

GMP officer faces misconduct charge for fracking arrest

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Inspector Kehoe faces a gross misconduct hearing over an arrest at the Barton Moss anti-fracking protest

A police inspector is to face a gross misconduct hearing over the arrest of a man at an anti-fracking demonstration in Salford.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigated the arrest of Dr Steven Peers by Insp David Kehoe at Barton Moss in January 2014.

Dr Peers was detained for failing to provide a breath specimen but the case against him later collapsed.

GMP told the IPCC it disagreed that the officer had a case to answer.

Wrongly arrested

Dr Peers was filming the arrest of a Barton Moss protester in his role as a lawful observer when he was accused by Insp Kehoe of drink-driving.

He denied the charge and claimed video evidence showed that he was wrongly arrested.



Image caption Anti-fracking protests began at Barton Moss in November 2014

Footage of his arrest published on social media prompted Greater Manchester Police to refer the incident to the IPCC.

The police watchdog found the officer had a case to answer with regard to the circumstances of the arrest and seizure of Dr Peers' property.

IPCC deputy chair Rachel Cerfontyne directed that a gross misconduct hearing take place after GMP disagreed with its findings.

Anti-fracking protests began at Barton Moss in November 2014 when energy company IGas started test-drilling

for shale gas in November 2014.

An independent [report](#) found [no evidence of police brutality towards anti-fracking demonstrators](#) in Salford.

Police said the cost of policing the protests was £1.7m.

Insp Kehoe will face gross misconduct proceedings on 17 October at GMP's headquarters at Central Park, Manchester and is expected to last a week.

Video of the arrest


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GMP inspector to face gross misconduct hearing

Oct 10, 2016

A Greater Manchester Police (GMP) inspector will face a gross misconduct hearing following an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) *investigation* into the arrest of a man at an anti-fracking demonstration in Salford.

Inspector David Kehoe was subject to an IPCC *investigation* into the arrest of Dr Steven Peers at Barton Moss in January 2014. Dr Peers was detained for failing to provide a breath specimen.

Footage of the arrest, published online, prompted a *referral* of the incident to the IPCC from GMP. The IPCC investigator formed the view that **Inspector Kehoe had a case to answer for gross misconduct with regard to the circumstances of the arrest and the seizure of Dr Peers' property.**

GMP disagreed with the findings of the *investigation*, resulting in IPCC Deputy Chair Rachel Cerfontyne directing that a gross misconduct hearing take place. This will be held by GMP at the force headquarters for five days from 9.30am on Monday 17 October.

Notes to Editor:

Details of how to attend this hearing can be found on the Greater Manchester Police website: <http://www.gmp.police.uk/>

Originally a *supervised investigation*, completed by GMP in June 2014, Dr Peers appealed against the findings and this was upheld by the IPCC. As a result, the IPCC began an *independent investigation* in September 2014 which concluded in June the following year – the final report was sent to GMP in August 2015. The IPCC directed GMP to hold gross misconduct proceedings in January this year (2016) and has since awaited a date for the hearing.

Ends



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The Barton Moss Environmental Protest

A report by the Police and Crime Commissioner's
Independent Panel on the Policing of Protests and Demonstrations
October 2014

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Foreword



This is the first major piece of work by the Independent Panel on the Policing of Protests and Demonstrations set up by the Police and Crime Commissioner. I hope that our findings and recommendations are both useful and will prompt further debate on this important topic.

The panel comprises a diverse range of people from all walks of life, but one thing we all agree on absolutely is the right for people to protest and make their voice heard. This report aims to support that fundamental right, which goes to the heart of what it means to live in a free, democratic country.

Martin Miller
Chair of the Independent Panel on
Protests and Demonstrations



The police have a duty to ensure that people's right to protest peacefully is facilitated and respected and although Greater Manchester Police has a good record in policing protests this is a frequent challenge.

The Barton Moss protest was particularly complex and contentious and, amid the legitimate public concerns raised, it was clear that independent scrutiny of this operation was needed in order to build trust and public confidence in our police service.

I want to thank the panel members for their observations and advice and for giving up their own time to produce this report. Now I'll work with GMP and other public bodies to make sure these recommendations are put into practice.

Tony Lloyd
Greater Manchester Police
and Crime Commissioner



The policing of protests is often contentious and the Barton Moss protest put GMP between those wishing to obstruct the drilling process and a company and landowner wishing to carry out their lawful business.

It is important that police action is independently scrutinised and we welcome the first report from the Protest Panel. All the recommendations are accepted by the Force. The Panel has highlighted the difficult issues of how to ensure all agencies preplan the response to protest, how the police communicate with protesters when some don't want to engage with the police and how the police communicate information on a protest without introducing any bias.

Sir Peter Fahy
Chief Constable
of Greater Manchester Police

Introduction and executive summary

Effective policing of public protests is vital to ensure that our democratic society allows people to have a voice and make that voice heard. Police are there not to control protest, but to facilitate peaceful and lawful action.

