

David Moore: please answer the fracking questions



this is what's been suggested recently by one of the companies with an interest in fracking. We're told that we should rely on our locally elected representatives, the elected government and the regulators.

All too often we see this negative approach being taken to our concerns.

It's happened in the NHS, in the social care system and in many other areas. Unfortunately, it's often a tragedy involving loss of life that forces action to be taken by the politicians and the regulators to correct something that has concerned the ordinary person for many years.

One unfortunate example of what can happen was seen when an earthquake and tsunami damaged a nuclear reactor in Japan in 2011. Rapid

action was taken to cool the damaged reactors with water but, some two years later, contaminated water has been found to seep from the storage tanks.

Once again, despite the politicians and the regulators' assurances, people's fears are being realised.

Our concerns have to be addressed no matter how spurious they may seem to some people.

We live in a democracy and we're entitled to question things that happen around us. Sometimes our fears may prove to be groundless but, on other occasions, they may prove to be our worst nightmare.

Professor Robert Mair chaired a joint committee, which was set up by the Royal

Society and Royal Academy of Engineering, to look at the environmental, health and safety risks associated with shale gas exploration in this country.

The report identified the risks associated with the production of shale gas and produced a set of recommendations to make the process as safe as possible. The Government accepted all of the recommendations, which were made.

In a recent article, Professor Mair still believes that fracking can be carried out safely, if there is a proper regulatory system in place, if the rules are followed correctly and if some of the unanswered questions, such as methane leakage, are addressed.

However, he takes a sensible approach to the possibility of fracking as a possible means of producing another source of energy.

He still feels that there are uncertainties associated with the process and believes that all sides of the argument both for and against have to be heard and considered before any scientific judgement can be made about the process.

Fracking is no different to any other potential source of energy. People will want to understand the benefits of any proposal but at the same time they will want to clearly understand what are the risks. So don't just palm us off with the perceived benefits argument. What we stand to gain may pall into insignificance compared to what we

might lose if the wrong decision is made.

Please will someone just answer two simple questions for a start. Tell us what happens if something goes wrong during fracking and leads to contamination of our water supply, particularly the aquifers? Then let us know how methane leakage into the atmosphere will be monitored.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns. For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 261640.

We all know how important reliable sources of energy are to us now and in the future and we can be sure that the debate on the pros and cons of various approaches will continue. The argument that we should just accept any energy generation process without question is ridiculous but