

Shale Gas Moratorium – Position Statement

The Co-operative supports an immediate moratorium on the extraction of natural gas from the UK's shale formations until all of the associated risks are fully assessed and addressed.

Shale gas extraction may pose significant risks to environmental and human health, including:

- the release, globally, of significant quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere – even a mid-range extraction scenario could see carbon dioxide levels rise globally by some 11 parts per million by 2050, further reducing any slim possibility of maintaining global temperature changes at or below 2°C and thereby increase the risk of entering a period of 'dangerous climate change';
- potential groundwater contamination as a result of well failure associated with chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing process together with the mobilisation of heavy metals and hydrocarbons;
- significant risk that the development of shale gas will both delay the introduction of renewable energy alternatives and frustrate the achievement of the UK's renewable energy and longer-term carbon reduction targets.

A precautionary approach to development of shale gas in the UK is the only responsible action until a sufficient evidence base assessing all risks is developed, and all necessary measures to address those risks are taken.

We call on the UK Government to follow the example of France, Bulgaria and New York State and impose an immediate moratorium on the extraction of natural gas from the UK's shale formations. At the same time, the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures should be prioritised.