

Comments on fracking by Professor Ernest Rutter

***The Guardian*, 15 August 2013**

<http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/2013/aug/15/fracking-debate-local-communities-energy>

Ernest Rutter: 'A campaign of misinformation has left many people confused'

There are good scientific reasons to believe there is sufficient shale gas in the UK to have a major impact on fuel supply. Experience in America has shown that extracting this gas can stimulate the economy, lead to falling energy prices, as well as the creation of new and secure jobs.

However, any such development must have the consent of the British people, and, unfortunately, a campaign of misinformation, disinformation and sometimes even outright lies has left many people confused and uncertain.

Fracking itself does not cause earthquakes, but fluid injection into pre-existing fault zones can cause localised slippage that can result in minor tremors, like a truck driving along the street. About 2.5m fracking operations have been carried out worldwide since its first use in the 1940s; hardly any have caused tremors, and many people in the UK have lived for decades with minor but persistent coalmining induced seismic activity. This is not a hazard.

Shale gas development will undoubtedly have an environmental impact. It is a major industrial activity (the fracking itself just a small part of it), but, although it generates far less mess than traditional heavy industry, it is still essential that it be carried out as safely as possible within a strict regulatory framework.

A minority of residents will be inconvenienced during the year or so that drilling, fracking and development activities take place at any locality. It is only right that those communities directly affected should receive appropriate financial compensation from the developers.

But why should the people of the UK get the benefits of home-grown energy without a bit of the inconvenience that would otherwise be visited on people of other countries, from which we would have to buy our gas? Burning gas is environmentally cleaner than burning coal and will actually lead to a decrease in CO2 emissions – as has been shown in the US.

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***Manchester Evening News*, 7 March 2014**

<http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/fracking-professors-ernie-rutter-kevin-6784520>

Ernie Rutter, professor of structural geology at the University of Manchester

'The potential importance of the development of shale gas resources to the UK economy and for a politically secure energy resource have been well rehearsed for those who have listened. The facts of the American experience of falling energy prices coupled with security of supply, job creation and economic stimulation demonstrate this potential.

There are good scientific reasons to believe there may be sufficient shale gas in the UK to make a major economic impact, although it is not certain until exploratory drilling and well testing has been widely undertaken. Unfortunately, a campaign of misleading information and, sometimes, outright untruths have left many people uncertain about what is involved.

The US Environmental Protection Agency has shown beyond doubt that no frack fluids have contaminated groundwater. A more significant concern would be methane leaking from badly set borehole casing, but this would be true for any gas well, whether fracked or not.

Shale gas has remained in place since it was formed hundreds of millions of years ago. The improbability of serious shale gas exploitation problems occurring in densely populated areas is illustrated by the fact that beneath the city of Fort Worth, Texas, there are 1,800 fracked gas wells.

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