



Email Address : admin@defendlytham.com
Web site address: www.defendlytham.com

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Press Release

Government announce community "benefits" package for areas affected by fracking

The government today released further details of the community benefits package aimed at securing acceptance of fracking wells in those areas that would be blighted by the process.

Defend Lytham is concerned on two counts. Firstly the level of "benefit" proposed would go nowhere near compensating local homeowners for the level of financial loss that they might suffer as a result of fracking. The mortgage industry suggested this week that fracking could affect house prices by as much as 30%. Even if the impact were only half that much, the proposed sweeteners would pay for only a small fraction of the financial loss suffered by homeowners. It wouldn't even start to compensate communities for the loss of amenity value.

Secondly it is unclear what is meant by "community" here. We understand that these sums might be paid at the County Council level so there is no guarantee that funds would even end up being directed at the communities who are affected.

The government is obviously conflicted about this issue - Utility Week reported that only last week the Department for Communities and Local Government stated that there are no plans to pay communities for hosting shale gas wells in the same way benefits are offered to communities that host onshore windfarms saying that "The planning rules are what the planning rules are and they haven't changed for shale gas extraction."

Defend Lytham believes that these proposed incentives fall far short of being any sort of realistic compensation for communities facing permanent blight as a result of fracking. The government has badly misjudged the potential negative impact of fracking on the Fylde and the level of public distrust which they now have to overcome.

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