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INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM ON UK FRACKING, ONSHORE OIL AND GAS AND THE REACTIONS TO IT

INDUSTRY

No more UK fracking in 2019 as Cuadrilla runs out of time after record-breaking tremor

BY RUTH HAYHURST ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2019 • (7 COMMENTS)



Fracking equipment at Cuadrilla's shale gas site at Preston New Road, 28 August 2019. Photo: Ros Wills

Cuadrilla has confirmed no more fracking will take place at its shale gas site in Lancashire before a planning deadline at the end of November.

Hydraulic fracturing equipment will be taken off the site, the company said in a statement (<https://cuadrillaresources.com/media-resources/press->

releases/cuadrilla-confirms-next-steps-at-preston-new-road-site/) today.

Opponents of Cuadrilla's operations have welcomed the news.

The company's statement confirms there will be no more fracking in the UK this year.

UK's largest fracking-induced tremor

Fracking was suspended at the UK's only active shale gas site at Preston New Road site on August bank holiday (26 August 2019) after a record-breaking tremor.

Cuadrilla carried out just seven main fracks

(<https://drillordrop.com/2019/09/12/cuadrilla-fracked-seven-times-before-record-breaking-tremor-official-logs/>) in August, causing more than 130 tremors, the most recent two days ago

(https://earthquakes.bgs.ac.uk/induced/recent_events/20190928182801.html#page=summary). The tremors included the UK's largest fracking-induced seismic event, measuring 2.9ML.

A total of 12 tremors (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/08/16/pnr-tremor-tracker-2019/>) measured more than 0.5ML. This is the threshold in Cuadrilla's hydraulic fracturing plan which required the company to pause fracking and check well integrity.

The British Geological Survey (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/09/26/more-fracking-needed-to-understand-risk-earthquake-expert/>) said it received about 3,000 reports about the 2.9ML tremor. Around 100 people are reported to have complained (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/09/26/cuadrilla-sent-office-staff-to-check-property-damage-from-uks-biggest-fracking-earth-tremor/>) to Cuadrilla about damage to their homes.

Cuadrilla said today it was continuing to help the Oil & Gas Authority (OGA) with a series of studies following the 2.9ML tremor:

“A timeframe has not been agreed with the OGA for this work to be completed and further hydraulic fracturing will not take place at Preston New Road before current planning permission for fracturing expires at the end of November.”

If the company wanted to frack again at Preston New Road it must submit a new planning application to Lancashire County Council. The council has said the application would be considered by its planning committee and would require a public consultation.

No application has yet been published by the council and a decision is unlikely to be made in less than three months.

The only other company with permission to frack in the UK, Third Energy, has said it is focusing on conventional gas (DrillOrDrop (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/08/16/third-energy-to-focus-on-conventional-gas-over-fracking/>)report).

Seven stages fracked

According to Cuadrilla's daily logs (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/09/12/cuadrilla-fracked-seven-times-before-record-breaking-tremor-official-logs/>) for August, the company fracked just seven of the expected 45 stages of the well, known as PNR-2. Despite this, Cuadrilla said today it would now test the flow of shale gas.

Cuadrilla's chief executive, Francis Egan, said:

“Our second horizontal shale well was partially fractured in August and I am pleased that we are moving to flow test it in the next few weeks.”

Cuadrilla was also unable to fully frack the first well, PNR-1, in autumn 2018.

Logs for that operation showed two-thirds of the stages of that well were not fracked (DrillOrDrop (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/04/01/confidential-records-reveal-limitations-of-cuadrillas-lancashire-fracking-operation/>) report). There were just 15 main fracks of PNR-1 between mid-October and mid-December. Whole sections of the well were not fracked at all. The company had to use nitrogen (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/07/16/cuadrilla-seeks-another-rule-change-for-fracking-site/>) to remove frack and formation fluids that were stopping free flow of gas.

Despite this, Cuadrilla said the flow test of PNR-1 confirmed a “high quality of gas capable of flowing to the surface”.

“Great news”

A spokesperson for the Preston New Road Action Group, which campaigns against the site, said today:

“It is great news that Cuadrilla are once again going to be demobilising their fracking equipment from PNR.

“We will watch with interest as they flow test. Last time they had an inadequate flow of gas to flare so used nitrogen lift which resulted in cold venting of methane. They do not yet have permission for nitrogen lift so cold venting will be a breach of permit.

“Given that they have only managed to frack 7 stages of the well it is hard to imagine that they are going to be getting very much gas out.

“The earth tremors from their failed attempt to frack still continue 5 weeks later. We truly hope that this is the end of Cuadrilla’s operations at PNR and that our community can return to a normal life once again”.

