

Shale Gas Myth Buster

Myth: #1 We no longer need gas

Fact: Last year 40%¹ of our electricity was provided by gas and over 85%² of the UK population use gas for heating and cooking. We also need gas as to make petrochemicals which are used in everyday items such as plastics, fertilizers, synthetic fibres, cosmetics and medicines.

Myth #2: Using gas is incompatible with our climate change commitments

Fact: Every scenario proposed by the Committee on Climate Change to meet our legally binding carbon reduction commitments includes demand for natural gas. A mix of gas and renewables will enable us to meet our climate targets and the Government continues to invest billions into renewable energy through the Contracts for Difference programme.

Myth #3: Shale gas extraction will industrialise the countryside and our national parks

Fact: There will be no hydraulic fracturing in National Parks. In 2016 we confirmed that shale exploration wells will not be able to be drilled in protected areas. A shale gas site is typically the size of a football pitch. Drilling only takes 4-8 weeks and once the wells are drilled the large equipment is taken away. Wells can be returned to their pre-drilling state in as little as 3 years.

Myth #4: Noise from shale gas sites will disrupt communities

Fact: Noise is carefully managed and regulated by the Local Authority. The planning process considers and regulates noise impacts to local people and authorities can impose restrictions. Shale gas operators will also use noise abatement fencing to further minimise any noise

Myth #5: Extracting shale gas will contaminate the water supply

Fact: The Environment Agency will not permit any activity where there is a risk of contamination of our water supplies. Furthermore, high volume hydraulic fracturing for shale gas is banned at depths of less than 1000m³. This depth is far below drinking water supplies which are typically found up to about 250⁴ metres deep.

Myth #6: Shale gas extraction is incredibly water intensive

Fact: A typical shale well uses less water over a decade than a golf course uses in a month⁵ and a coal-fired power plant uses in 12 hours⁶. Companies will only be allowed to use water for hydraulic fracturing if there is enough supply locally without effecting drinking water supplies or the environment.

Myth #7: Shale gas causes earthquakes

Fact: The risk of an earthquake from shale gas extraction is very low. The Oil and Gas Authority regulates for seismicity and requires operators to stop activity if any seismicity is measured, even if it is lower than tremors caused by a rollercoaster.

Myth #8: Shale gas extraction requires the use of nasty chemicals

Fact: The chemicals that will be used in the UK are non-toxic and won't harm the environment and are similar to those found under a typical kitchen sink. Under EU and UK regulation operators are required to publish all of the chemicals they are going to use on site.

Myth #9: Local communities don't get a say in the decision

Fact: Local communities must be fully involved in planning decisions and any planning application – whether decided by councils or government – will continue to require a full consultation with local people.

Myth #10 Shale gas extraction is harmful to human health

Fact: The UK has world class regulation to ensure that shale exploration can happen safely, Regulators, Operators and Government are working closely together to ensure there is no risk to public health from any shale gas extraction or associated works.

¹ BEIS, Digest of UK Energy Statistics (DUKES) 2017

² Energy Networks Association (ENA)

³ Infrastructure Act 2015 (section 50)

⁴ Environment Agency source

⁵ United Kingdom Onshore Oil and Gas (UKOOG); <http://www.ukoog.org.uk/regulation/water-and-soil>

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