

# LET COMMUNITIES DECIDE

## Action Guide: Week of Action 8 - 14 October 2018

### Introduction

The government is proposing massive changes to planning rules that could give the fracking industry a green light to cover swathes of the country in drills.

They propose to classify exploratory drilling for shale gas as 'permitted development' - a planning category originally designed to speed up minor home improvements like garden sheds, conservatories and fences. If these changes went ahead, fracking companies could start drilling across the country without the need to apply for local planning permission, threatening communities and the climate in the process. The proposal is an affront to the principles of local democracy and community consultation.

The Government's consultation on this proposal closes on 25th October. As that date draws near its time to ramp up the pressure!

During the local Week of Action 8 – 14 October we're asking people around the country to do a campaign stunt, action or event in your own area that week to grab the attention of local media, people and politicians. By taking part in the Week of Action, you'll be making waves both locally and nationally.

### What can you do?

We're asking groups and individuals all across the land to organise a **stunt, action or event** in your localities between 8 - 14 October 2018.

We have come up with three suggested actions below to help get the ball rolling. If you think up something different you'd rather do, though, go for that!

## Choose your action

### 1. Fracking in the town square, village green or city centre!

If the permitted development proposal is adopted, it will essentially allow fracking companies to drill at will. We'll mirror that by turning up to **drill wherever we like** too!

This is a stunt you can pull off in a variety of ways depending on your time, resources, etc. Here are some of the elements you can include (please do dream up more!). You don't have to include them all, of course (even the fracking rig itself isn't essential), and they can be combined in different permutations:

- **A fracking rig.** Building a model fracking rig from [PVC pipe](#), [waste packing tubes](#), [wood](#), [metal](#), [cardboard](#) or [other materials](#) doesn't have to be complex or difficult to build. If you feel daunted or feel you don't have the know-how, ask around - this is the sort of little project that someone in your area would love to take on!
- **Cracks in the pavement.** These can be 'made' with black tape or chalk to create a dramatic representation of the impact of extreme energy exploration, as in this great [example](#).
- **Work site fencing.** Erect some temporary fencing - the [heavy-duty plastic lock-together stuff](#), orange temp fence - or even Heras fencing. You can hire fencing, or ask a sympathetic contractor to borrow some. Traffic bollards and red and white hazard tape are a cheap and quick alternative.

Note: obstructing the highway is a criminal offence so you should be careful to make sure that you don't cause an unlawful obstruction – go to Green & Black Cross for further advice on the law in this area.

- **Work site notices.** These are crucial and can help give a clear indication of what is being depicted. "NOTICE: DRILLING TAKING PLACE UNDER PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT. NO PLANNING APPLICATION NEEDED TO DRILL AT THIS LOCATION", etc. You can use them to convey your message, and they can make for great photos if they are brief, clear and simple.
- **Work clothing & accessories.** Hi-vis tabards/jackets/trousers/oversuits, hard hats, work boots, work gloves, etc all help give the desired impression.

- **Suits and clip-boards.** Management on site directing proceedings, waving 'plans' around and telling the workers where to drill is always

Once you've got the basics from the list above and your imaginations, decide [what to add to your event](#) to make it extra-impactful, newsworthy and effective.

Then think about what is going to happen and when. Do you want to add in an element of **street theatre** to depict the process and dynamics, or simply create a **tableau**? Plot out whatever you plan to do and rehearse a bit for most convincing results!

### **Important note RE any action:**

- Do not cause any damage
- If questioned by police, make sure you explain this is a peaceful protest
- Let police know what you are doing, what time you will be finished and that you will remove all signs and marks (e.g. chalk, tape)
- Be polite with police and passers by – even if they don't agree with you.

## **2. Silenced democracy action!**

This planning proposal is an outrageous affront to the principles of local democracy, threatening to deny local communities a voice over major industrial development on their doorsteps. We'll demonstrate that by gagging ourselves, in the style of great actions by groups in [Huddersfield](#) and [Malton](#). For this simple action you will need:

- **Gags.** Tape placed across the mouth to demonstrate the gagging of local democracy. Two lengths of insulating tape, placed to form a cross over the mouth works well - and insulating tape is not too sticky so it shouldn't hurt to take off again!
- **Banner/s.** For this action, a large and eye-catching banner with your message on will help to gain attention from the media and public. See [below](#) for more information.
- **Placards/signs.** You can also use [placards](#) to make your point clear and to join the dots for onlookers between what you are doing and the issue of permitted development and exploratory drilling. They might read eg "Let Communities Decide on fracking" and/or any other messages that build a clear picture of the issue. A related idea is to hang signs around the necks of those who are gagged.

They might read “[Council name] Council” or “local democracy” or “local councillor”.

**Note:** You could also **combine actions 1. and 2.** to complete the picture of drilling going ahead without restriction, and local democracy and voices silenced in the face of this.

