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Decision making on fracking planning guidance must remain at local level



05 July 2018

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's report into planning guidance on fracking warns the Government against its proposed move to bring applications under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) regime.

- [Read the report summary](#)
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Mineral Planning Authorities

The Committee concludes that Mineral Planning Authorities are best placed to understand the local area and how fracking can best take place.

Moving decision making on fracking planning applications to a national level contradicts the principles of localism and would likely exacerbate existing mistrust between communities and the fracking industry.

Decision making must remain at local level

Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, said:

"Taking decision making powers away from local planning authorities would be a backward step. It would remove the important link between fracking applications and Local Plans and be hugely harmful to local democracy and the principles and spirit of localism. It is Mineral Planning Authorities that have the knowledge of their areas needed to judge the impacts of fracking, not Ministers sitting in Whitehall.

Any move to alter this process also seriously risks worsening the often strained relationship between local residents and the fracking industry. The Government has failed to provide any justification as to why fracking is a special case and should be included in the regime in contrast to general mineral applications."

National Policy Statement

The report states that, should the Government press ahead with plans to include fracking in the NSIP regime, a National Policy Statement must be produced urgently to ensure cumulative impact of applications is considered automatically and every decision is consistent with Local Plans.

Online 'one-stop shop'

The report also calls for an online 'one-stop shop' for all fracking guidance and policy documents, to be hosted by a newly created 'Shale Information and Coordination Service'. The current disparate guidance hinders understanding, transparency and engagement with fracking applications, the Committee says.

Definition of fracking

On the definition of fracking, the Committee is highly concerned at plans to use the definition from the Infrastructure Act 2015 in the revised National Planning Practice Guidance. The definition does not reflect the technologies used on the ground nor the public understanding of fracking. The Committee calls on the Government to amend the definition to ensure every development which artificially fractures rock is included.

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