

A STEP CLOSER TO FRACKING?

Britain has moved a step closer to 'Fracking' with the news that a decision to block the extraction of Shale Gas in South Lancashire could now be overturned by the Secretary of State.

Although a local planning inspector at Lancashire County Council will still hear the Energy firm's appeal in February as per the usual course in planning appeals, they will now only have the power to compile a report and forward suggestions. A final decision will instead lie in the hands of Greg Clark, the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government, who has chosen to depart from the usual process because the prospect of extracting Shale Gas is a matter of "*major importance having more than local significance*".

This follows Mr Clark's September decision to afford himself a final say over planning appeals concerning Shale Gas, as s.62A of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1990* allows him to do.

In June of this year, Cuadrilla's applications to instigate 'Fracking' at two sites, Roseacre Wood and Little Plumpton, were rejected by Lancashire County Council's Development Control Committee, with nine from the fourteen strong committee rejecting the proposals on the grounds that the sight of Fracking operations and the noise arising from them would cause an "*unacceptable adverse impact*" on the rural setting that was to host them.

As we previously reported, central government have appeared keen to promote 'Fracking' despite indications that support for the technique has reached an all time low. Moreover, with opposition to the extraction of Shale Gas often heard at local levels, the significance of this development cannot be underestimated. Groups such as *Friends of the Earth* have been quick to voice concerns that this development will help to sideline local opinions.

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