

**'Fracking' in Staffordshire? frequently asked questions**

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## What is fracking?

Hydraulic fracturing, commonly known as “fracking” is a technique used to extract oil or gas from deep below the ground.

The process introduces a network of fine cracks into rock after drilling for oil or gas (hydrocarbons).

In the fracking process, water is pumped under extremely high pressure into a drilled borehole, opening up existing fractures in the rock. Allowing the oil or gas trapped within the rock to flow out through the wellbore.

The water used in the process is usually mixed with sand to keep the fractures open (and the oil or gas flowing). Chemicals are also added – around 0.25% of the liquid used. These chemicals are required for various purposes, including providing lubrication and purification.

Fracking may be used at both the exploration stage (to see what oil or gas it is there, how much and how easily can be extracted) and at the production stage (to maintain the flow when pumping the oil or gas out).

 [British Geological Survey's Mineral Planning Factsheet - 'Alternative Fossil Fuels' \(604 KB\)](#)

More information is provided in national guidance through the [GOV.UK website](#).



### **Are there any fracking sites in Staffordshire?**

No – there are currently no planning applications or sites permitted to carry out exploration or development of on shore oil or gas using fracking techniques in Staffordshire.

There is one site with permission to carry out natural gas extraction from a conventional gas reservoir in the Staffordshire Moorlands and an operational site in Stafford Borough with permission to carry out abandoned mine methane extraction from the former Florence Colliery in Stoke-on-Trent.

For more details refer to our [A to Z of Planning](#) - 'C' for Coal for a 'Summary of recent coal bed methane, coal mine methane and natural gas sites'.

There is also a site at the former Hem Heath colliery site within Stoke-on-Trent area where coal mine methane is extracted for electricity production. Further information can be found through [Stoke-on-Trent City Council's website](#).



## Who would give permission to carry out fracking in Staffordshire?

The Oil and Gas Authority, the Environment Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and Staffordshire County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority would control the development of onshore oil/gas development in Staffordshire.

Before a company can see whether oil or gas resources are available, they must get a Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence (PEDL) for the relevant area) from the Oil and Gas Authority. This licence allows the company to ‘search and bore for and get’ the Crown’s resources, such as oil and gas.

Some parts of Staffordshire are licensed for oil or gas exploration and development. For details refer to the [Oil and Gas Authority Interactive Map](#)

The company must then [make an application for planning permission](#) to us. We would consult the relevant District/Borough Council, Parish Councils, neighbours and a wide range of statutory / non-statutory consultees as we do with all mineral development planning applications.

In reaching a decision on the planning application we must have regard to the relevant policies in the [development plan for the area](#), including our own Minerals Local Plan and the District/Borough Local Plan. Policy 5 in our [Minerals Local Plan](#) sets out how we would assess proposals for oil and gas development within licensed areas. We must also have regard to government policy and guidance including the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) and the Planning Practice Guidance ([‘Planning for Hydrocarbon extraction’](#)).



## What's the latest news on fracking?

**1 November 2018** - The Government is [consulting](#) to seek views on whether applicants should be required to conduct pre-application consultation with the local community prior to submitting a planning application for shale gas development. The consultation closes on 7 January 2019.

**23 October 2018** – The County Council has responded to the Government consultations as follows: -

- [Permitted development for shale gas](#)
- [Shale Gas Production Projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project Regime](#)

**19 July 2018** - The Government is [consulting](#) to seek views on the principle of whether non-hydraulic fracturing shale gas exploration development should be granted planning permission through a permitted development right, and in particular the circumstances in which it would be appropriate. The consultation closes on 25 October 2018.

**19 July 2018** - The Government is [consulting](#) on the timings and criteria for including shale gas production projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime under the Planning Act 2008. The consultation closes on 25 October 2018.

**17 May 2018** - The Government has [invited bids](#) from Mineral Planning Authorities for funding to help them with the processing and consideration of shale planning applications for the period 2018 - 2019 and 2019 - 2020.

**17 May 2018** - Two Written Ministerial Statements have been laid before Parliament. These statements laid by [the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#) and [the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) reiterate the Government's view that there are potentially substantial benefits from the safe and sustainable exploration and development of onshore shale gas resources and sets out the actions to support this position.

**31 October 2017** - The Oil & Gas Authority published a report entitled "[UK Oil and Gas: Reserves and Resources](#)" (as at end 2016).

**15 February 2017** - The Government has published [Guidance for Licensees](#) in Great Britain for use when submitting an application for hydraulic fracturing consent.



**13 January 2017** - The Government updated the [guidance on Fracking](#) (developing shale gas in the UK).

**3 October 2016** - The Oil & Gas Authority launched a [new website](#) to reflect its new status as a government company.

**8 August 2016** - The Government consulted in order to seek views on the delivery method and priorities of the [Shale Wealth Fund](#). The consultation seeks views on what the government's priorities should be for the Shale Wealth Fund, the allocation of funding from the Shale Wealth Fund to different stakeholder groups and the extent to which the industry community benefits scheme and the Shale Wealth Fund should be aligned.

**11 March 2016** - The Government has announced [new permitted development rights](#) to allow the drilling of boreholes for monitoring and investigative activities for purposes of potential petroleum exploration. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development (England)(Amendment) Order 2016 will come into force on 6 April 2016.

**February 2016** - The Government has [written to Mineral Planning Authorities](#) requesting the provision of information to the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the applicant when granting planning permission for relevant shale gas or oil development. The information is sought to support decision making under the Petroleum Licencing regime.

**16 September 2015** - Two Written Ministerial Statements have been laid before Parliament. A statement laid by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change entitled [Shale Gas and Oil Policy](#) sets out the Government's view that there is a need to explore and develop our shale gas resources in a safe, sustainable and timely way, and the steps it is taking to support this. This statement reiterates, and replaces, the joint policy statement made on 13 August. A [statement laid by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government](#) sets out further details of two of the planning measures: on identifying underperformance in respect of oil and gas applications and a revision to the recovery criteria for appeals for planning permission for shale gas.

