

Position Statement

# Fracking

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WOODLAND  
TRUST

# Fracking



WTML / J Corey

## The Trust's view

- Ancient woodland is irreplaceable and both ancient woods and ancient trees should be strongly protected from the impacts of development through the planning system.
- There are potential impacts on ancient woodland from drilling and the creation of infrastructure to enable fracking (hydraulic fracturing to access shale or oil gas), as well as longer term implications from abandoned wells. These include direct loss of ancient woodland, indirect impacts from noise and light pollution, and leakage of contaminants from abandoned wells near ancient woodland.
- The Trust considers applications relating to fracking in the same way as other planning applications. In fact, any application to extract oil and gas inshore (either conventional or unconventional) could be of interest to The Trust, depending on the location of the well pad and other infrastructure. Shale oil/gas extraction is only part of this.

## The Trust will

- Oppose applications for activity that would impact on ancient woodland
- Not enter into any agreement that would allow exploration for oil and gas extraction on our land, and oppose applications on nearby land that would impact our land, including both ancient and secondary woodland
- Continue to lobby for all ancient woodland to be excluded from the sites to be considered for extraction

# Fracking

## Background

Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable resource, home to more threatened and vulnerable species than any other habitat. It covers only around 2 per cent of the UK. Ancient woodland faces multiple challenges including the direct threat of loss to development, and indirect impacts from development and intensive land use on neighbouring and nearby land.

“Fracking” refers to the process of fracturing shale to access shale gas or oil. It requires a number of associated activities including drilling of wells, and creation of infrastructure to allow transport of water to a site for the process, or transport of contaminated waste water away from the site.

A number of potential impacts from fracking that could affect ancient woodland have been identified: direct loss of ancient woodland for test well pads, or for creation of infrastructure to allow transport of water; noise and light pollution during drilling; contamination of water from accidental spillage; longer term contamination from abandoned wells on nearby or neighbouring land.

Currently, Petroleum Exploration and Development Licences are issued by Government to give companies exclusive rights to explore for onshore oil and gas, including both conventional and “unconventional” sources such as potential fracking operations. Gas and Oil Companies also need planning permission and other licences to actually drill within their licence area, and would need further permissions, if gas is found, to enter into commercial production. Companies currently need permission of all landowners whose property lies over the top of the well (including the lateral part of the well, not just the surface works), if drilling less than 300m down.

The Woodland Trust’s approach is to treat applications for activity related to potential fracking in the same way as other planning applications. We oppose activity that would destroy or damage ancient woodland and also oppose activity that would negatively impact on any of the Woodland Trust’s estate.