**[DANES HILL - THEY MAY NOT BE FRACKING BUT IT COULD BE JUST AS BAD](http://danes-hill-they-may-not-be-fracking-but-it-could-be-just-as-bad/)**

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Brian Davey, an independent ecological economist who has asked to make it clear that he is not a member of the Lib Dems or any other political party, has posted his correspondence with the local County Councillor for the Danes Hill site near Sutton-cum-Lound, Cllr Liz Yates, in which he explains that while Dart International do not plan (at this stage) to "frack" the site, what they are planning to do is just as dangerous.  With his permission, I am reposting his letter here.

Dear Liz Yates,

I am a freelance ecological economist who works mainly on energy and climate issues. I am writing to you because I have been advising and supporting some individuals in Sutton cum Lound who are concerned about the proposed coal bed methane extraction there. From a report of the recent Parish Council I've been told that you acknowledged that your knowledge of the issues was limited. I think that's true for almost everyone and I too am struggling to get up to speed on the issues specific to coal bed methane extraction. That said, I have spent a considerable time over the last few months taking in and writing about what information is available from the USA and Australia. Using this information I put in a lengthy comment to the County Council's Minerals Plan Consultation. I am attaching a slightly reworked copy of that with this email and I hope that you find it useful.

When I wrote the attached paper I was aware that I was writing about two kinds of processes that might happen in Nottinghamshire - fracking for shale gas mainly in the south of the county and coal bed methane extraction in the north and east, a process that does not always involve fracking. (To explain - in Australia coal bed methane is called coal seam gas). If I may I would like to just dwell on the difference between fracking for shale gas and coal bed methane extraction a little here. The proposal for Daneshill is to explore the potential for coal bed methane extraction and the company concerned, Dart International, say that they do not "stimulate" their coal bed methane wells (that means that they do not 'frack' them). Indeed in Australia only 8% of coal bed methane wells are currently fracked - though that % may rise in the future. The process of gas extraction is different from shale gas fracking - it typically involves "de-watering" a coal seam. The water already in a coal seam is pumped out - and this is made possible by horizontal drilling along the coal seam underground without any fracking. However, it would be wrong to assume from this that there are no environmental dangers. There are actually multiple dangers. The point of pumping out and de-watering the coal is to free up the methane in the coal seam that is held there by the pressure of the water. The methane is then pumped to the surface. However, it is also freed to migrate into other fissures in the rock and along old mine workings so that it comes to the surface in an uncontrolled fashion in an unplanned way through cracks in the ground. The potentially devastating consequences of that can be seen by watching these two very short You Tube videos - one from Australia and the other from Wyoming in the USA.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Go4Mu0vKiv4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8IWAFG61jE>

These YouTube videos are about uncontrolled migration of methane through cracks in the ground. In fact gas wells also leak through improperly sealed bore holes too - a 2010 report by the State of Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation involved inspecting 58 gas wells in the Tara field developed by British Gas - 26 of 58 were leaking - in one case above the lower explosion limit of methane and in a further 4 cases close to that limit.[http://mines.industry.qld.gov.au/assets/petroleum-pdf/tara\_leaking\_well\_investigation\_report.pdf](http://www.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fmines.industry.qld.gov.au%2Fassets%2Fpetroleum-pdf%2Ftara_leaking_well_investigation_report.pdf&h=WAQHg7s_m&enc=AZORj3OizjJfWZHSCMOuy2nzJFOu4klX1NvbaWYB7OD_oqgRU5MI75smBpebEFCJtuQJEOX65PHCbE1vK-KlhfGaGh1UwJeDI4W6pM4eL-F0Z70yvx4p6ecmzABXPC1P6KlOUnQjPmdoHLykoMCByCAns2dj-VFNy9oz4xr3ZXG2VQ&s=1) (see page 4) . 5 cases over or near the lower explosion limit is nearly 9% of cases. Applying this Queensland percentage failure rate to a possible 900 wells in Nottinghamshire would be 78 wells.

I notice, Councillor Yates, that you are the Conservative representative on the Notts and Nottingham Fire Authority. You might like particularly to take note, therefore, that one of the main risks of gas wells on your patch are explosion risks and fire dangers.

A high failure rate through the bore holes of wells because of fractured pipes and failures in cement sealing are very common in the gas industry - as I explain in the attached statement which gives web references for studies of why gas wells fail. The number of failures increases through time, including after wells have been abandoned.

There are multiple other problems - particularly with the highly contaminated water pumped out of the coal seam and brought to the surface. These are also considered in the attached paper.

A final comment is that although the current proposals for your area are to extract coal bed methane this does not mean that fracking, including fracking for shale gas, might not be proposed in the future. It is possible that at different level of the rock strata there are also gas bearing shale layers. At some point in the future the companies might want to explore for and develop these too, even though at this point in time it does not appear that this is planned by them.

With Best Wishes

Brian has also posted Liz Yate's reply and that can be read [here](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1Y730moNS9JRVJpQUszOS15cHc/edit?usp=sharing)