

## **UK GOVERNMENT'S BACKING OF SHALE GAS WOULD RENDER NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITMENTS MEANINGLESS SAYS THE CO-OPERATIVE**

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The Government would almost certainly have to renege on its legally binding climate change commitments if it gives the go-ahead to extensive shale gas production in the UK.

That is the stark conclusion of a report on the climate change and environmental impact of shale gas extraction issued today (23 November) by The Co-operative.

The report, written by researchers at the internationally respected Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, demonstrates that the widespread exploitation of shale gas would force the Government to go back on its commitments to reduce carbon emissions and fundamentally undermine the UK's good international reputation on climate change.

If just 20% of the reserves identified under Lancashire were to be extracted and burnt, this would result in emissions of over 2,000 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, representing around 15% of the Government's greenhouse gas emissions budget through to 2050. With further shale gas finds now being investigated in South Wales, the Mendips, and Dumfries and Galloway, widespread shale gas exploitation has the potential to undermine the UK Government's carefully constructed climate change commitments.

Additionally, up to £32bn of investment would be required for the extraction and conversion to electricity of shale gas; equivalent to 10% of the UK's current gas consumption. This investment could pay for 2,300 large offshore wind turbines – roughly the number required for the UK to hit its renewable energy targets.

The report, which updates a publication released by The Co-operative in January, says that in the absence of a stringent global emissions cap, large-scale extraction of shale gas cannot be reconciled with the climate change commitments enshrined in the Copenhagen Accord (2009).

Following significant increases in estimates for global shale gas reserves, the report's scenarios illustrate how even conservative rates of extraction and combustion equate to over a quarter of the remaining global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions budget for providing a reasonable chance of avoiding two degrees Celsius of warming. Atmospheric levels of CO<sub>2</sub> would be expected to rise by between five and 16 parts per million by volume (ppmv) with a mid-range of 11ppmv.

The report also points out that the UK's regulatory system is not currently fit for adequately controlling the environmental risks, including groundwater contamination, that would occur if full scale extraction involving up to 3,000 wells were to proceed.

Paul Monaghan, Head of Social Goals at The Co-operative, said: "This authoritative report shows that a new dash for gas is incompatible with the UK's carbon reduction targets and that a complete re-appraisal of approach is needed."

"It is shocking how little scrutiny and thoughtful consideration has been demonstrated by the UK Government and its environmental agencies when it comes to shale gas. Not least because, evidence is now emerging which indicates that gas derived from shale may have a significantly greater carbon footprint than previously thought, seriously questioning whether it can play any role in the transition to a low carbon economy. The calls from 'big gas' for the abandonment of renewables targets must be rebuffed, and here is the science to do just that."

Kevin Anderson, Professor of Energy and Climate Change at the Tyndall Centre, University of Manchester, said: "As the Government's Committee on Climate Change make clear, for the UK to meet its binding carbon targets, electricity needs to be decarbonised by 2030 with domestic heating having moved from high carbon gas to low-carbon electricity."

"With so little time to meet these commitments, there is no meaningful emissions allowance available for shale gas. Moreover, pursuing shale gas electricity risks displacing urgently required investments in genuinely low carbon energy supply. Consequently, the Government faces a difficult choice; to lead a new and low-carbon energy revolution or stick with high carbon fossil fuels, forgo its emission targets and relinquish its hard won international reputation on climate change."

The release of this report coincides with a special showing to MPs at Westminster of the Oscar nominated and Emmy award winning film, Gasland, which highlights the implications of shale gas extraction in the United States.

**Notes to Editors**

The full report will be issued shortly, but for more details visit the website: [www.co-operative.coop/shalegasresources](http://www.co-operative.coop/shalegasresources)

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