

Scottish people most sceptical on fracking, survey shows

September 16 2014

If Scotland votes for independence later this week, its Government could face an uphill challenge in persuading the Scottish people that fracking is necessary, research has revealed.

The University of Nottingham Shale Gas Survey has been tracking public perception of [shale gas](#) extraction in the UK since March 2012 and has shown that people living north of the border are the least supportive of fracking.

Professor Sarah O'Hara, who leads the research in the University's School of Geography, said: "The clear move against shale [gas extraction](#) in Scotland is at odds with the rhetoric of pro-independence groups that have suggested that tapping into the region's unconventional energy resources could provide a colossal boost to Scotland's public finances.

"An independent Scottish government will have to work hard to change the mind of the country's voters if it is to deliver on the promises that it has made to the Scottish people."

One of the key debates in the arguments for and against Scottish independence has been around the fiscal stability of an independent Scotland, and the revenues that a Scottish government might expect to get from oil and gas.

On the basis of a 'median' line being drawn between Scottish territorial waters and the rest of the UK, Scotland would have a claim to some 96

per cent of the UK's current offshore oil production and 47 per cent of gas production.

What that would be worth in terms of government revenue is contested and is hugely sensitive to assumptions about future prices and levels of investment. Tax revenue from the North Sea Oil has fluctuated considerably, standing (in real terms) at £6.2bn in 2004-5, £13.9bn in 2008-9, and £8.8bn in 2010-11. What nobody disputes, however, is that future taxation will be tied to shrinking quantities of output. In 1999, the peak production year, the UK produced 2.8m barrels of oil equivalent per day (BOEPD) from the North Sea, in 2013 the figure had declined to 1.43m BOEPD.

In the light of declining offshore output, one suggestion has been that Scotland could look to its onshore reserves of shale gas in order to secure its energy future. The British Geological Survey (BGS) has recently estimated that Scotland's Midland Valley holds around 80 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of shale gas, and it has been calculated that if 10 per cent of this amount were to be recoverable, it would keep Scotland in gas for 46 years at current usage rates.

Professor Mathew Humphrey, in the University's School of Politics and International Relations, said: "So if it exploits its shale gas reserves Scotland could potentially be self-sufficient in gas for decades. This possibility raises a question, however – what do the Scots themselves think of the risks and rewards of exploiting shale?"

The University of Nottingham Shale Gas Survey has shown that support for fracking has declined from 62 per cent of those able to identify shale gas to just under 49 per cent in September 2014, with people living in Scotland being the least supportive of fracking in the UK.

Moreover the number of people saying that fracking should not be

allowed is higher in Scotland than the rest of the UK with the differential between those in favour and those against now being 10 per cent compared to 20 per cent in the UK as a whole. Support amongst men is the main reason for this difference and while 61 per cent of men in the UK believe that extraction of gas from shale should be allowed the figure for Scotland is significantly lower and currently stands at 53.8 per cent.

Support for shale gas extraction also varies considerably amongst Scottish voters with conservatives continuing to be strongly in favour of shale gas extraction with nearly 79 per cent in favour compared to 47.6 per cent and 47.4 per cent for Labour and Liberal democrats respectively. Scottish National Party (SNP) voters are the least in favour with support for shale gas extraction being 36.5 per cent.

The differential between those in favour and those against [shale gas extraction](#) show conservatives at +62 per cent, the Liberal Democrats at +15.7 per cent and Labour at +6.5 per cent. Support amongst SNP voters, however, stands at -17.5 per cent down from +21.4 per cent in September 2013.

Provided by University of Nottingham

Citation: Scottish people most sceptical on fracking, survey shows (2014, September 16) retrieved 20 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2014-09-scottish-people-sceptical-fracking-survey.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.