



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

January 2016

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about shale gas, fracking, and the corresponding regulations.

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. The Government's approach is guided by the Environment Agency, and with these protections 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.

As you may be aware, MPs were asked to vote on regulations, which will protect some of the country's most beautiful areas from fracking. I would like to reiterate my assurances that National Parks are covered by these protections. As a result of these regulations, gas cannot be extracted at depths of less than 1,200 meters under National Parks.

These protections are provided for in the Infrastructure Act 2015. The Act forbids the Secretary of State from issuing consent for fracking if it would take place within a 'protected groundwater source area'. The regulations clearly set out what is meant by this, and ensure that fracking would be banned at depths of less than 1,200 metres within 50 metres of a point where water used for domestic or food purposes is extracted. Drinking water is not normally found below 400 metres. This limit therefore provides at least 800 metres between the depth of most drinking water sources and the highest possible level at which hydraulic fracturing can take place. The regulations also ban fracking in zones through which groundwater (again used for domestic or food purposes) travels for 50 days before it reaches an abstraction point.

In addition, the Government has firmly stated its commitment to ban fracking wells and drills at the surface of National Parks, in order to safeguard the landscapes of these beautiful areas. Consultations will start on this shortly.



These regulations were debated and discussed by MPs, who approved them on 16 December. I know that the Government is listening closely to people's concerns, and have, for example, recently launched a consultation that could see these protections extended even further.

I know that some may hold a different view, but I strongly believe the UK has to move forward with fracking.

The UK has one of the best track records in the world when it comes to protecting our environment while also developing our industries, and Ministers have assured me that that this experience will be brought to bear on the shale gas protections. The industry will be developed safely with world class environmental protections, creating jobs and delivering better energy security, while all the time safeguarding some of our most precious landscapes.

Fracking has allowed the USA to hit its *Kyoto Target*, even though it did not sign up to that target at all in the first place. It is providing cheap gas (and in the future, will provide cheap oil) that lifts people out of fuel poverty. I think it is also important to state that the UK has one of the strongest regulatory frameworks for shale-gas extraction in the world.

This being said, as oil prices continue to fall, I believe that investment in fracking and active retrieval of natural gas through fracking will slow. Among other effects, this will provide the Government and those on the ground time to ensure that the regulations surrounding fracking are enacted properly and are the best for both the environment and the growth of the industry.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY