

## FALL IN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR FRACKING:

The government are failing to win public support for Fracking, with surveys hinting at a sharp decline in public support despite efforts to create a market for Shale Gas.

YouGov and the University of Nottingham have studied public reactions to Fracking extensively since early 2012. The results of their latest survey, involving over 6,000 people, suggested that little more than one in ten people now support the technique. If its previous studies are to be believed, support for Fracking reached a high of nearly 40% in July 2013.

More correctly known as hydraulic fracturing, 'Fracking' involves pumping a mixture of chemicals and sand into rock fractures so as to extract gas and oil. The technique dates back to the 1940's. In the UK, areas such as Nottingham, Derbyshire and parts of Leicestershire have long been known to have excellent potential for the extraction of shale gas.

In spite of this, 'fracking' has been suspended in the UK since 2011, when drilling in Blackpool was linked to minor earthquakes. Earlier this year, two planning applications, submitted by Cuadrilla, were also rejected by Lancashire County Council amidst vocal opposition, with the decision issued on the grounds that operations could cause auditory and visual pollution in a rural landscape. Opponents of Fracking also frequently contend that drilling has the potential to pollute drinking water.

Nonetheless, in recent years the government has appeared keen to change public perceptions; reducing the subsidies available for wind and solar energy whilst insisting that Fracking could be key to making the UK energy self-sufficient. Companies like Cuadrilla, GDF Suez and Ineos have recently been granted over 1000 miles of land to explore for potential fracking, whilst another 5000 square miles will be subject to consultation, given their proximity to protected areas.

Yet falling support has also been reported in research conducted by the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), who interviewed over 2000 households in July and found a support rate of approximately 21%, 6% lower than in February last year. The DECC Public Attitudes Tracker seemed to suggest a public preference for wind and solar, finding that 75% of the public supported sources of renewable energy.

Although these results suggest they are facing an uphill struggle, DECC have made a clear commitment to Fracking; they have previously argued that it could contribute billions to the UK economy. As such, it would be surprising to see them give up their battle to convince the public right now.



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*For more information, please contact Edmund Robb on 07930 397531, or by email on: [er@prospectlaw.co.uk](mailto:er@prospectlaw.co.uk).*

**Prospect Law Ltd**  
23 Berkeley Square, London W1J 6HE  
T +44 (0)20 7947 5354

Regus House, Pegasus Business Park, Castle  
Donington, Derbyshire DE74 2TZ  
T +44 (0)1332 818 785

F +44 (0)20 7665 6650  
E [info@prospectlaw.co.uk](mailto:info@prospectlaw.co.uk)  
[www.prospectlaw.co.uk](http://www.prospectlaw.co.uk)