

Considerations for the Development of Shale Gas in the United Kingdom

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Abstract



The United States shale gas boom has precipitated global interest in the development of unconventional oil and gas resources. Recently, government ministers in the United Kingdom started granting licenses that will enable companies to begin initial exploration for shale gas. Meanwhile, concern is increasing among the scientific community about the potential impacts of shale gas and other types of unconventional natural gas development (UGD) on human health and the environment. Although significant data gaps remain, there has been a surge in the number of articles appearing in the scientific literature, nearly three-quarters of which has been published since the beginning of 2013. Important lessons can be drawn from the UGD experience in the United

States. Here we explore these considerations and argue that shale gas development policies in the UK and elsewhere should be informed by empirical evidence generated on environmental, public health, and social risks. Additionally, policy decisions should take into account the measured effectiveness of harm reduction strategies as opposed to hypothetical scenarios and purported best practices that lack empirical support.

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