This is not always an easy task as police also have to take into account the rights of people with competing views, as well as the rights of those not involved in an individual protest to go about their normal business. Police have to ensure that any disruption caused by protest is proportionate and that disruption is minimised.

The environmental protest at Barton Moss in Salford took place between November 2013 and March 2014 during exploratory digging at the site. It created unique issues for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and this report examines those issues in a frank, honest and balanced way to see what learning can be applied to future contentious protests.

A number of recommendations are made at the end of this report around pre-planning, engagement and communications which the panel hopes will provide useful and constructive ideas.

This report has been written by the independent panel set up by Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd to examine the policing of protests and demonstrations. The panel members have been drawn from across Greater Manchester's diverse communities, and bring with them a vast range of experience including protest and trade union activism, politics, policing, community relations, media and youth engagement. More information about the panel is available on the Commissioner's website at:

www.gmpcc.org.uk/protest-panel.

Methodology

This report aims to use an issue of major public concern to help inform future similar incidents.

This report is not intended to be a formal inquiry into the policing of the Barton Moss protest. The panel has no statutory or inquisitory powers. This report is not about finger-pointing or blame, but aims to provide constructive feedback to police and others around the management of contentious and complex protests.

As part of the research for this paper, panellists spoke to:

- Greater Manchester Police – officers and staff involved directly and indirectly in the operation and the associated communications
- Protesters, both on-site at Barton Moss and in interviews. We spoke to both grassroots activists and a representative from Frack Free Greater Manchester
- Local businesses and residents around Barton Moss Road
- Salford Council representatives
- iGas representatives
- Media representative

We are grateful to the individuals we spoke to for giving up their time and for their candid observations.

We asked to speak to Peel Holdings, who own the land where Barton Moss is based, but they declined to speak to us – citing legal matters which were still being considered. Given the willingness of so many others to take part in these interviews, this was disappointing. This matches Peel's approach throughout the Barton Moss controversy as they have consistently remained silent – despite their key role as landowner.

In addition, panel members conducted a number of visits to the Barton Moss site. These visits were both announced and unannounced. Panel members also observed the operation from the police control room.

Panel members reviewed social media content, video footage and print and broadcast media coverage of the Barton Moss protest.

Context

GMP has a good record on managing demonstrations. It has built expertise and capability over a number of years. Each year the service deals with many protests, both high-profile and small-scale, planned and spontaneous. Two recent examples of protests in Greater Manchester that presented different challenges are outlined below:

Example one - trade union protest during the Conservative Party Conference, September 2013

The protest against austerity during the 2013 Conservative Party conference was one of the largest demonstrations Greater Manchester has ever seen, with up to 50,000 participants. The march went through Manchester city centre, attracted a diverse range of participants, and passed off without major incident and no arrests. The march and rally was organised by the TUC who worked with GMP and the city council to agree a route, event plan and contingencies. It was a good example of partnership working in practice.

Example two - EDL protest, Manchester, March 2013

The English Defence League have carried out a number of protests in Greater Manchester. The EDL has limited support in Greater Manchester and has regularly bused in supporters from elsewhere. When they have protested in Greater Manchester, counter demonstrations by Unite Against Fascism have also taken place. In March 2013, the EDL informed police that they were planning to protest in Manchester city centre. Through negotiation with both the EDL and UAF it was agreed they could both have a protest area in Albert Square in Manchester city centre. In the run-up to the event a letter was sent to the Manchester Evening News, led by the Police and Crime Commissioner and signed by a range of civic, faith, community and business leaders urging the public to ignore the protest. Attendance at the protest was limited, disruption to the city centre was minimised and the protest passed off without major incident. There were a handful of arrests for public order offences.

Key to effective management of protests has been a willingness by GMP to engage with protest organisers and partner agencies such as the local authority.

Barton Moss - background

Hydraulic fracturing – fracking – is a relatively new technology to extract gas from shale rock. It works by drilling into the ground and then directing a high-pressure mix of water, sand and chemicals at the rock to release the gas. It has been used extensively in the USA, where it has dramatically changed the country’s energy production landscape and significantly reduced energy prices. The UK government considers fracking to be a key part of securing Britain’s energy future and is encouraging the exploitation of shale gas reserves.

There are environmental concerns over fracking which go beyond the general concern over developing a new process of exploiting fossil fuels. It uses large amounts of water and there are fears that the chemicals used can escape and contaminate ground water at a fracking site, as has happened in the USA. Fracking can also cause minor earth tremors, such as those experienced in Blackpool in 2011.

Proponents say that effective regulation will ensure that contamination will not happen. The Government points to a 2012 Royal Society study which concluded that the health and safety risks of fracking “can be managed effectively in the UK as long as operational best practices are implemented and enforced through regulation”. Those in favour of fracking recognise the risk of tremors, but say they are very minor and highly unlikely to cause any damage. The strength of the tremors has been compared to an HGV truck driving past a house.

The first area of Greater Manchester where fracking has become an issue of public concern is the Barton Moss site. However, it is important to point out that no fracking has taken place at the site, and none can take place without an appropriate application for planning permission being submitted.

The site is off Barton Moss Road, a country lane which runs between the A57 Liverpool Road and the M60. It is adjacent to City Airport (formerly known as Barton Aerodrome). Although Barton Moss Road is not a council-owned lane, there are a number of local businesses and homes on the road. There is also a young people’s secure unit.

In March 2010, Salford Council granted planning permission to a drilling company for the exploration and extraction of methane from the coal bed at Barton Moss. The exploratory work uses conventional methods of drilling and extraction. An assessment will be made by iGas, who carried out the exploratory drilling, following this work to determine if the area is suitable for fracking.

When planning permission was granted, fracking was not identified as a contentious issue in the UK. The council did not consider the granting of planning permission to be controversial, and the work itself was seen to be relatively small-scale with little impact on the local area. However, following other exploratory work in Balcombe in Sussex and the associated protest, fracking became a much more potent issue.

In the months leading up to work starting, GMP held meetings with partner agencies and iGas to agree a joint approach to the management of the work and inevitable protests. However, police were the main, if not sole, organisation to respond to media and public inquiries over the operation. Although partnership working was good on an operational level, police told the panel they felt this was not replicated on the public-facing side of the operation.

The protest

The protest at Barton Moss began in November 2013 and lasted until the exploratory work completed in April 2014. Protest activity had different elements: a camp on Barton Moss Road, daily protests when deliveries were being made to the site, weekend rallies at the site, and a demonstration in Manchester city centre.

The contentious parts of the protest at Barton Moss concerned the camp and delivery protests. The rallies at the site and city-centre demonstration were a more traditional style of protest and both the organisers and police told the panel they were well-organised and caused no issues and there were no arrests.

Police told the panel the operation had three aims: to facilitate peaceful protest; to minimise disruption for local businesses; and to allow residents and workers to go about their lawful business.

The operation involved around 60 police officers each day, although this figure rose to more than 100 on occasion. The cost of the operation was in the region of £1.6m.

The protesters themselves, many of whom preferred to be termed “protectors”, were a diverse group who claimed to have no leadership and acted as a collective. We were told protesters could be, roughly, segmented into four general groupings: “environmental campaigners”, “concerned local people”, more “hard-line’ eco-activists” and “anti-police agitators”. There was a general consensus on these groupings from both protesters, police, and neutral observers.

The vast majority of people participating in the protests were clearly there to do so peacefully, but the panel found there were a small number who wanted to antagonise police and encourage conflict. Protesters we spoke to recognised there were some intent on trouble, but the majority were not. However, they felt police treated them all the same, and as if they were all criminals.

Flashpoints

The main flashpoints between police and protesters happened when deliveries were being made to the site. These deliveries took place regularly between November 2013 and April 2014, with deliveries being made once a week, or more frequently. Protesters would protest in front of the convoy of lorries.

Protesters told the panel that the aim would be to stop deliveries into the site, although they recognised this was unlikely to happen and therefore their aim would be to delay and disrupt deliveries as much as possible. Barton Moss Road is a small country lane. The distance between the start of the lane and the entry point to the site is less than half a mile, which at normal walking speed would take approximately 10 minutes and certainly no more than 15 minutes.

Police told the panel they believed they could facilitate the competing rights of the protesters, businesses, iGas and local residents by allowing the protesters to walk along the road at a slow pace. The time taken to complete the walk varied. Protesters told the panel that at times they would be forced along the road in 15 minutes; police told the panel that at times the walk took several hours.

The protests observed by panel members took between one hour and ten minutes, and one hour and 25 minutes. Protesters complained that changing expectations made it difficult for them to judge what pace would be deemed acceptable, and what would be deemed as too slow and disruptive, by the police. This confusion was seen by protestors as a source of tension and possible conflict.

The deliveries would travel along the lane with a walking police escort. A line of police officers at the front of the lorries would keep the convoy moving. Protesters would gather in front of the police line. The police would tell them to keep moving. It is during these deliveries when most arrests would be made, with police arresting those who they felt were being uncooperative. Police said this included protesters who were pushing back against the police line, those who were endangering themselves or others, or those being abusive. Initially arrests were made for obstructing the highway, but following a court ruling in February 2013 that said Barton Moss Road was a public footpath rather than a public highway, the police subsequently arrested protesters for aggravated trespass. More than 200 arrests were made during the operation. So far, 62% of those cases have either been discontinued or the alleged offender found not guilty.

Protesters told the panel that police officers regularly shoved them during these protests and tried to force them to walk at a quick pace. Given that some of those taking part were elderly, protesters said this was unnecessarily antagonistic on the part of police. This claim is supported by the experience of a journalist from the Manchester Evening News who attended Barton Moss “undercover”. The reporter spent a day at the Barton Moss camp and took part in the protest. He did so without speaking first to police so GMP was unaware

he was there. This journalist said he was shoved by police and accused of pushing against the cordon when he was not.

