

Matthew Williams
Planning Team Manager
Mendip District Council
Cannards Grave Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BT

18th October, 2011

Dear Mr Williams,

'Fracking' in Mendip District Council Area.

You will probably be aware of all the issues circulating recently relating to 'fracking', the process of hydraulic fracturing to release gas.

It has been suggested in the national and local media that significant prospective resources of shale gas and coal bed methane have been identified in Somerset. We also understand that in 2008, the then Government Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform granted rights for two companies to search for gas in and around the Mendips.

We are aware of concerns raised by Bath & North East Somerset Council that the process of fracking will result in the water courses leading to the natural hot springs in Bath being contaminated with pollutants from this process, or for the waters to adopt a different direction of travel through new fractures in the underlying rocks. The AONB Unit would also have serious reservations about the process taking place within the designated landscape with regard to impacts on the character of the landscape from buildings and structures, on aquifers and the water table and on SSSI's and biodiversity. We know that Wells M.P. Tessa Munt is supportive of a very cautious approach to 'fracking'.

It is anticipated that the licensed companies will now be submitting planning applications to commence drilling. As this type of proposal clearly meets the

criteria set out in the agreed guidelines for referral (copy attached), the AONB Unit looks forward to being consulted regarding any planning applications for activities relating to 'fracking' within the AONB or its setting. Could you please confirm whether Mendip District Council has received any such applications and if the Council considers it necessary for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be submitted to support an application.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Richards
Planning Liaison Officer
Mendip Hills AONB Unit

cc Councillor Dawn Hill AONB Partnership Chair; Councillor R Forrest; David Clark Heritage Conservation, Mendip District Council.