

NOTICE OF MOTION

FRACKING

“This Council notes with concern the effects of unconventional shale gas extraction, namely the case of Blackpool where minor earthquakes followed as a result of drilling in the area. (1).

This activity has also been linked with the contamination of local water sources such as aquifers, which provide about 30% of the UK’s water. This puts both local communities who rely upon these water supplies, and the local environment at risk.

There are as yet no plans at present to extract gas in this way in Brighton and Hove - however Quadrilla, an American company, has already gained planning permission to use hydraulic fracturing or 'fracking' nearby in Balcombe, East Sussex. This could have an unquantified detrimental impact on the surrounding area including our city, and there are fears that any subsequent earth tremors could be a threat to the crucial London to Brighton railway route.

Fracking uses massive volumes of water, 1 million gallons(1) for each frack, which is also of great concern in a region only recently taken out of drought conditions. Methane gas produced at drilling sites is a significant contributor to climate change – far more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.

This Council also notes that the production of hard-to-reach fossil fuels is incompatible with efforts to achieve statutory UK carbon targets. A focus on gas extraction detracts from and delays investment in renewable energy sources.

The European Parliament is due to report shortly on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety impacts of shale gas and shale oil extraction activities. There is considerable concern across Europe with Bulgaria having banned it and moratoriums have been put in place in France, New South Wales and Westphalia (a German state). A citizens’ petition has also been initiated on the subject.

Further to the above, this Council:

- Asks Policy & Resources committee to resolve that Brighton and Hove should become a ‘frack-free’ zone;
- Asks the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment calling on him to impose a moratorium on onshore and offshore exploration, development and production of Coal Bed

Methane, Shale Oil and Shale Gas, at least until a full independent environmental impact of the processes involved has been carried out;

- Calls on the Government to make it easier for co-operatives such as the Brighton Energy Co-op, housing associations and local authorities to generate their own renewable energy.”

(1) BBC News, 2nd November 2011: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-15550458>

(2) Figure from Tyndall Centre on Climate Change report of last year. Gasland & Josh Fox suggest the actual amount is higher.