Protesters told the panel that people would be arrested for no particular reason and felt that police had a quota of arrests they needed to make each day. GMP told the panel no such quota existed.

Police said they faced a barrage of abuse from the protesters, with cameras and smartphones being shoved in their faces as they were being shouted at. This claim is supported by online video evidence.

Claims of police brutality

Protesters claimed there was regular police brutality at Barton Moss. The panel heard how some protesters have been incredibly upset by photographs and videos that have been posted online which purport to show police using violence against protesters.

Throughout the evidence-gathering process of this report, no panel members witnessed any behaviour by police that could objectively be described as “brutality”. Significantly, none of those we spoke to witnessed behaviour by police that could be categorised as violent. No protester we spoke to witnessed police violence, no panel member witnessed police violence, nor did anyone else we spoke to including impartial media representatives who were present at Barton Moss.

Claims of police violence have not been substantiated. Specific claims of alleged injuries have been shown to be untrue. One example is an allegation which has been made repeatedly that a protester was shoved down a ditch by police and broke his leg. The video footage of this incident, from 13 December 2013, shows someone falling into a ditch, but there is no video footage of him being shoved into the ditch by police. The claim he broke his leg is untrue. The protester was back at the site in the days following the fall walking unassisted. The panel wishes to stress that the individual protester did not make the claim he had broken his leg – this was made by others commenting on social media.

Another example of an allegation was the claim that one protester was arrested, taken to a police station where she was strip searched and left naked in a cell for four hours. This was alleged to have taken place on 17 March 2014 and was widely reported on social media. This is an extremely serious claim which, if true, would be a clear abuse of police power. Such was the seriousness of the allegation, the Police and Crime Commissioner ordered

an immediate review of what had taken place. A senior and experienced independent custody visitor reviewed both the custody log and CCTV footage from the custody suite. This review determined that the reality of the incident was that the arrested woman had taken her own clothes off, urinated on them and was both violent and abusive towards custody staff. It took several hours before she had calmed down and accepted alternative clothing.

There is a public interest in the police challenging allegations which can be shown to be untrue. Such false allegations undermine confidence in policing and should be shown to be untrue. However, there is limited evidence to suggest that GMP directly challenged false claims of brutality.

Overall, GMP told the panel they were keen to ensure their operation was proportionate, and it was subject to independent review several times as it was ongoing. These reviews were carried out by: two different police forces (Lancashire and Merseyside), a human rights lawyer, an assistant Police and Crime Commissioner from another police force area, and the College of Policing. Police told the panel that none of these reviews found cause for concern about how GMP was carrying out its operation, but GMP did not provide the panel with copies of these reviews.

Crossing the line

Whereas most of the action taken by protesters at Barton Moss was peaceful, there were some isolated incidents which were of more concern. These included “lock-ons” where protesters would attach themselves to heavy items in an attempt to prevent the convoy getting through to the site. In effect, they did not stop the convoy getting through, but rather delayed the convoy and caused significant disruption on Barton Moss Lane to local residents and other businesses. In one instance, protesters attached themselves to a concrete drum. When the police team attempted to remove the protesters, it emerged that the drum was filled with barbed wire and broken glass, which caused a minor injury to a police officer. This kind of activity clearly crosses the line of peaceful, lawful protest.

Similarly, iGas told the panel that workers at the site had been subjected to violence and intimidation. iGas told the panel that one worker was followed after leaving the site and was so concerned that he returned to the site and stayed there overnight. iGas also told the panel that other workers were physically and verbally assaulted, although did not provide specific details.

Police told the panel that local residents also reported isolated incidents of intimidation, which included people in masks being seen on their property.

This kind of behaviour clearly crosses a line. Police also reported that some protesters had endangered themselves with their behaviour. One attempted to use a bicycle lock to lock himself onto an HGV truck that was going to the site. Had the protester been successful it is likely he would have killed himself, and caused significant distress to the driver of the lorry. Others, including protesters and police, would also have been endangered by this action. Given the police have a duty to ensure people's health and safety, it is understandable why the police had so many officers present at certain points during the protest.

“Flaregate”

One single incident caused significant controversy and a serious breakdown in the relationship between police and protesters. This incident has become known as “flaregate”. In the early hours of Saturday 4 January 2014 the police helicopter was coming in to land at City Airport, which is near Barton Moss Lane. The pilot reported that a flare was fired at the helicopter and appeared to come from the vicinity of the protester camp. The camp was searched by police on 6 January, but no evidence of a flare was found.

GMP publicised this incident, calling it an “unbelievably stupid act of criminality” which had endangered lives. However, the protesters at the camp strongly refuted the allegation that the flare had come from Barton Moss. Some of those the panel spoke to said that if something had been fired on the night then it may have been a firework from a local housing estate. The panel was told that many protesters believe the police had simply made up the claim.