### 3. Stall!

Find a good spot near you for an information and action stall. If there is a meeting of your council happening locally, you could time the stall to coincide with that to maximise the impact, or even set up outside. Use it to create a photo opportunity with the stall and banner and hopefully a councillor or several. Here some of the things you can include on a stall;

- **Leaflets.** You can have hard copies of the [Let Communities Decide leaflet](#) sent to you by contacting [fracking@foe.co.uk](mailto:fracking@foe.co.uk). Frack Free United are running low on stocks of their [permitted development leaflet](#) but have a few left. Email [steve@frackfreeunited.co.uk](mailto:steve@frackfreeunited.co.uk) to get some sent to you.
- **Banners.** See [below](#) for details on this. It is a particularly important element on a stall as, because there isn't so much else going on visually at a stall, you need a way to stand out and attract attention.
- **Posters.** Let Communities Decide posters are available from Frack Free United [adela@frackfreeunited.org.uk](mailto:adela@frackfreeunited.org.uk) or be emailing [sebastian.kelly@350.org](mailto:sebastian.kelly@350.org). Or you could make our own with your own messaging.
- **Petitions.** If you can muster and master the technology, 3/4G tablets at your stall can enable people to complete the online petitions. Otherwise, you could collect signatories for the online petition on paper - but you'll need a dedicated and patient volunteer to input all the details online afterwards! You could also make your own hard copy local petition to give to your MP if she/he is not already on board, to demonstrate strength of local feeling on the issue - and the petition could also be used later as a media story.
- **Consultation Responses.** You can also use tablets to enable people to complete the government consultation via the [Friends of the Earth online consultation response action](#). Otherwise you could also distribute Frack Free United's more details [Guidelines for Consultation Responses](#) to interested people.

- **Spot the difference competition.** Some people have created posters with photographs of a **garden shed and a fracking well** pad side by side, asking people if they can spot the difference as an entertaining, accessible way in to the issue.

## **Sign up!**

Whatever you decide to do, whether it is one of the suggested events above, or something else of your own devising, please [register your event](#) on the Let Communities Decide campaign map. Whether the event or activity is large or small, putting it on the map helps give a sense of what is happening around the country and enables people to get involved in their area.

## **What else to add to your event?**

### **Banners!**

Whether you do a suggested action or one of your own devising, a banner (or several) is a crucial ingredient in the mix. They are attention-grabbing, photogenic, provide a great backdrop to whatever is going on, and convey your message. Keep them simple, clear and bright for best effect. A common technique for creating banners is to hang the banner fabric vertically against a wall, use a projector to project an image onto it, then paint the projected design onto the material.

### **Politicians!**

Do you have a local councillor or several, or an MP who would come along to the event? Their presence would instantly lend an event status and credibility and make it more newsworthy. A photo with your local MP at the event is a local news story in itself - and councillors can bring a similar benefit. They may also be willing to speak at the event (see below).

### **Speakers!**

If you can rig up a PA, an amp, a megaphone or someone with a loud enough voice, having speakers brings focus to the event. If a sympathetic local councillor or two would agree to speak (they should be appalled by the threat to local democracy whatever their views on fracking), or your MP, all the better.

## **Literature!**

Let Communities Decide leaflets on the permitted development issue are available, as are Frack Free United leaflets on the issue. See [above](#) for details. The Let Communities Decide website has [campaign resources](#) to download that may be displayed.

## **Preparation**

### **Site visit**

What kind of space will suit your event? You'll probably want a place where plenty of the public pass, but with enough space to do your thing, for instance.

Think about access, public safety, and any permissions you might need. Different local authorities have different approaches to this, so check your council's website about their policy or speak to a council staff member before you finalise your plans.

If you're doing a stall, some councils will allow you to arrange permission for a stall in advance, occasionally for a small fee – however the location may be restricted. A common policy in city/ town centres is not to allow flyering, so this means in most places you should be able to have a presence that involves encouraging people towards a stall, and allowing them to pick up information if you've had a conversation with them. It's important to check your council's policy, as there can be fines for flyering other than from your stall.

### **Media**

Whatever you decide to do, make sure to get the media to cover it! We want the issue splashed across media around the land during the Week of Action.

The [local media guide for campaigners](#) will tell you all you need to know about the who, what, where, when and how of working with your local media, and getting your event covered.

For the week of action, we will have a template press release prepared, so you will only need to add the details of your event. Once available, it will be on the [resources section](#) of the website.

## Roles/functions

Here are some on-the-day roles you will probably want to think about covering for your event, especially if it is for actions 1. or 2. Don't worry if you can't fill all roles, and remember that often two or more of these roles can sometimes be covered by one person if needs be.

- **“Actors”**: those in ‘costume’ in some way eg as workers, gagged council members, etc etc
- **Film and photography** to record the event
- **Media coordinator/contact** to liaise with media, chase them, handle calls & enquiries, etc
- **Spokesperson**. Someone who is available at the event (and ideally beforehand and afterwards) for media interviews
- **Social media**: do you have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc channels you can put news, pics and vids of your event out on? If you do, get on it!
- **Police/security liaison**: It can be helpful to have someone primed and designated to chat with any police or security who may come along to check out what's happening. Police and security are invariably reassured if there is someone they can talk to, and the liaison person can let them know what's happening, why you're there, how long you plan to stay, etc.
- **Support/welfare**. Who's bringing along sandwiches, tea, extra layers, sun cream, etc?

## Finally...

**All of the guidance in this action guide is intended to support you. Take what is useful, leave the rest, and please don't get daunted by any of it. Whatever you can do will be a fantastic contribution!**

Also check out the:

- [Week of Action introduction video call](#) for more inspiration
- [Resources](#) section of the website

- Let Communities Decide [Facebook Group](#) - and join it!

Please do get in touch. We're here to offer support and answer any question you might have. Do also let us know what events you have planned, and how preparation is going. Email [sebastian.kelly@350.org](mailto:sebastian.kelly@350.org) or visit [letcommunitiesdecide.org](http://letcommunitiesdecide.org)

Go for it everyone and good luck!

[www.letcommunitiesdecide.org](http://www.letcommunitiesdecide.org)