

**Cllr David Martin**

## **SOMERSET MINERALS PLAN**

I welcome the recommended response in the Cabinet paper to the Somerset Minerals Plan Preferred Options.

There is considerable unease in B&NES about the prospect of extracting Shale Gas through the process of fracking operations in the Mendips.

I share the unease about this unproven and potentially highly risky method of squeezing the last drops of what is a non-renewable fuel in a sensitive part of the country. Although this method of fuel production appears to be welcomed by the Government with the introduction of new regulations, the special situation of the Bath hot springs and water supply needs to be recognized.

As reported in the Cabinet paper, the Council has obtained expert advice on this matter. The advice suggests that there is the potential for damage to the deep water sources that supply the hot springs in Bath. These springs are a crucial part of the tourist attraction that sustains thousands of jobs in the city. The geology of the area around Bath is very complex and the impacts on water supply routes are completely unknown.

The County of Avon Act requires Council consent for any excavation below certain depths, and it is essential that there are tight controls over potentially damaging activities near the hot springs. However the controls currently do not cover activities outside specific geographical areas, including the Mendip District Council area.

I hope that our officers will work closely with colleagues in Somerset to ensure complete safeguarding from the adverse impacts of fracking operations. Our ancient waters should not be at the mercy of planning decisions outside the Council area.

In the early 1800s, William Smith, the father of English geology, produced the first large scale geological map of Bath and the surrounding area. I am sure that he would be horrified to learn of the prospect of fracking operations to release Shale Gas from the underlying strata.

Cllr David Martin

Member Champion for Energy and Climate Change