GMP did not produce any additional evidence to support the veracity of the incident. There was no video evidence as the helicopter was not filming as it came in to land. GMP told the panel that the helicopter pilot did give a statement shortly after the incident, which supports the existence of an incident, but this was not released to the public.

The panel does not believe that GMP has a responsibility to “prove” incidents it publicises – as a public body police have a duty not to mislead the public and it would be extraordinary if any such incident had been fabricated. However, given the levels of mistrust that existed between police and protesters at this point of the operation, supporting information would have helped demonstrate to the protesters and the wider public that this was a serious incident that actually happened. The only public evidence to support the incident was a discussion on an online forum where it seemed to suggest

that the person responsible had been ejected from the camp. However, this discussion was on an open forum which did not require any registration and there is no evidence to suggest the discussion was a real discussion between protesters. Although protesters have confirmed that one person was asked to leave the camp, they told the panel this was unrelated to “flaregate” and had to do with his behaviour.

Both police and protesters agree that the atmosphere changed around the time of “flaregate”. From a police perspective, it was felt that more ‘hard-line’ protesters had arrived in the run-up to the incident and there had been a ramping up of civil disobedience. The flare incident, therefore, was indicative of a change of atmosphere.

For the protesters, their view was that police officers treated them differently after “flaregate”. One protester told us that police had been “firm but fair” before the flare incident, but afterwards became more aggressive. The protester’s view was the relationship went “down the pan” after this point with officers believing what the protester called “police propaganda” that the camp wanted to kill their colleagues.

There was a public interest in publicising the flare incident as this was a serious criminal act which could have caused loss of life or serious injury. But, with hindsight, the panel believes more information about the incident should have been issued. This could have included media interviews with the pilot, or the pilot’s statement could have been issued to the media.

“Legal observer” arrest

Relations between the police and protesters were also strained in an incident where a “legal observer” was arrested for alleged drink driving. “Legal observers” were present throughout the Barton Moss protest, although it is unclear what the term means. There is no such a position as “legal observer”. The term gives the impression they are impartial individuals merely there to observe, but in practice those present at Barton Moss seemed to be linked to the protest itself.

On 14 January 2014, one of the “legal observers” was arrested during an incident which was filmed and broadcast on YouTube. So far this has been watched around 220,000 times and it received significant media coverage. The video shows an officer asking the observer if he has had a drink. The observer says that he has had a tea, which the officer appears to mishear as “two”. He says that the observer has admitted having a drink and the observer is then arrested on suspicion of drink driving. The observer was not in his car at the

time and the video evidence does not show whether he had been driving or not.

At the time GMP did not provide a response which could have explained the officer's actions or at least set them in context. This lack of willingness to explain is difficult to understand, given the reputational damage this incident has caused.

This case came before the courts later in January and was thrown out. Rightly or wrongly, the video does give the impression that the officer, at best, overreacted and, at worst, abused his powers. GMP's Professional Standards Branch investigated this incident and did not uphold the complaint, saying there was no case to answer. The arrested man has appealed this decision to the Independent Police Complaints Commission, who upheld the appeal and are now investigating.

Building relationships

These two vignettes give a flavour of the breakdown of trust between the protesters and the police. GMP's previous success at managing protests has been largely dependent on the building of trusted, mutually-respectful relationships between protesters and police. This was absent throughout the Barton Moss protest.

A protester the panel spoke to had been involved in the previous campaign against a second runway at Manchester Airport. He said that at that protest there was a named senior police officer who took the time to get to know the protesters and build rapport and relationship with them. He said it was noticeable that this was lacking at Barton Moss.

GMP had "protest liaison officers" present at Barton Moss throughout the protest. These officers worked to build relationships with those at the camp, and the panel observed them behave in a compassionate and respectful way, for example escorting an elderly protester, who had arrived late, to the front of the protest. However some of the protesters told the panel that they believed these officers were the "bottom of the pecking order" and others thought that they were there to gather intelligence rather than build rapport.

GMP were keen to stress to the panel that they made significant efforts to engage with the protesters, but they were thwarted at every point. To illustrate this point, GMP told the panel that towards the start of the protest a chief inspector attempted to negotiate with the protesters on a range of issues, including the pace of the convoy and general conduct from both police and

protesters. GMP said the response of the protesters was to verbally abuse the chief inspector in person and then subsequently mock him on social media. Despite this, GMP believed they had negotiated some basic principles with the protesters. For example, GMP said they agreed not to send vehicles down Barton Moss Road at the request of the protesters as it would disturb their sleep. However, GMP said this provided the protesters with the opportunity to leave a wind turbine outside the gates of the site. GMP felt some protesters acted in a cynical way and had no real desire to negotiate with police.

