



PRESS RELEASE

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Experts warn that the government's fixation with shale gas could undermine investment in renewables

As the Energy and Climate Minister, Mr Gregory Barker, unveils his new Strategic Framework for "Low Carbon Technology" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, independent experts raise concern that government reliance on shale gas as a bridging technology could damage future investment and transition to low-carbon technologies.⁴

Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP, is to host an event today at the Royal Society of Arts, London, to launch the new Strategic Framework and to promote innovation in the low-carbon technology sector.

Yet, independent experts at the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) remain deeply concerned that apparently ever-increasing resources of shale gas (derived from hydraulic fracturing, commonly termed fracking) will undermine the development of alternative technologies.

With shale gas extraction positioned to improve UK energy security and potentially reduce energy costs, CIWEM warns, in its newly updated [Hydraulic Fracturing Policy Position Statement](#), that the political pressure to exploit a substantial resource of domestic gas could undermine further development of low-carbon technologies, such as carbon capture and storage.

CIWEM's Chief Executive, Dr. Simon Festing, said: *"The central bind for Energy Minister Gregory Barker is that the more the UK seeks to develop shale gas to meet energy security needs, the greater the long-term risks that the government fails in its commitment to increase the use of low-carbon technologies. Outright opposition to fracking is irrational, since its use can reduce carbon emissions in the short term. However, support for shale gas extraction must not come at the expense of low-carbon technologies."*

Gas will have a role to play in space heating in the medium term and it is unlikely that all shale gas would be burned to generate electricity. But given the new figures available from recent revisions to estimates of shale gas resources⁵, if it was to be burned to generate electricity, shale gas would represent nearly 30 per cent of the UK's carbon budget to 2050⁶.

CIWEM's experts warn that the strategy of using gas as a bridging fuel must be managed carefully as it risks locking the UK into fossil fuel infrastructure for a period, after which there would be a need for a dramatic, rather than progressive, reduction and replacement with renewable energy.

Key points from CIWEM's Hydraulic Fracturing Policy Position Statement:

Shale gas is a fossil fuel so it is essential that the resource is considered within the context of the UK's carbon budget.

Shale gas exploitation could reduce the UK's dependency on imported gas; gas is essential in the medium term for space heating as well as electricity generation.

Hydraulic fracturing could result in local environmental impacts, hence strict regulation will be required and environmental mitigation should be implemented where possible.

Baseline monitoring is important prior to implementation of hydraulic fracturing to ensure that environmental impacts can be assessed accurately.

Open dialogue and engagement with stakeholders should be undertaken by the industry.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Scott Edwards, CIWEM Publications and Media Coordinator, on 020 7831 3110, E: scott@ciwem.org.

Notes to Editors

1. The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management (CIWEM) is the leading Chartered Professional Body covering all aspects of water and environmental activity, sustaining the excellence of the professionals who protect, develop and care for our environment. www.ciwem.org.
2. CIWEM's updated Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking) of Shale in the UK Policy Position Statement is available [here](#).
3. Shale Gas and Water, CIWEM's 2014 independent review of shale gas exploration and exploitation in the UK with a particular focus on the implications for the water environment, is available [here](#).
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-use-of-low-carbon-technologies>
5. The energy company Cuadrilla has announced that following detailed analysis of seismic and well data, there is 330 trillion cubic feet of gas in place in its licence area in the north west of England. This is 50 per cent greater than previous estimates. It will take two years to see if the gas is viable commercially.
6. Based on the Tyndall Centre's original calculations that burning just 20% of the gas that Cuadrilla claims to have found in its licence area in Lancashire (1,132 bcm) is 14.5% of the carbon budget to 2050 (20% of the new estimate 9,339 bcm = 1,868 bcm).