

Fracking

DiPs at *The Blue Mugge* pub, Mon 1 Feb 2016

Notes here mainly from the BBC's summary of issues on web.

1. **'Fracking** is the process of drilling down into the earth before a high-pressure water mixture is directed at the rock to release the gas inside. Water, sand and chemicals are injected into the rock at high pressure which allows the gas to flow out to the head of the well.

The process can be carried out vertically or, more commonly, by drilling horizontally to the rock layer and can create new pathways to release gas or can be used to extend existing channels. The term fracking refers to how the rock is fractured apart by the high pressure mixture.

OK with this definition?

2. Going round, those who wish offer a very brief summary of their position on fracking (no more than one minute at most...).
3. Based on these summaries, and points below, our discussion will be on the big issues:

Arguments for:

The government believes shale gas has the potential to provide the UK with greater energy security, growth and jobs. Prime Minister **David Cameron has repeatedly spoken** of his support for fracking, saying it could support tens of thousands of UK jobs and reduce bills. "I want us to get on board this change that is doing so much good and bringing so much benefit to North America. I want us to benefit from it here as well," he has previously said.

What about National Parks?

In January, MPs overwhelmingly rejected an outright ban on fracking but ministers did pledge an "outright ban" on fracking in national parks. However, in December **MPs voted to allow fracking** at 1,200m below national parks, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and World Heritage Sites. Critics, including Labour and Greenpeace, accused the government of a U-turn.

Add to these, from summaries as above...

Arguments against:

Fracking uses huge amounts of water, which must be transported to the fracking site, at significant environmental cost. Environmentalists say potentially carcinogenic chemicals used may escape and contaminate groundwater around the fracking site. The industry suggests pollution incidents are the results of bad practice, rather than an inherently risky technique. There are also worries that the fracking process can cause small earth tremors.

Campaigners say that fracking is simply distracting energy firms and governments from investing in renewable sources of energy, and encouraging continued reliance on fossil fuels. "Shale gas is not the solution to the UK's energy challenges," said Friends of the Earth energy campaigner Tony Bosworth. "We need a 21st century energy revolution based on efficiency and renewables, not more fossil fuels that will add to climate change."

Following the Paris climate change deal, Friends of the Earth chief executive Craig Bennett said Mr Cameron must "end Britain's scandalous support for fossil fuels, including fracking".

Add to these, from summaries above....

4. Objectively, who will win?

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