

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

19th July 2018

Dear Clive Betts MP,

Planning Guidance on Fracking Inquiry: Correction

I have now had an opportunity to read the final report of the HCLG Committee's inquiry into planning guidance on fracking, published 5 July 2018, to which the Landscape Institute gave evidence. The report makes several vital recommendations in favour of improved planning guidance for fracking, and we are pleased that the conclusions of the report chime with our own.

However, we are disappointed that the report misquotes some of the evidence that we provided, in a way that we believe will mislead people as to our views.

In paragraph 52 of the final report, our evidence is quoted as supporting the statement: "greater weight be given to the Government's support of fracking in certain circumstances". Nowhere in our evidence do we say this, and it is not a position that the Institute supports.

In our evidence, which the report quotes, we write:

"The status, in planning terms, of the extant Government guidance, and the weight it can be given at planning inquiries, is lower than it needs to be."

Our evidence is clear that this refers to existing government guidance pertaining to shale gas (for instance the Minerals chapter of the NPPG, published October 2014). Its "status" – to answer the question of the committee – is low, because it is either informal or out-of-date. Wanting that guidance to be updated, as we do, does not equate to wanting "greater weight [to] be given to Government support of fracking".

The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of 17th May, is recent government guidance which *does* advise that greater weight be given to fracking in planning decisions. However our evidence was submitted on April 23rd, and therefore was clearly not an endorsement of the May WMS, nor indeed of any previous *informal* government statements in favour of fracking.

We do not agree that Local Planning Authorities should give fracking greater credence in decision-making than they currently do, and we certainly do not believe that they should give greater weight to non-material government guidance than to the sustainable development policies in the NPPF. However we *would* like to see planning practice guidance updated, so that it is coherent and useful.

Our evidence has also been misquoted elsewhere, at Paragraph 77. Your committee clerk ensures us that this error will be corrected.

It is disappointing that our views have been so fundamentally misrepresented, and we ask you to accept this letter as a formal clarification.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Bailey CMLI, MRTPI (Retired)

Chair of the Landscape Institute Policy and Communications Committee

Landscape Institute