

Yorkshire Water's Position On Fracking

Our primary concern is making sure the people of Yorkshire always enjoy the safest drinking water. With that in mind, shale gas extraction is an issue that we consider to be of strategic importance to our water and wastewater services. We have developed this policy position following an assessment of the best available information of relevant issues, threats and opportunities.

Yorkshire Water is now a statutory consultee on planning or permit applications for shale gas exploration or extraction. Our primary concern is making sure that where fracking does occur it is done safely and has no impact on water supplies. To ensure water supplies are protected we set high thresholds which must be met before we can consider supporting any proposed development.

There are two key issue to consider the impact of fracking on – water quality and water supplies:

Water quality

With the high levels of regulation from Government, HSE, Environment Agency, Planning Authorities and close observation by water companies the construction and operation of shale gas wells has a low risk of adverse impact on water quality. Flowback and produced water from shale gas operations are unlikely to differ significantly from produced water from 'conventional' oil and gas production. There is great deal of experience in safely handling this material and the Environment Agency would regulate any waste disposal from fracking operations. Prior to agreeing to receive waste water from shale gas operations, we will ensure that it is treatable to the appropriate standards and will not harm the water environment into which it is discharged.

Water supplies

All water companies have an obligation to offer a water supply to any legally operating company in their area. As a consequence of our obligations we need to consider the implications on water supplies. The water demand for shale gas exploration, hydraulic fracturing and during production is well within our water management plan forecasts. It is a very small proportion of our overall production and it is likely that we will not supply all the water needs of these operations. Yorkshire Water produces 1.2 billion litres of water every day. The likely peak water demand for shale gas is around 2.2 million litres per day, or less than 0.2% of daily production.

Conclusion

As companies apply for permission to produce Shale gas and hydraulic fracturing we will review our policy and if necessary change this policy to reflect the hazards and risks to our customers and the environment. Our current assessment is that the risks from shale gas production are acceptable, provided they are properly identified in order that appropriate mitigation can be implemented.

How we will be looking after Yorkshire's water

- To support our policy we have and will maintain channels of communication with shale gas exploration and production companies.
- We will continue to comment as an interested and expert party on planning applications and permit applications for shale gas related activities, ensuring that our thresholds for protection of supplies are met.