**[RESPONSE TO JOHN MANN ON FRACKING](http://response-to-john-mann-on-fracking/)**

19/02/2014

In the last few weeks I have been involved in setting up a non-party political group to oppose fracking & other forms of extreme gas extraction in Bassetlaw called Bassetlaw Against Fracking (please visit our Facebook page - [Bassetlaw Against Fracking](https://www.facebook.com/groups/bassetlaw.against.fracking/)) and we will be holding our launch Public Meeting on Wednesday 19th March at The Well in Retford (see [Launch Public Meeting](https://www.facebook.com/events/1408465459403874/)).

Yesterday, after the details had been confirmed, I emailed all the local Councillors (District & County) to invite them to the meeting.  I also sent the invitation to our local MPs, John Mann & Patrick Mercer.  I haven’t yet heard back from Mr Mercer but John Mann was quick to respond with a rambling email questioning both the basis on which the group was started and also my personal integrity.  I have responded on behalf of the group (see [Correspondence with John Mann about Public Meeting](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1Y730moNS9Jc2k5amFFY3J5eTQ/edit?usp=sharing)) but will use this post to respond to the personal attacks he has made on me.

Mr. Mann’s first point about the Lib Dems encouraging fracking is incorrect.  If he had taken the time to read our policy paper ([Green Growth and Green Jobs](http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/libdems/pages/1811/attachments/original/1390821175/109_-_Green_Growth_and_Green_Jobs.pdf?1390821175)) he will have seen on page 27 this statement:

“4.4.4 Still, there is value in promoting domestic production rather than imports, so Liberal
Democrats would permit measured shale gas extraction, ensuring that regulations protecting water and land pollution and local environmental quality are strictly enforced at a national level.

Planning permission decisions should remain with local authorities however, and local communities should be fully consulted over local extraction, and fully compensated for all damage to the local landscape.”

Permitting within strict controls is very different from encouraging, a point possibly lost on Mr Mann. He also seems to think that, because the Government has a policy and the Lib Dems are part of the Government, the Liberal Democrats as a party agree with every word of that policy.  We don’t, not nationally, not regionally and certainly not locally.  Bassetlaw & Sherwood Liberal Democrats issued a [press release](http://leonduveen.mycouncillor.org.uk/2014/01/13/fracking-in-bassetlaw/) over a month ago opposing fracking and have made our feeling well known.

Mr Mann went onto point out that there are over 300 fracking sites in The Netherland, a figure I do not contest, but it isn’t relevant as without knowing what type of fracking was used at these sites it is not possible to comment.  If, like Mr Mann seems to be, you are not aware of the [different types of fracking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fracking), I suggest you read the informative article on Wikipedia.  The “high volume” fracking technique has only once been tried in the UK and the two resultant minor earthquakes in Lancashire has meant that no other attempts have been tried.

Mr Mann then goes on to ask number of questions (he is very good at questions, not so good at actually understanding the answers though).  To deal the one by one:

Am I against current underground gas extraction in Bassetlaw?

No, the damage has already been done and, as they don’t use “high volume” fracking to extract the gas, they are not likely to do more damage.

Am I against methane extraction?

Am I against oil extraction?

If by this he means any new gas or oil extraction, then yes I am, especially where the techniques to be used are damaging to the environment and possible dangerous.  As I have said elsewhere we would be far better off investing in truly renewable energy sources than trying to utilise ever diminishing hydrocarbon sources using every more novel and intrusive techniques.  I have seen research that shows that over 50 years the costs of investing in renewables & using hydrocarbons equals out.  So if we have the foresight & courage to pay those admittedly high short term costs in renewable technology, we would be left with a really long term cheap energy source that will make us energy independent for generations to come while at the same time provide jobs in the new industry.

Mr Mann then goes on to question my personal commitment, saying that as I have a gas inlet to my property (as do most other houses in Worksop), this isn’t consistent with my objection to fracking (at least I think that is what he means as what he actually wrote is a bit confusing).  Well I plead guilty to that.  My house had gas when we moved in nearly 25 years ago and yes we still have a gas fired central heating system, which we upgraded (without the help of any grants) about 12 years ago to a more efficient system.   Because of the aspect of my house, it is not suitable for [solar panels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_panels) and up to now we haven’t had the money to invest in [pv panels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photovoltaics%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) although we are looking into it.

This actually is one of the reasons I am such a supporter of renewable energy.  Many people like me live in properties that are not suitable for attaching pv or solar panels to.  While it makes sense to make this a compulsory feature of all new buildings, those who can’t fit them shouldn't miss out on cheaper energy.  If the Government encouraged energy suppliers to invest in the whole range of renewables, including off-shore wind farms, solar arrays, geo-thermic, tidal and hydro, everyone could benefit.

Nuclear is not an option as we still have no way to deal with the waste other than to store it at Sellafield. Until that issue has been resolved, no new Nuclear plants should be considered.  Equally to return to using coal is a similar backward step to using methane or other hydrocarbons.

As ever, Mr Mann does not understand that there are people who not only disagree with him but are more knowledgeable than him on some subjects (or at least willing to listen to those that are).  As a former researcher for the AEEU, he should use those skills to go away and do some proper research into the subject as he often does not seem to know what he is talking about.