

# Agenda Item 14.1 Motion on Notice

## SEDGEMOOR DISTRICT COUNCIL

### MOTION ON NOTICE

#### Fracking

Proposed: Cllr Bill Revans  
Seconded: Cllr Charlie Riches

#### Preamble:-

This Council notes that:

1. Significant areas of Sedgemoor have been licensed by central government for onshore unconventional shale oil and shale gas development (PEDL 320, 321 and 344, OS Map grid squares ST24, ST25, ST34, ST35), which could include hydraulic fracturing or “fracking” for short.

OS Grid Square	Main settlements affected
ST24	Combwich, Cannington, Nether Stowey, Fiddington, Wembdon, Chilton Trinity, Pawlett.
ST25	Berrow, Brean
ST34	Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Burtle, Edington, Puriton, Woolavington, Cossington, Chilton Polden, East Huntspill, West Huntspill.
ST35	East Brent, Brent Knoll, Mark, Biddisham, Rooksbridge.

2. Shale gas and shale oil are fossil fuels and emit greenhouse gases (methane, via fugitive emissions and carbon dioxide via production processes and when burnt).
3. Fracking in the US, Canada and Australia has produced unacceptable risks including ground water contamination and adverse impacts on air quality (with the release, treatment and disposal of radioactive toxins), agriculture, public health and safety, climate stability, economic vitality, the rural economy (farming & tourism), landscape and property values as well as earthquakes<sup>i</sup>.
4. While England is said to have a more robust regulatory system, there are weaknesses; much of the monitoring of pollution, leaks etc. is left to the companies themselves and the regulators are often under budgetary pressures<sup>ii</sup>.
5. The latest scientific evidence demonstrates that fracking has no role to play in the transition to a zero carbon economy and would thwart the UK’s climate change mitigation efforts.<sup>iii</sup>

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6. Popular opposition to fracking across Somerset, including Sedgemoor, is evidenced by strong support for groups such as 'Frack Free Somerset' and 'Frack Free EQS' (Exmoor, Quantocks and Sedgemoor) and motions to declare Frack-Free Zones passed by town and parish councils across Somerset including Bridgwater Town Council and Chedzoy parish in Sedgemoor District.
7. The High Court Judgement on 14th May 2019 (Stephenson v Secretary of State for Housing and Communities and Local Government [2019]) confirmed that public bodies can depart from Government policy in the Written Ministerial Statements by adopting their own stance opposed to fracking on climate change grounds<sup>iv</sup>.

This Council considers that:

1. Developing onshore oil and gas extraction in Somerset is inappropriate given:
  - a. The complex geology of our county;
  - b. The fact that PEDL 344 includes European, national and locally designated sites for nature and wildlife conservation;
  - c. The high risk of flooding and the presence of Hinkley Point nuclear power station and;
  - d. The uncertainties surrounding the potential impacts on public health, landscape and local road networks, the risk of groundwater contamination and air pollution and increased pressure on water supplies and water treatment facilities.
2. Onshore unconventional oil and gas extraction is contrary to any strategy to address climate breakdown, diverting investment from clean, renewable energy and weakening the market for those alternatives and it would thwart attempts to make Sedgemoor carbon neutral by 2030.

### **Recommendations:-**

This Council therefore resolves:

1. To declare Sedgemoor a Frack Free zone.
2. To oppose unconventional onshore oil and gas exploration and development activities on any land that we own or have an interest in.
3. Not to invest in any companies which are involved in fracking, including other methods of unconventional onshore oil and gas production.
4. To call on neighbouring local authorities to pass similar motions and to put planning policies in place to implement a presumption against all applications for unconventional oil and gas exploration and production in Somerset, including fracking, following the example of the Greater Manchester Authorities<sup>v</sup> and the new draft London Plan<sup>vi</sup>.
5. To write to our district's MPs to convey the Council's concerns about and opposition to fracking, to urge them to lobby Government to ban

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unconventional onshore oil and gas development permanently and to request that they write back indicating whether they are supporting the Council in this matter.

### APPENDIX A – Motion Background Briefing Research Paper

- i [https://concernedhealthny.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Fracking\\_Science\\_Compedium\\_5FINAL.pdf](https://concernedhealthny.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Fracking_Science_Compedium_5FINAL.pdf);
- ii <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Fracking-The-Evidence-.pdf>
- iii <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-manscw:156730&datastreamId=FULL-TEXT.PDF>;  
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10584-011-0061-5.pdf>;  
[http://www.talkfracking.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/20170200-whitehalls\\_fracking\\_science\\_failure-lq.pdf](http://www.talkfracking.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/20170200-whitehalls_fracking_science_failure-lq.pdf)
- iv <https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2019/519.pdf>. See also <https://drillordrop.com/2018/12/20/councils-can-use-climate-change-evidence-to-reject-fracking-government-lawyer-tells-high-court/>
- v [https://www.greatermanchesterca.gov.uk/media/1710/gm\\_plan\\_for\\_homes\\_jobs\\_and\\_the\\_environment\\_1101-web.pdf](https://www.greatermanchesterca.gov.uk/media/1710/gm_plan_for_homes_jobs_and_the_environment_1101-web.pdf)
- vi <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draftnew-london-plan/chapter-9-sustainable-infrastructure/policy-si11-hydraulic>