

Energy and Industrial Strategy: Fracking: Methane

Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health and Social Care Committee, Chair, Liaison Committee (Commons)

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with reference to the Implementation Unit Report on Shale Gas, what estimate the Government has made of the amount of unintended methane emissions at the projected (a) 17 sites by 2020, (b) 30 to 35 sites by 2022 and (c) 155 sites by 2025.

Claire Perry The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Minister of State (Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) (Energy and Clean Growth)

Both the 2013 report, 'Potential Greenhouse Gas Emissions Associated with Shale Gas Extraction and Use'[1] (Mackay/Stone) and the Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) 2016 report 'Onshore Petroleum: The compatibility of UK onshore petroleum with meeting the UK's carbon budgets'[2] provided analysis on the potential implications of greenhouse gas emissions from extracting shale gas in the UK.

The Mackay/Stone report concluded that the carbon footprint of UK shale gas would likely be much less than coal and comparable to imported Liquefied Natural Gas.

The CCC report concluded that shale gas production is compatible with carbon budgets if three conditions are met:

Methane emissions from shale gas production minimised and monitored.

Gas consumption remains within carbon budget limits

Any additional shale gas emissions offset by reductions elsewhere in order to meet carbon budgets

We believe that our robust regulatory regime and determination to meet our carbon budgets mean those tests can and will be met.

The Government is grant funding an environmental monitoring programme led by the British Geological Survey in the Fylde (Lancashire) and Kirby Misperton (North Yorkshire), where applications for shale gas wells have been made. This programme includes the measurement of methane emissions, and would continue after the start of shale gas extraction. The evidence gathered from this programme will inform our future estimates of unintended methane emissions from potential shale gas extraction.

During any shale gas operations the operator will be required to undertake environmental monitoring, including emissions monitoring, to demonstrate compliance with their environmental permits.

Clauses in the Infrastructure Act make it clear that any hydraulic fracturing activity cannot take place unless appropriate arrangements have been made for monitoring emissions of methane into the air. Operators will also be required to publish the results of their methane emissions reporting.

[1]

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/237330/MacKay_Stone_shale_study_report_09092013.pdf

[2]

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/committee-on-climate-change-report-and-government-response-on-the-compatibility-of-uk-onshore-petroleum-with-meeting-the-uks-carbon-budgets>