“Trying to maintain investor confidence”

Another local campaign group said:

“Frack Free Lancashire are delighted to learn that 35 days after they caused a 2.9ML earthquake which shook the Fylde and the confidence of their investors, Cuadrilla are finally demobilising the Preston New Road site.

“We are not surprised to hear this as, if their claims are to be believed, it has been costing them £94,000 a day to do very little while they waited in vain for the green light to carry on rocking our local community.

“The seismic activity which they provoked has not stopped though, with the 133rd event being recorded on Saturday, five weeks after they last fracked.

“We await the results of their flow test with interest as we have seen no evidence of any gas being flared from this well so far and we know that they have only fracked seven stages of the planned 47 (15%) and they have only managed to inject 289 tonnes of proppant of the 3,525 tonnes that they were permitted to use (8%).

“This flow test looks as though it has more to do with trying to maintain investor confidence rather than being a meaningful data gathering exercise and we hope that it won’t be too much longer before local people are able to stand by the gates at Preston New Road and point towards yet another failed fracking site.”

“Final attempt at positive spin”

Friends of the Earth’s fracking campaigner, Jamie Peters, said:

“Today’s flow testing announcement is just the latest, and hopefully final, desperate attempt to put a positive spin on the fracking fiasco at Preston New Road.

“With no more fracking taking place before planning permission expires, and Cuadrilla yet to apply for an extension, work at this site could soon be at an end.

“We are in the grip of an environmental emergency. It’s time the government pulled the plug on this unpopular and unnecessary climate-wrecking industry – and focussed on building the clean energy future we so urgently need.”

“Excellent shale gas reservoir”

Cuadrilla said the fractures in the Bowland Shale formation were typical of “an excellent shale gas reservoir”.

The company remained committed to exploring for shale gas, Mr Egan said.

But a critic of Cuadrilla’s operation has questioned whether the company actually fracked the formation.

An American fracking expert, Dr Grant Hocking, told a scientific meeting (<https://drillordrop.com/2019/09/26/more-fracking-needed-to-understand-risk-earthquake-expert/>) last week, that he thought Cuadrilla had opened slickensided bedding planes, creating seismic activity a long way from the well. He said a consortium including universities and the gas services company, Halliburton, concluded that the Bowland shale could not be hydraulically fractured because of the slickensided bedding planes.

The same meeting heard from one of the UK's leading seismologists, Dr Brian Baptie. He said the Bowland shale appeared to behave different from some equivalent formations in the US, with what he described as "quite high seismicity rates".

Dr Baptie said his research had shown that the pattern of tremors caused by fracking PNR-2 was different from that on PNR-1. The second well saw many more trailing events, tremors that happened after fracking.

- Yesterday, Cuadrilla said it was removing rainwater from the Preston New Road site by tanker. The vehicle movements were outside normal delivery hours but were allowed under the transport management plan, the company said.

DrillOrDrop 2019 tremor tracker for Preston New Road

(<https://drillordrop.com/2019/08/16/pnr-tremor-tracker-2019/>)

 7 replies »

And don't come back !

REPLY

Do you really mean no Fracking over the UK Cos isn't it Lancashire where Cuadrilla said no more? **REPLY**

XxxH

Sent from my iPhone

>

It won't be long before the main investors stop payir wages. **REPLY**

UK shale/Ponzi scheme. Pummeled by well organised communities.

“Cuadrilla said the fractures in the Bowland Shale were typical of “an excellent shale gas reservoir”. **REPLY**

That's not what the report into Preese Hall states,

“Magnitudes of the induced earthquakes during hydraulic fracture stimulation in hydrocarbon fields such as the Barnett Shale (Maxwell et al., 2006) and the Cotton Valley (Holland, 2011) are typically less than 1 ML”

Since when did “an excellent shale gas reservoir” produce a 2.9 magnitude earthquake to extract no gas?

Hi Helen

REPLY

We think no more fracking in the UK in 2019.
Third Energy have a fracking plan approved for Kirby

Misperton, but the company says it now has no plans to frack. Aurora are developing Altcar Moss near Formby, but the application is currently in the planning system and unlikely to be resolved before Christmas. No-one else has a well ready to go for fracking (as far as we know).

Pity that those climate-change-denying investors can't **REPLY** somewhere less damaging to place their unwanted cash. When will they wise up to Cuadrilla and the government's spin? Heaven knows, we are going to need this cash to avoid the climate catastrophe Egan and his like are fueling.

"We are going to need this cash"!!! Investors cash?? **REPLY**

Think you will find investors make their own decisions.

Don't be greedy. Tesla are still getting \$ BILLIONS without making a profit.

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