

11th November 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about shale gas.

I fully understand and appreciate people's concerns about fracking, but let me reassure you that the Government is creating a regulatory regime that provides clear, strong protections for the environment. With these in place, I think it is right that we explore and make use of shale gas and oil. The opportunity to extract this energy, as well as to secure jobs and investment, cannot be ignored.

It is clear that an affordable, secure supply of energy that individuals and businesses can rely on now and in the future is the backbone of a thriving economy.

Regulations will ban fracking at the surface of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Broads and World Heritage Sites. Gas cannot be extracted at depths of less than 1,200 metres below these areas. In addition, fracking wells cannot be sited within National Parks or other protected areas. Consent cannot be granted for drilling without an environmental impact assessment and operators are required to monitor the level of methane in groundwater.

The Government has recently launched a consultation that proposed extending the surface ban to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). I am pleased that the Government understands that it is critical for the industry to have the confidence of the public if it is to flourish in the long term.

The Government has the right protections in place to ensure that fracking can go ahead safely without risk to our most beautiful and important natural sites. People should have confidence in these protections and in this vital industry which could create over 60,000 jobs and be worth billions of pounds to our economy. That is why the Government is providing further reassurance for our most valued areas.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP