

Cuadrilla ordered to plug and abandon shale gas fracking wells in Lancashire

Cuadrilla is to plug and abandon two shale gas wells in Lancashire following orders from the government's industry regulator, it confirmed in a statement.

Cuadrilla's parent company AJ Lucas said the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) had ordered it to permanently seal the two shale gas wells drilled at the Preston New Road (PNR) [Lancashire](#) shale exploration site.

It will soon start plugging the wells with cement and removing pipework and valves from the site.

Cuadrilla claims shale gas from the North of England has the potential to meet the UK's energy needs and alleviate the cost of living crisis, as well as create jobs and aid levelling up.

Analysts and green campaigners say because gas is globally traded, meaning it is sold to the highest bidder, it is unlikely to help the UK.

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Cuadrilla's chief executive officer, Francis Egan, said he thought the decision had not "been properly thought through".

"Leaving our own shale gas in the ground will make reducing global emissions even harder," he said. "Emissions from importing gas are far higher than those from home-produced shale gas."

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His comments were echoed by the Net Zero Scrutiny group of roughly 20 Conservative MPs, who raise fears about climate action.

But Sam Hall, director of the Conservative Environment Network group of 123 MPs, said fracked gas had “limited potential to reduce energy bills, because of our population density and pipelines to the European gas market”

“The government expended significant political capital and taxpayers’ money trying to kick-start fracking in the UK, but the industry couldn’t win communities’ support or frack [without causing tremors](#),” he said.

He added the government was “right to focus on expanding domestic clean energy and reducing gas demand as the route out of the current energy bill crisis”.

The OGA told Sky News it does not comment on individual cases, but said it “expects licensees to manage their redundant well stock responsibly, including by the timely plugging and abandonment of non-producing wells.”

Green groups warn the UK should avoid “lock-in” to burning the climate-heating fossil fuel and accelerate the shift to domestic renewable energy.

The wells have remained unused since 2019 when the government imposed a moratorium on fracking over concerns about tremors.

They took the decision “on the basis of the disturbance caused to residents living near Cuadrilla’s Preston New Road site in Lancashire”.

An OGA report had found that it was not currently possible to accurately predict the probability or magnitude of earthquakes linked to fracking operations.

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