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We cannot afford to miss out on shale gas

Safe fracking will cut energy bills and create wealth without ruining precious countryside, writes David Cameron



Britain has led the way in technological endeavour: fracking is part of this tradition Photo: AP

By **David Cameron**

10:04PM BST 11 Aug 2013

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Fracking has become a national debate in Britain – and it’s one that I’m determined to win. If we don’t back this technology, we will miss a massive opportunity to help families with their bills and make our country more competitive. Without it, we could lose ground in the tough global race.

As with any advance in technology, fracking – drilling for so-called “unconventional” gas – has rightly drawn scrutiny. But a lot of myths have also sprung up. So today I want to set out why I support it – and deal with the worst of the myths at the same time.

First, fracking has real potential to drive energy bills down. Labour’s mismanagement of the economy means that many people are struggling with the cost of living today. Where we can act to relieve the pressure, we must. It’s simple – gas and electric bills can go down when our home-grown energy supply goes up. We’re not turning our back on low carbon energy, but these sources aren’t enough. We need a mix. Latest estimates suggest that there’s about 1,300 trillion cubic feet of shale gas lying underneath Britain at the moment – and that study only covers 11 counties. To put that in context, even if we extract just a tenth of that

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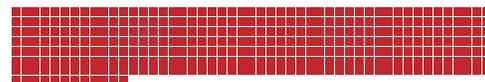
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figure, that is still the equivalent of 51 years' gas supply.

This reservoir of untapped energy will help people across the country who work hard and want to get on: not just families but businesses, too, who are really struggling with the high costs of energy. Just look at the United States: they've got more than 10,000 fracking wells opening up each year and their gas prices are three-and-a-half times lower than here. Even if we only see a fraction of the impact shale gas has had in America, we can expect to see lower energy prices in this country.

Secondly, fracking will create jobs in Britain. In fact, one recent study predicted that 74,000 posts could be supported by a thriving shale-gas industry in this country. It's not just those involved in the drilling. Just as with North Sea oil and gas, there would be a whole supply chain of new businesses, more investment and fresh expertise.

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Thirdly, fracking will bring money to local neighbourhoods. Companies have agreed to pay £100,000 to every community situated near an exploratory well where they're looking to see if shale gas exists. If gas is then extracted, 1 per cent of the revenue – perhaps as much as £10 million – will go straight back to residents who live nearby. This is money that could be used for a variety of purposes – from reductions in council-tax bills to investment in neighbourhood schools. It's important that local people share in the wealth generated by fracking.

The benefits are clear. But it's also crucial to put to bed the myths. It has been suggested in recent weeks that we want fracking to be confined to certain parts of Britain. This is wrong. I want all parts of our nation to share in the benefits: north or south, Conservative or Labour. We are all in this together.

If neighbourhoods can see the benefits – and are reassured about its effects on the environment – then I don't see why fracking shouldn't receive real public support. Local people will not be cut out and ignored. We are issuing very firm guidance: firms looking to frack should make people aware of their plans well before they apply for a permit. Dialogue is important and if residents express specific concerns, then companies should take them on board. From my experience as a local MP, people tend not to oppose developments for the sake of it. But what they do object to is the idea that their neighbourhood should change without any say. We want people to get behind fracking, and a transparent planning process is an important ingredient.

Equally, we must make the case that fracking is safe. International evidence shows there is no reason why the process should cause contamination of water supplies or other environmental damage, if properly regulated. And the regulatory system in this country is one of the most stringent in the world. If any shale gas well were to pose a risk of pollution, then we have all the powers we need to close it down.

When all is said and done, though, one myth still remains – that fracking damages our countryside. I just don't agree with this. Our countryside is one of the most precious things we have in Britain and I am proud to



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represent a rural constituency. I would never sanction something that might ruin our landscapes and scenery. Shale gas pads are relatively small – about the size of a cricket pitch. But more than that, similar types of drilling have been taking place for decades in this country without any real protest. The South Downs National Park remains one of the most beautiful parts of Britain, yet it has been home to conventional oil and gas drilling since the Eighties. The huge benefits of shale gas outweigh any very minor change to the landscape.

So my message to the country is clear – we cannot afford to miss out on fracking. For centuries, Britain has led the way in technological endeavour: an industrial revolution ahead of its time, many of the most vital scientific discoveries known to mankind, and a spirit of enterprise and innovation that has served us well down the decades. Fracking is part of this tradition, so let's seize it.

