



The Global Warming Policy Forum

55 Tufton Street Westminster London SW1P 3QL
020 7340 6066 www.thegwpf.com

Written evidence submitted by the Global Warming Policy Forum

The Global Warming Policy Forum is a London-based think tank which conducts activities which do not fall squarely within the Global Warming Policy Foundation's remit as an educational charity. It is widely regarded as one of the world's leading critical think tanks on climate policy issues.

Successive UK governments have burdened British households and industry with unilateral and hugely expensive climate and green energy targets. As a direct result, energy prices and fuel poverty are rising, making households poorer and the UK economy less competitive. The GWPF is campaigning for cost-effective alternatives that will help to make Britain more resilient and more competitive.

Executive Summary

The length of time it has been taking for shale gas extraction to get planning approval demonstrates that the system is utterly failing. An approach is needed that can bring about swift but considered planning decisions, and that also provides the necessary reassurances for local communities that the environment is protected and disruption minimised.

- As a result of the Shale Revolution, the United States has been forging ahead in delivering cheaper energy for consumers. Other countries, such as Argentina, China and Saudi Arabia are hot on their heels. In the meantime, Britain has been sitting on the side lines watching a once-in-a-generation opportunity go to waste. The failure means lost jobs, lost growth and missed opportunities for many people right across the country. That there should have been a shortage of gas supplies this winter is all the more shocking in an era of global natural gas abundance, and points to the need to develop domestic gas resources, and cheaper energy for households and businesses alike.
- Despite the delays, with the necessary political will the Government can yet facilitate a thriving shale gas sectorⁱ. Just 400 sites over the next 20 years have the potential to deliver over 60,000 jobs and £33bn of investment.

Director: Dr Benny Peiser

Board of Directors: The Rt Hon Lord Lawson (Chairman), Edward Atkin CBE, Terence Mordaunt, Neil Record

Registered in England, No. 09135232.

- Shale gas extraction is required to replace depleted reserves from the North Sea, and to ensure we have a more secure gas supply. At present, we are at risk of becoming increasingly reliant on Russia for our gas supplies during periods of high demand, and this could have disturbing political consequences. Russia's recent destructive and destabilising actions show that it is not an appropriate partner to rely upon in this way. National Grid have warned that Britain may become reliant on imports for over 90% of our gas supplies by 2040. In contrast, they say that if the UK develops its shale resources, that figure would be only 30%.
- A thriving industry will also bring jobs and growth to the North of England, where they are needed most.

Q. Is there a need to update and improve the guidance available?

1. The Conservative manifesto promised to change the law to class 'non-fracking drilling' as permitted development, and the Government now has a responsibility to deliver upon this objective. This would reduce unnecessary delays and remove opportunities for disruptive campaigning organisations to frustrate legitimate economic activity. Activists have been successful at delaying even preliminary stages of onshore oil and gas exploration, and it is hard to see how these activities can be economic if these delays continue. At the present moment, permitted development includes drilling boreholes for groundwater monitoring and seismic monitoring, so it is only a small step to include 'non-fracking drilling'.
2. Councils should be told by the Government to stick to the statutory timelines. These guidelines are deliberately flaunted by local councils, under local political pressure. But these delays mean unnecessary anxiety for local residents and shale developers alike. The Secretary of State needs to be more vocal about intervening when councils take too long, and if necessary, should strengthen the statutory timelines to ensure they are enforced properly. Campaigners are employing very expensive planning specialists and lawyers who time objections and appeals to make the process as long as possible. For every day that is wasted, the industry is paying a high price. There needs to be consequences for councils who conspicuously fail to meet statutory guidelines.

Q. Is there a need for a comprehensive document incorporating existing and updated guidance?

3. Every effort should be made to provide clear guidance to councils so they know exactly how to proceed with applications. A document to incorporate all the relevant guidance would be an effective way of achieving this objective. By gaining a better understanding of the official guidance, councils will be better able to assess applications and justify their actions in the face of intimidation from activists.
4. The Government needs to ensure better co-ordination between the various regulators and the relevant local authorities, and much clearer lines of communication. At present,

Director: Dr Benny Peiser

Board of Directors: The Rt Hon Lord Lawson (Chairman), Edward Atkin CBE, Terence Mordaunt, Neil Record

Registered in England, No. 09135232.

members of the public are sometimes unable to ascertain the precise status of applications and this can create confusion. Britain has a rigorous regulatory regime and the findings of regulators need to be communicated quickly and clearly to members of the public. This will make the process more transparent and lead to greater public confidence in the process.

Q. *Should applications for fracking be dealt with as national infrastructure under the 2008 Planning Act?*

5. Fylde Council in Lancashire have suggested that this may be a sensible route to take, given “the complexity of the matters that must be taken into account in the determination of a planning application for the extraction of unconventional hydrocarbons and their potential significance in maintaining the UK energy supply.” This reflects concerns that councils are not adequately equipped to deal with applications – and is a further justification for improved and clearer planning guidance.
6. The priority always needs to be the timely assessment of planning applications. If referring applications to the Secretary of State could slow down this process then it should be avoided. Nonetheless, if new applications can be assessed more quickly by considering them as national infrastructure, then this option has to be considered.

ⁱ GWPF Note 12: *UK Shale Developments*.

<https://www.thegwpf.com/content/uploads/2017/07/Shaleupdate.pdf>