

Benchmark Review: Update

Mike Bradshaw

Co-I Challenge 1

Professor of Global Energy

Warwick Business School

“ A review of the social, political and economic dimensions of the SGL in the UK will be conducted by the social scientists in the Interdisciplinary Research Team (IRT) together with the project teams in Challenge 5. The work will be split into component parts: public perceptions and understanding; social licence and community engagement; potential economic impacts; energy security; climate change; governance; and regulation.”

Work Plan

Published

Shale Gas and UK Energy Security, Nicholas Solman and Michael Bradshaw, Warwick.

The Shale Gas Legal Landscape, Joanne Hawkins, Leeds.

Shale Gas and the UK's Low Carbon Transition, Laurence Stamford, Manchester.

A Brief History of the UK's Political Debate over Shale Gas, 2009-2019, Laurence Williams, et al. Sussex.

In Progress

Shale Gas Governance: devolution and localism, Matthew Cotton, York.

Public Perceptions of Shale Gas Exploration in the UK: A Summary of Research (2012-20), Stacia Ryder Patrick Devine-Wright, Exeter and Darrick Evensen, Edinburgh.

Anti-'fracking' Activism and Local Democracy, Damian Short and Paul Stretesky, Northumbria, Anna Szolucha, UCL.

Brexit, Net-Zero and the Future Role of Gas in the UK energy system, Nicholas Solman, Warwick, Grant Wilson, Birmingham and Michael Bradshaw, Warwick

Synthesis Report: The UK's Shale Gas Trilemma, Michael Bradshaw, Warwick

Home

About

News

Events

Publications

Open Call

Benchmark Reports

UK Energy Security
March 2020



Nicholas Solman
Michael Bradshaw

Legal Landscape
June 2020



Joanne Hawkins

Low Carbon Transition
June 2020



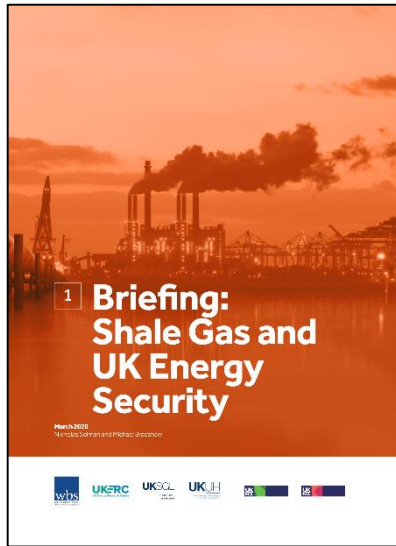
Laurence Stamford

Political Debate
July 2020



Laurence Williams
Abigail Martin
Benjamin K. Sovacool





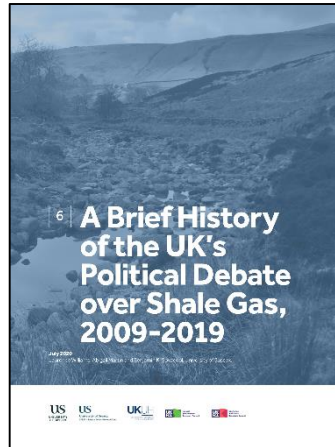
- A UK shale gas industry is unlikely to do more than partially compensate for the decline of domestic offshore production, although exact resource estimates remain uncertain due to the lack of exploratory drilling.
- Given the current circumstances surrounding the industry, commercial shale gas production in the UK is far from a certainty.
- The absence of a domestic shale gas industry will lead to a higher level of imports along with an increased balance of payments deficit, in addition to a higher lifecycle carbon footprint and the offshoring of emissions.
- This is all within the context of a UK energy system that is currently resilient but is entering a period of uncertainty brought about by the need to achieve net zero by 2050 at the latest; and, navigate a new geopolitical path as a result of exiting the European Union.



- There is a problematic tension in the planning context between previous national policy support for shale gas and the aims of the Localism Act 2011.
- Beyond planning, a broad range of well-established regulatory controls are potentially applicable to shale gas developments. Regulatory changes predominantly reflect previous government support for shale gas developments but also reveal responsiveness to NGO and local community concerns.
- A number of regulatory areas require further attention (e.g. role of environmental impact assessments, industrial emission permit controls, remediation of land).
- Where legal challenges are brought against regulatory decisions, unless there is a procedural failure, the courts are reluctant to interfere in specialised decisions by expert bodies.
- With Brexit posing a significant threat of regression to general environmental standards in England, and the overarching regulatory framework within which shale gas developments take place, ongoing review of the regulation is particularly important.



“... shale gas is thought to have a lower carbon footprint than some other fossil fuels (including coal and LNG). However, the need for extremely rapid decarbonisation leaves a relatively short and narrow window for its deployment without carbon capture if we are to meet our commitments to limit global warming to +1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. With carbon capture, it may have a major role in hydrogen production, but at consumption levels lower than today.”



- Initial government responses to questions concerning shale gas and its regulation failed to address concerns and created suspicion and ambiguity.
- The growing difference in wholesale gas prices between the US and Europe, and the 'competitiveness anxiety' this induced was the key reason for growing shale gas support amongst legislators.
- Government support was cemented in the period 2013-2014 by concerns over... energy bills...and potentially volatile international gas markets.
- Place-and class- based identity was mobilised by advocates and objectors alike in ways that arguably foreshadowed the deep divides that dominated British politics in the second half of this time period.
- Conditionally supportive Conservative MPs with a constituency interest were active and influential and increased in number over time. The government failed to satisfy many of them and ultimately lost their conditional support.
- Attempts to speed up regulatory and planning processes were always politically challenging and were arguably politically impossible after 2017. Many Conservative MPs saw such efforts as contradicting earlier commitments to robust regulation and localism.
- The government failed to find a clear way to articulate whether and why the 'unburnable carbon' and 'bridging fuel' positions were reconcilable.

Q&A (Time Permitting)