A senior named officer with the specific and sole role of protester engagement would have been a sensible step as it would have built credibility of the liaison officers and potentially could have helped defuse the atmosphere when things got tense. Given the breakdown in the relationship it may have been beneficial for the police to look outside its own service and engage independent mediation to try and restore some of that trust. However, protesters have acknowledged that this may not have worked as they claim to act as a collective rather than an organised group. This does not mean that it could not have been tried as it may have been possible to build a general consensus.

Communicating effectively

Overall, communication between the protesters and police was poor throughout the operation. Protesters complained that they did not have any clear idea of what tactics police would use, as one day they would facilitate a slow walk, while on other days the impression was given that they wanted to get the deliveries in as quickly as possible. This helped foster the idea that GMP was the “iGas private army”. This is an unfair categorisation, as iGas admit that the way in which GMP chose to balance the competing rights did put them at a commercial disadvantage as deliveries that should have taken 15 minutes took significantly longer, at considerable cost to iGas. GMP also on occasion took action against lorries making deliveries to the site when deemed necessary. However, this was generally at the off-site muster point for the lorry convoy and so unknown to the protesters. This contributed to the sense that only the protesters were subject to the actions of the police.

However, as outlined above, GMP believe their attempts at negotiation were thwarted by on every occasion by an unwillingness to engage.

One area of perceived contention that has arisen is the presence of iGas representatives in the police control room during the operation. To set in context, a range of partner agencies were present in the control room during the operation, including Salford Council, emergency planning officers and

other blue light agencies. Police told the panel this is standard procedure during major operations, and stressed iGas was there in an advisory capacity and had no role in directing police operations. Police said that a professional, appropriate distance is always kept between third parties and police with operational decision-making responsibilities in such circumstances, and this was the case with iGas. There is also a literal distance between those making command decisions as those officers are in a partitioned area separate to third parties. Police said the role of iGas was to provide an effective and efficient communication channel to monitor the movement of iGas vehicles and take account of any last minute changes. Without this presence in the control room, alternative, robust and effective links would need to be developed to ensure effective communication is maintained. Having an advisory presence therefore seems to be a practical and pragmatic decision. But the panel recognises this does cause a perception issue that should be addressed. One way this could be addressed in future protest operations is by inviting a representative of the protesters into the control room to view the operation to provide reassurance of the advisory role of other agencies during protests.

GMP was in a very difficult situation over the Barton Moss protest. The service's desire from the outset was to take a back seat in terms of the public communications. GMP said it should have had support from other agencies and organisations as the Barton Moss situation was not one of its making. Most notable for their silence is Peel Holdings. Peel owns the land which iGas is drilling on – but have been silent throughout this process. Peel even declined to engage with the panel in the production of this report. iGas were more proactive, but according to journalists the panel spoke to, they only became proactive towards the end of the process. Salford Council and the Mayor of Salford's office had a consistent reactive media line on fracking, but did not offer anyone for media interviews or proactively outline the rationale for the granting of planning permission. GMP was the only body, public or private, that was speaking out on this issue throughout the exploratory drilling process.

Conclusions, observations and recommendations

The panel has considered the issues around the Barton Moss protest and proposes a number of recommendations which are outlined below.

Pre-planning

Recommendation 1 – for planning authorities

The panel recommends that when planning applications are submitted for this kind of controversial activity, public safety and potential protests should be considered carefully. If it is likely for there to be protests, then the appropriateness of any site should be considered. Barton Moss Lane is not an appropriate area to facilitate the movement of heavy machinery with a protest camp and daily delivery protest. In retrospect, iGas recognised that it may have made more sense to have a separate entry and egress point for the equipment. This would have entirely mitigated much of the complexity of the Barton Moss policing operation. Consideration should also be taken during the planning process of creating an area where protesters can go to exercise their lawful right to make their voice heard.

Recommendation 2 – for all agencies

The panel recommends a partnership approach to communications and engagement should be developed and a joint strategy for both should be developed ahead of controversial activity such as the Barton Moss operation. GMP's complaint about being the only partner organisation speaking publicly about this issue for the bulk of the operation is legitimate. For future, similar, operations a strategy should, at the very least, be developed by the relevant local authority or authorities and police. It should also include other agencies which are involved and other relevant organisations such as land owners and companies carrying out the work – whilst recognising that public bodies should have appropriate professional distance from interested parties, such as landowners, to ensure they maintain independence. It should be agreed in advance who the spokespeople should be and who should say what, where and when.

During an operation - engagement

Recommendation 3 – for Greater Manchester Police

The panel recommends that police should do more to engage with protest groups in the run-up to, and during, a policing operation which has generated significant public concern. A senior officer should be assigned with the specific and sole role of engaging with protesters in complex protests similar to Barton Moss. This should, where possible, include clearly stated expectations from the police to protesters of how the operation will unfold. This is particularly important where an operation covers multiple days and operational requirements will vary day to day; it would help to dispel confusion arising from operational variance.

