



FRACK FREE LANCASHIRE NEWSLETTER October 2022



You can find out more about what fracking will mean for Lancashire at www.frackfreelancashire.com and you can email us at admin@frackfreelancashire.com

FRACKING REARS ITS HEAD AGAIN!

The Prime Minister, Liz Truss, announced in parliament that the moratorium on shale gas would be ended *"where there is local support for it."*



This decision breaks the manifesto commitment made in 2019 that *"We will not support fracking unless the science shows categorically that it can be done safely."*

The UK Government commissioned a report from the British Geological Survey in April 2022 to see if sufficient progress might have been made in the science of predicting and mitigating seismicity induced by fracking to warrant lifting the moratorium.

The report was submitted in early July, and when it was finally released in late September it was clear that nothing significant had changed since the 2.9ML earthquake at Preston New Road in August 2019.

There has been no significant progress made and the top level conclusion of the report is that *"Forecasting the occurrence of large earthquakes and their expected magnitude remains a scientific challenge for the geoscience community."*

It has not been shown *"categorically that it can be done safely"*.

INDUSTRY DESPERATION

The fracking industry found itself torn between delight at the apparent lifting of the moratorium and desperation because they know that the traffic light system (which they designed and agreed to), and their inability to control or mitigate seismicity means their industry has nowhere to go.

As Chris Hopkinson, CEO of Igas told BBC Newsnight *"If the government doesn't change it, it makes it very difficult for us to do anything. ... without these changes there is no future for the shale development in the UK"*.

As a result the industry has been lobbying hard to get the rules around seismicity relaxed.



Energy Secretary, Jacob Rees- Mogg, has indicated that he is considering relaxing the regulations so that fracking can restart.

Rather than resolving the issue, they are simply going to redefine what is considered dangerous to local communities.

THE FACTS ABOUT SEISMICITY

Events at PNR showed us that far from relaxing the TLS, it needs to be strengthened. The purpose of the system is to alert the operator to small seismic events which might be precursors to larger, more damaging ones, so that they can take action to avoid them.

The 2.9MI quake that ended fracking in 2019 occurred 3 days after Cuadrilla last fracked, and because the rules say they only have to pause if the event occurs while they are actually fracking, they could legally have started fracking again on the Monday morning, 2 hours after the quake!

The BGS report that an effective TLS may “require red-light thresholds as much as two magnitude units below the threshold that the scheme is intended to avoid”. Assuming that they are intending to avoid similar damage to property as was experienced in 2019 then the threshold to avoid has to be below 2.9ML. If we said 2.5MI then the red limit should remain exactly where it is at 0.5MI, but it needs to be observed at all times during the fracking operation and not just while pumping.

FORCING FRACKING ON COMMUNITIES

In his written statement on fracking Mr Rees Mogg stated “*tolerating a higher degree of risk and disturbance appears to us to be in the national interest.*”

The message here is clear. This Government is not going to pay attention to local opposition at the same time as they contemplate shredding the protections in place for local communities

LOCAL OPPOSITION AT AN ALL TIME HIGH

Fylde MP, Mark Menzies led the charge with a spirited rebuttal of Mr Rees-Mogg’s plans in the Emergency Debate in the Commons. He left us in no doubt that Lancashire is simply not suitable for fracking

Subsequently a local Conservative Councillor ran a poll on a local Facebook page. Over 1600 locals voted Yes or No to Fracking. The results were astounding! 87% of respondents voted against fracking with just 13% supporting it.



1,681 votes 92 comments

So 9 out of 10 locals who voted are against having fracking imposed on us by central Government!

Fracking is hugely unpopular here in Lancashire since the immediate impacts of induced earthquakes became so suddenly apparent in August 2019.

It’s important to note that the earthquake risk isn’t all above ground. In 2011 the 2.3 MI Preese Hall quake deformed the well casing that protects the aquifer from contamination. With thousands of wells in prospect this is a risk that has to be taken seriously.

But it’s not all about earthquakes!

OTHER CONCERNS ABOUT FRACKING

Fracking is a highly contentious industry. Valid concerns have been expressed regarding community impacts (especially traffic on country roads), water usage, local environmental impacts (including noise and light pollution), health impacts, disposal of waste water which is sometimes radioactive, and the wider impacts on global heating from methane which has a much greater impact on climate change than CO₂.

INDUSTRIALISING THE COUNTRYSIDE

If the Government does ride roughshod over local opposition, we can expect the industry to start to ramp up. What does this mean for Lancashire?

Well, if Cuadrilla’s claims are to be believed they would drill at least 4,000 wells on 100 well pads over the next 15 years or so, creating “the largest gas field in Western Europe”. This would mean that in Cuadrilla’s licence area it would be hard to be more than a mile from a fracking pad at any time.

Any employment opportunities from the fracking industry would be wiped out by losses of jobs in tourism and agriculture.

COMPENSATION IS NOT CONSENT



The evasive Mr Rees-Mogg appears to be relying on the operators providing cash to local communities to buy their consent. This has been tried before, but even after Cuadrilla paid money to locals at PNR, we can see that 9 out of 10 locals still don’t want this invasive industry to be allowed to take hold here.

Finally, regardless of whether you are pro or anti shale gas, it would be madness to allow fracking to go ahead in Lancashire without community support and adequate regulation and enforcement.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?



After you have read this please forward it to a friend.

You can also visit

<https://www.frackfreelancashire.com/actions-to-take/> where you will find suggestions for what you can do.