

## **Remarks to Call In Committee, Wilmington Farm Solar Array**

My name is William Hobhouse and I have no interest to declare in this decision.

In 2013, Conservatives and Liberal Democrats passed a motion opposing fracking in BANES. This call in raises the question whether the Conservative group has changed its mind on fracking since then.

We need to keep the lights on. It is not a coherent position to be against fracking and against the alternatives to fracking. As North Sea gas declines, and coal is phased out as a particularly dirty fuel, the options for the UK are nuclear and renewables, or fracking.

Building this solar array will provide electricity to 600 houses. Alternatively, we can approve fracking licences in the area, frack out the shale gas and provide electricity to these 600 houses. These are political choices to be made here in BANES and by our MPs at Westminster. We must do one or the other.

I don't think there is much doubt about what Conservatives at Westminster think about fracking. Jacob Rees-Mogg is in favour of fracking, Eric Pickles is in favour of fracking, George Osborne is in favour of fracking. And, to be fair, there are arguments for fracking.

But there are also arguments against fracking. That fracking should be a last resort not a first choice. That tackling climate change is the great challenge of our age. That government must do all they can to develop renewable technologies to replace fossil fuels. Just down the road from here at the National Composites Centre, prototypes are being built to generate electricity from ocean currents.

This call in is about a field of solar panels. But the signal it will send to the public will be about fracking.

I urge the committee to restate the Council's position from 2013. In the context of this meeting, that solar panels are better than fracking rigs, that renewables are our first choice and fracking our last resort.

I urge the Conservative Councillors to consider the arguments, and, on reflection, to allow the decision in favour of the solar array to stand.

William Hobhouse