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bullshitter
Yesterday 09:06 PM

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I am neutral on fracking but become highly suspicious once Cameron gets personally involved like this.



kevinsmithj
Yesterday 07:22 PM

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WHY WE NEED SHALE AND FRACKING BY DAVID CAMERON
=====

Yo.

We all have sacrifices to make, if we are to meet the stated aim of my Party, to take the overall population level of the UK to the 100 million mark. This would be a major achievement for UK PLC and give our politicians important jobs in Europe. But to sustain a population of 100 million and beyond, we need resources. Recently, shale has been shown to offer us an opportunity as seen in recent years in the USA.

However, we would not simply use increased supplies of oil to lower energy prices for consumers. We would intelligently use the supply increase to pay the extra costs of getting the population metric up via our immigration initiative and incentives for people across the world to take up residence here, which I'm sure you'll all welcome as much as I do.

Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP



Plimpton
Yesterday 07:09 PM

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Just catching up on things here. I see that England fracked the Aussies in The Ashes.

Well done boys.

Never a damn Aussie on the rig when you need one.



vielnick
Yesterday 06:45 PM

Recommended by 1 person

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I still miss the binding commitment of the drilling companies, that they will never use poisonous or carcinogenic compounds for fracking, which are forbidden to contaminate drinking water even with the lowest concentrations.



g1lgam3sh
Yesterday 07:10 PM

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There are generally only a handful of chemicals in fracking fluid.

In the example of Cuadrilla Resources in the UK, they are only using three, two of which only have to be revealed as they already exist in the public water supply of local supplier United Utilities.

The third, polyacrylamide is widely used in water treatment and agriculture. In this case, polyacrylamide is used at a concentration of less than 0.25%, whereas the same "chemical" is used



Plimpton
Yesterday 07:03 PM

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Do you feel the same about all the things in your house?

Fenbeagle

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Yesterday 07:09 PM

I bet he's never even checked what's in anything he uses in his house.

people

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Report



g1lgam3sh

Yesterday 07:12 PM

This lot are even more hysterical nocturnal micturators than the warmistas in their heyday.

At least they had the semblance of science about them.

Recommended by 1 person

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richardsmith

Yesterday 06:44 PM

Enjoy your holiday at Daymar Bay and Rock Mr Cameron. I was there last week. It is still pristine.

It and many other areas won't be for much longer if you have your way.

The argument is very simple. Granted fracking brings quick easy gains. Granted windmills make the countryside look like teletubby land and they currently generate not a great deal. However when you've finished with them you simply dig them up...and er that's it. No pollution...nothing...plus their efficiency is increasing all the time.

Now onto fracking....well you just know what i'm going to say so why bother?

In your hearts you know its the truth. You just think its hippy and most windfarm engineers are just left wing drug dealers on the side.

In other words...grow up!

Recommended by 2 people

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Report



ColdfingerUK

Yesterday 08:58 PM

"Enjoy your holiday at Daymar Bay and Rock Mr Cameron. I was there last week. It is still pristine."

You didn't get off the beach to explore the abandoned Antimony and Lead mines then?

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anthony wilson

Yesterday 06:33 PM

Fracking will reduce energy prices,it did not take very long for The Prime Minister David Cameron to once again lie,then one lie after another.

Fracking is replacing the foundation of the very ground we stand on,with sand.

Only a fool builds a future on sand.

Cameron is an Ugly fool(filthy commie)

Recommend

Report



Plimpton

Yesterday 07:07 PM

Holy crap!

That's started my day off with a good laugh.

Just got out of bed to find that my rig is merrily drilling at over 9000ft, no earthquakes, polluted aquifers or released demons of the underworld yet, and I read that.

I think I'll use that at our morning meeting if I may Anthony. The boys like a good laugh.

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Cheers, and keep 'em coming.



g1lgam3sh
Yesterday 06:45 PM

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"Fracking is replacing the foundation of the very ground we stand on,with sand."

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I almost cannot believe I just read that, surely it must be satire?



Fenbeagle
Yesterday 06:55 PM

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It's alternative thinking.

[Report](#)



Plimpton
Yesterday 07:07 PM

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non thinking perhaps?