Recommendation 4 – for Greater Manchester Police

If there is a complete breakdown in trust, the panel recommends that all other alternatives should be explored to reach agreement. This could potentially include engaging independent mediation services to help build relationships. The panel recognises that it may be difficult to gain a consensus amongst a diverse group of protesters, but working towards a general consensus with people, the majority of whom are reasonable people who care passionately about an issue, is an effort worth making.

Recommendation 5 – for protesters and protest organisers

Protesters should do more to recognise their responsibilities during protests. Whilst the majority of protesters at Barton Moss behaved lawfully, there were isolated incidents that were unacceptable. The vilification of police officers and others, including social workers who were there to ensure the welfare of children during the Barton Moss protest, was not acceptable. Protesters at similar protests in the future should consider developing a set of principles for their protest – outlining what they will do, what behaviour is acceptable and what behaviour is not. This should include ensuring they have definite individuals with whom the police can liaise effectively (even if these change from day to day in line with their “collective” principles) – see Recommendation 6 below.

Recommendation 6 – for Greater Manchester Police

During major protest operations, GMP should consider inviting a nominated representative agreed by police and protesters into the police control room, on the same advisory status as other third party bodies. Doing this could provide reassurance to all organisations that third parties

are present in a solely advisory capacity and have no role in directing police operations. It could also help build trust and confidence that GMP's publicly-stated aims match the execution of the police operation.

Recommendation 7 – for Greater Manchester Police

Police should do more to recognise the diverse nature of those who take part in protests such as Barton Moss. When the panel spoke to protesters, one of the themes which they regularly came back to was how they were made to feel like criminals. Many of the protesters at Barton Moss made the point they were not “troublemakers” – they merely cared passionately about an issue of public concern. Police should engage better with those participating in contentious protests to ensure the reasons for the police being there are understood. Protesters who are willing to engage constructively with police should be invited to the morning police briefing so they can see the approach the police take to the operation.

During an operation – communication with the media and the public

Recommendation 8 – for public bodies

The panel recommends that all public bodies consider the public interest when assessing what information is appropriate to issue to counteract exaggerated or false claims which could affect confidence in public services. GMP expressed frustration at being unable to gain traction in the media during the protest, to the extent that they felt that the media were not interested in what the service had to say. However, information given out by GMP was, at times, sparse. In future, police should consider issuing more information in a clear and concise way, including, where it is available, video, audio and photographs.

GMP has a huge following on social media and this channel could have been used more effectively to get messages out. GMP told the panel that it could not give out information or footage as this could prejudice subsequent prosecutions. However, not enough consideration was given to the reputational damage that unchallenged claims and allegations caused the service, particularly claims levelled at the police of partiality on behalf of iGas. Individual cases must be balanced with the wider public interest of keeping the public accurately informed. This recommendation is not about encouraging “tit-for-tat” between police and protesters in mainstream or social media, but rather is about emphasising the importance of keeping the public accurately informed.

Recommendation 9 – for Greater Manchester Police

The panel recommends that when police publicise a controversial incident during a protest operation, the service provides supporting information to provide additional assurance to the public. The panel's view is that "flaregate" could have been handled better by GMP. While it is not the case that GMP should have to prove incidents have taken place, it would have been helpful for GMP, and it would have been in the public interest to provide supporting information. As with Recommendation 7, this recommendation is about ensuring the public is kept accurately informed on matters of significant public interest, and not about either protesters or the police engaging in propaganda dissemination.

Conclusion

It is clear that Barton Moss was a difficult operation. Frontline police officers faced daily verbal abuse as they sought to go about their job. Communications professionals within the service were frustrated that they did not get their message out to the public as their attempts to explain their operation were often ignored by the media and drowned out by the emotive language and sometimes inaccurate claims used by protesters. Protesters felt they were treated badly by the police, with clear evidence of many people being shoved as they exercised their democratic right to protest (although more serious allegations of police brutality have not been substantiated). Trust was lost in the police during the Barton Moss protest, despite the evidence showing that GMP was committed to balancing, as best it could, the competing rights of the protesters, local businesses and local residents.

The panel is of the view that many of the issues arising from the protest at Barton Moss could have been mitigated, or even resolved, by better pre-planning and more constructive communications and engagement during the operation. Our recommendations are based on that view. We are also clear that this should apply to other public bodies and commercial agencies involved, as well as the police. Moreover, we would expect similar active engagement from protesters themselves in order to facilitate the exercise of their democratic right to peacefully protest.

It is likely that environmental protests such as those seen at Barton Moss will become more common as the government encourages the development of shale gas extraction. The panel hopes this report gives some valuable, constructive feedback to police and others which will help inform the management of future operations involving contentious protests.

Panel members

Members of the **Independent Panel on the Policing of Protests and Demonstrations** have been drawn from across Greater Manchester's diverse communities, and bring with them a vast range of experience including protest and trade union activism, politics, policing, community relations, media and youth engagement.

The panel is chaired by **Martin Miller, Chief Executive of the Diocese of Manchester**. Martin also had a leading role in the Hope Not Hate campaign, which takes a stand against extremist organisations like the British National Party and English Defence League.

