

NO FRACKING WAY

Why we don't need "fracking" for shale gas in the UK

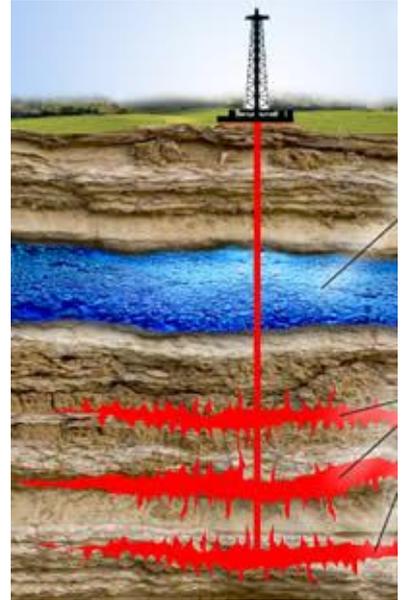
What is "fracking" ?

"Fracking" is short for "hydraulic fracturing" - a technique that has reached full development and become widely used only recently. It allows the extraction of previously untappable natural gas from relatively non-porous shale beds.

It involves drilling deep down and then usually outwards horizontally into the shale beds. The shale bed rock is then fractured by forcing down into it large quantities of water, mixed with sand and chemicals, under high pressure. The sand, or other 'proppant' sticks in micro-fissures, keeping them open and allowing the gas to flow back up the drilled well.

"Fracking" is part of the ever more frantic effort to reach an ever increasing variety of new sources of fossil fuel as the older ones begin to run out or become more expensive.

The yield from a 'fracking' well is much less than that from a conventional well so far more wells are required (expanding out over a given area often in a regular 'grid' pattern) causing far more visual impact and disruption. Added to that huge quantities of water – usually mixed with toxic additives – are required and have to be disposed of after 'flow-back'.



Set fire to your tap water – a trail of environmental disasters...

In the US where 'fracking' has taken off in a big way there have been numerous cases of **contamination of ground water, well blow-outs, and ground and air pollution**. Famously, tap water has contained so much methane it has been possible to set light to it. These numerous incidents have provoked a storm of protest in the US and have even inspired an Oscar-nominated film 'Gasland' by director Josh Fox.

Now fracking is coming to the UK!

It has already started up in the Blackpool area (see photo, right), but oil and gas companies are making applications in an ever increasing number of other areas too, already including South Wales, Kent and the Mendips. The impact of this destructive technology on the fragile environments of our small and densely populated island doesn't bear thinking about. In the Blackpool area fracking activity has been temporarily halted due to **two earthquakes** probably caused by the fracking. Earthquakes are yet another of the damaging impacts of fracking – seen also in the US.



The route to climate catastrophe

So fracking is a **high-impact, environmentally damaging way of scraping the barrel** for every last drop of fossil fuel that we can find. While **this is precisely the time when we should be making every effort to cut out every last drop of fossil fuel** that we can. The global climate is destabilising dangerously due to the heat-trapping greenhouse gases we are spewing into the atmosphere - especially CO₂ from the burning of fossil fuels. If we burn all the fossil fuel reserves that remain then that is a sure recipe for tipping us into a runaway climate catastrophe that will kill literally billions. Yet even as some fossil fuels become harder to find and more expensive to exploit we are investing in yet new “unconventional” fossil fuels like tar sand oil, coal bed methane – and shale gas from fracking. Exploiting these alongside conventional fossil fuels guarantees global suicide twice over.



It has been claimed that because the emissions from gas are less than those from, say, coal then it can act as a ‘bridging fuel’ until we develop more carbon-free sources of energy. But some studies throw doubt on this because of the ‘fugitive methane’ emissions that are generally unaccounted for – but more importantly there is no evidence that shale gas will be used *instead of* any other fossil fuel – it will simply be used *in addition* to them, increasing the total amount of heat-trapping gases we add to the atmosphere.

A dangerous diversion from building a green economy

The clear way out of the climate crisis we face is to develop renewable sources of energy to build a low, ultimately zero, carbon economy as fast as possible. There is no place here for the exploitation of any new fossil fuels and especially those that carry a high intrinsic risk of a variety of damaging environmental impacts, like shale gas. This is critical decision for the UK and for the world – are we going to build the zero carbon economy we need to avert climate catastrophe, as fast as possible – or will we endlessly defer that goal as we exploit every last drop of every new source of fossil fuel we can find, until its too late, and we are facing disasters a hundred times worse than, for instance, the one we are seeing now in Somalia.

The swelling tide of fracking destruction has been stemmed, with bans or moratoriums, in France, New York, New Jersey, Quebec, the Swiss province of Freiburg and most recently South Africa. **We can stop it here, too** – if we come together to forge a united, strong, resistance.



Join the resistance to the fracking invasion!

Write to your MP to support the anti-fracking EDM 2159 (Early Day Motion) sponsored by Caroline Lucas and Michael Meacher. Put pressure on the government to stop fracking in the UK. Find the downloadable template here: <http://t.co/6pANEzN>

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