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## Press Release

### *David Cameron's Support for Shale Gas*

This week the Prime Minister, David Cameron, has expressed his support for shale gas saying "Fracking has become a national debate in Britain - and it's one that I'm determined to win" (1)

In his article he twice tells us that he expects fracking to reduce energy prices, that it will give us 51 years worth of gas supply and that it might create 74,000 jobs. He reassures those of us in the "desolate" and "unloved" regions North of his Oxfordshire constituency that "We are all in this together" and that he wants "all parts of our nation to share in the benefits: north or south, Conservative or Labour". He tells us that local people must have say in planning decisions about fracking, and tells us we shouldn't be worried about the environmental impact". Finally he tells us "we cannot afford to miss out on fracking."

**Defend Lytham** would question many of the assertions made by the Prime Minister in his article.

Firstly the suggestion that shale gas will mean any sort of reduction in gas prices has been debunked, not only by bodies like Deutsche Bank, The Committee on Climate Change and Bloomberg Finance, but by Cuadrilla themselves. It seem that the only people who keep perpetuating this myth are those in our government who are trying to make a political case for fracking. **Defend Lytham** believes that this suggestion is unhelpful in furthering the debate on fracking.

Secondly he suggests that fracking will give us 51 years worth of energy if 10% of the hypothetical reserves could be commercially extracted. This figure is a fine example of the selective use of data. 10% of the BGS estimate is 130 trillion cubic feet (tcf). Average annual gas demand since 2000 has been 3.6 tcf (2). Even allowing the optimistic 10% of the estimated gas in place that would only amount to 36 years. Professor Peter Styles, professor of applied and environmental geophysics at Keele University, who has studied the issue suggests that increased supply would also increase demand and that we should not expect more that 25 years use from 130 tcf (3). To exaggerate the potential by using the lowest figure in the previous 12 years, as Mr Cameron does here, is highly misleading. **Defend Lytham** believes that a proper assessment of fracking's potential is necessary if people are to make informed choices.

Thirdly he tells us we can expect around 74,000 jobs. This figure cannot be justified. It comes from a report by the Institute of Directors that ignores huge variations in cost structures between countries and makes hugely over-

simplistic comparisons as a result. The report's author refuses to comment on criticisms of his methodology. Defend Lytham believe that an honest assessment of any potential employment gains and losses which might result from fracking is essential to public understanding of this issue. This figure is definitely not the result of such an honest assessment.

Turning to Mr Cameron's exhortation that "I want all parts of our nation to share in the benefits: north or south, Conservative or Labour. We are all in this together. " Defend Lytham was surprised to read in the Daily Mail that, after saying this, Mr Cameron avoided answering the question of whether he would welcome fracking in his own constituency no less than 10 times (4). It seems that there is no sacrifice so great that the Prime Minister won't talk about it.

Defend Lytham cannot understand how Mr Cameron is able to state that local people will not be "cut out and ignored" as this is precisely the impact that the Government's new planning guidelines will have, by effectively reducing Lancashire County Council's role to rubber stamping planning applications.

Mr Cameron's reassurances regarding environmental impact fail to convince. Ignoring the fact that he doesn't seem to know the difference between a cricket pitch and a cricket field, he claims that "similar types of drilling have been taking place for decades in this country without any real protest". As a claim that is as disingenuous as the claim made by Cuadrilla last year that their well at Elswick is representative of future fracking developments. That claim was censured by the Advertising Standards Authority for being misleading and an exaggeration.

Defend Lytham would remind Mr Cameron and the public that shale gas and fracking is such challenging engineering that 50% wells here have failed and that leading academics are calling for more research to be carried out before further experiments are undertaken. It is simply not sensible to be using the UK population as guinea pigs.

Finally he tells us "we cannot afford to miss out on fracking".

Defend Lytham believes that Mr Cameron has failed to make an adequate or convincing case to support that statement.

1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10236664/We-cannot-afford-to-miss-out-on-shale-gas.html>

2.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/224643/gas\\_since\\_1882\\_historical\\_data.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/224643/gas_since_1882_historical_data.xls)

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/jun/27/britain-shale-gas-deposits-supply-25-years>

4. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2390937/Would-David-Cameron-welcome-fracking-constituency.html>

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