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Fenbeagle
Yesterday 07:09 PM

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Yes....It's the alternative.

[Report](#)



lacoste
Yesterday 05:15 PM

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" . . . their gas prices are three-and-a-half times lower than here."

Is that Etonian or Ozzie 'English'?

Please translate.



David Camerpong
Yesterday 06:03 PM

Recommended by 1 person

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Dreadful ain't it.

[Report](#)



cormacleeach
Yesterday 04:40 PM

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So your argument is: 1 sucessful frack in Germany=> no problem to frack up and down UK to line the pockets of the energy sector and the conservative political coffers.

[Report](#)

Fracking is a fundamentally chaotic activity using toxic chemicals you wouldn't want your family imbibing on a regular basis. Dick Cheney repealed the clean water act in the US in light of this fact. People should watch the award winning movie Gasland by Josh Fox.

The heavy onus of proof is not on the Nays but on those PRO fracking. The CEO of any energy company that wants to frack should be contractually required to drink 1 litre of water from any tap of Greenpeace's choosing in a fracking area over the next 5 years.

In short the assymetry of risk and reward from fracking are staggering and a democracy should not stand for it.

I suspect these comment boards are heavily populated with PR agents of Big Oil!



Vernon Stradling
Yesterday 05:51 PM

I'd be very happy to drink the tap water from any fracking area in the UK. I'm not sure what noxious substance you think is going to be in it but I have every confidence in the treatment processes applied to the mains water supply.

In fact your suspicions are totally misplaced. The graphic scenes of methane emerging from taps in the US were filmed at properties that were not on the mains supply but obtained their water from their own boreholes. See what can happen with unregulated drilling! Naturally occurring methane is found in water from shallow boreholes in many areas of the world - it has nothing to do with fracking.

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Rifleman1853
Yesterday 05:18 PM

No, Cormac - my argument is that the German experience proves that fracking HAS BEEN done, and can be done, safely.

When and where did I say that I was in favour of fracking to "line the pockets of the energy sector and the conservative political coffers"?

If you want to argue with anything I've said, feel free - **but DON'T put words into my mouth and then slag me off as though I've said them.**

Earlier on, you asked for some factual evidence that fracking could be done safely. So I took you at your word and gave a link to verifiable evidence which is in the public domain - which, come to that, you could have found for yourself if you had taken the trouble to look.

And how did you respond?

By accusing me of being a bloody hired shill!

I should have known better than to waste my time on you. You eco-fascists are all of a lump. None of you would know a scientific proof if it bit you in the arse.

Recommended by 5 people

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vielnick
Yesterday 06:07 PM

.Rifleman: You quote a somewhat shiftily witness, who has to experience disciplinary proceedings. Here a google translation of the affair

A senior official in the State Mining Authority is in trouble because of a dubious side jobs. The President of the State Mining Office LBEG, Ralf Pospich has a disciplinary action against the head of department initiated because he had his problematic secondary activity not displayed: The Chief Mountain Director Klaus Söntgerath is for information this newspaper since 2009, working as an officer of a company in North Rhine-Westphalia, the products markets for the mining industry. These are some of the so-called fracking used.

Thus Mr. Söntgerath is a lobbyist for the fracking industry who has gained a job also in the State Mining authority and wanted to hide his double face (and double earnings)

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g1lgam3sh
Yesterday 05:23 PM

He did exactly the same to me.

Completely ignored the evidence, again all available in the public domain, and just redoubled his fantasies.

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g1lgam3sh

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Yesterday 05:11 PM

Unfortunately for your fantasies, reality says no.

There are generally only a handful of chemicals in fracking fluid.

In the example of Cuadrilla Resources in the UK, they are only using three, two of which only have to be revealed as they already exist in the public water supply of local supplier United Utilities.

The third, polyacrylamide is widely used in water treatment and agriculture.

In this case, polyacrylamide is used at a concentration of less than 0.25%, whereas the same "chemical" is used at a 2.5% solution in disposable contact lenses among other uses.

people

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Mick J
Yesterday 05:38 PM

Recommended by 1 person

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Report

With so many posts about frac additives, curiosity came my way and I wondered what additives might be added to tap water by the water companies. A search returned such an enquiry already made to Thames Water. They refused to reveal the chemicals that they add.

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com...>

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