

# The trouble with fracking

June 15 2015, by David Bradley

---

The UK may be sitting on vast reserves of shale gas accessible with today's technology to the petrochemicals industry only through the controversial process of hydraulic fracturing, better known as "fracking". Unfortunately for the industry and its lobbyists there are strong public opinions on fracking not least because of five major environmental and health concerns about its use:

- Carbon dioxide and methane emissions, particularly the potential for increased fugitive methane emissions during drilling compared with drilling for conventional gas
- The volumes of water and chemicals used in [fracking](#) and their subsequent disposal
- The possible risk of contaminating groundwater with chemicals used in fracking and the release of subterranean materials
- Competing land use requirements in densely populated areas
- The physical effects of fracking in the form of increased seismic activity

There is conflicting research that considers these various risks, but nothing yet addresses the concerns people have to the satisfaction of those worried about the risks. Writing in the journal *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, a team from the UK suggests that the UK government has done nothing to allay public fears it is also biased in its planning guidance towards the development of shale gas reserves. Peter Jones and Daphne Comfort of the Business School, at the University of Gloucestershire, and David Hillier Centre for Police Sciences, University of South Wales, see the

major national economic and energy benefits claimed by those who would frack, but does not seem concerned with the risks, which are concentrated at the local level.

Moreover, as anti-fracking campaigns strengthen, the team suspects that the UK Government may revisit its decision not to treat planning applications for shale gas exploration and development as nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs), which would take the decision to allow fracking out of local authority hands and make it a decision of central government.

Not only is this of grave concern to local people, the development of [shale gas](#) reserves seems to be a significant conflict of interest in the light of the government's purported commitment to "increasing the deployment of renewable energy", which will supposedly help to "make sure the UK has a secure supply of energy, reduce [greenhouse gas emissions](#) to slow down [climate change](#)" and to "stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses".

Wind turbines, tidal surge generators, solar farms and other all have their opponents for ecological, aesthetic and many other reasons too, but the industry of fracking has no claim to sustainability in energy terms nor in regard to it simply adding to our atmospheric carbon burden and forcing climate change, nor can its industrial scale implementation across the country be anything but an anti-aesthetic option.

**More information:** 'The contested future of fracking for shale gas in the UK: risk, reputation and regulation', *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp.377–390.

Provided by Inderscience Publishers

Citation: The trouble with fracking (2015, June 15) retrieved 23 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-fracking.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.