The other panellists are:

- Atiha Chaudry, an equalities and diversity specialist and magistrate
- Matthew Colledge, former leader of Trafford Council and Vice Chair of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Diane Curry OBE, Partners of Prisoners Chief Executive and independent member of the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Panel
- Davine Forde, a youth and community organisation manager who is currently Project Coordinator at Manchester charity Reclaim
- Alan Manning, former TUC Regional Secretary
- Mohammed Sultan, a retired police inspector with more than 30 years' policing experience
- Janine Watson, who has 30 years' experience in communications and community engagement in Greater Manchester local authorities and media organisations

TONY LLOYD
POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER
GREATER MANCHESTER

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'No brutality' at Barton Moss anti-fracking protests, probe finds

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The Barton Moss protests saw several clashes between police and anti-fracking demonstrators

No evidence has been found of police brutality towards anti-fracking demonstrators in Salford, an independent report has found.

Protests began at Barton Moss last November when energy company IGas started test-drilling for shale gas.

A probe was set up **following a number of clashes between protesters and Greater Manchester Police** (GMP).

GMP has also been told the government will not pick up the £1.7m bill for policing the protests.

'Not substantiated'

A panel was set up by Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd to look into how the force handled the operation.

The **report** found that "although the majority of people at the site were there to protest peacefully, a small number wanted to antagonise police and cause trouble".

Panel chairman Martin Miller said it was a "complex and difficult operation" which "saw officers subjected to daily abuse as they carried out their job".

He said: "We also found that some protesters were shoved and felt they were treated badly although I want to stress that allegations of police brutality have not been substantiated."

Frack Free Greater Manchester welcomes the report

He added many things were "done right" by GMP but the panel found that many of the issues could have been "mitigated or resolved by better pre-planning" and "more constructive communications and engagement" with protesters.

Mr Miller said he would work with the force to make sure recommendations are put into practice.

Chief Constable of GMP Sir Peter Fahy said he welcomes and accepts the report's recommendations but said legislation around dealing with protesters

needs to be clearer.

'Patrolling communities'

About 60 anti-fracking protesters set up a camp close to the IGas site near the M62 and Barton Aerodrome last November.

Frack Free Greater Manchester welcomed the report but said some "important questions remained unanswered".

They included a police claim that protesters fired a flare at the force helicopter which the group said should be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

Martin Porter said it was a "peaceful protest" and no evidence been produced in relation to the "Flaregate" incident.

He said: "For [GMP] to claim that these peaceful protesters launched a terrorist attack is totally unacceptable. If this story was made up to discredit peaceful protesters and justify repressive policing, then there must be consequences."

Barbara Keeley, MP for Worsley and Eccles South, had **expressed concerns over the number of officers policing the Barton Moss protests** instead of "patrolling in our local communities".

GMP Chief Constable Sir Peter Fahy also revealed the cost of policing the Barton Moss protests was £1.7m.

He also said there was "considerable frustration" in the force with current legislation on obstruction which he described as weak and which put officers in a "very difficult position".

In January, GMP **asked the government to meet the costs** but the Home Secretary has since refused, it emerged.

Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Jim Battle said it was "disgraceful the people of Greater Manchester are expected to carry the burden of the cost".

Fracking involves pumping a mixture of water and chemicals into shale rock at high pressure to extract gas and oil.

The firm said **gas was found in shale rock** during test-drilling at the Barton Moss site.

Exploratory drilling stopped in March while samples are analysed.

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Barton Moss: Police protest handling investigated

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GMP previously said it normally used 60 officers a day to police the site

An independent panel examining how police deal with major protests and demonstrations in Greater Manchester has been set up.

It follows a number of confrontations involving protestors and Greater

Manchester Police (GMP) at Barton Moss.

Exploratory drilling for shale gas is taking place at the Salford site, with an anti-fracking protest camp nearby.

The panel, set up by Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd, will hold its first meeting next week.

IGas, which is conducting tests at Barton Moss, has been at the site since November and is expected to leave at the end of the month

'Independent scrutiny'

A legal bid by the landowners to remove protestors was launched in February, with the case due to be heard at Manchester Civil Justice Centre on Thursday.

The force previously said it normally used 60 officers a day to police the site, but on some occasions this rose to 150.

According to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the panel will provide "strategic advice" as well as being "actively involved in police operations during live events".

Mr Lloyd said: "This panel will ensure that there is independent scrutiny of how police approach demonstrations in our region."

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Barton Moss: MP says anti-fracking protest 'over policed'

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An MP has expressed concerns over the number of officers policing a fracking protest site in Salford.

Campaigners set up the camp at Barton Moss last month where exploratory drilling for gas is to take place.

Barbara Keeley, MP for Worsley and Eccles South, said there were 150 officers at the site instead of "patrolling in our local communities".

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) said staffing numbers were "continually under review".

Ms Keeley said: "I am concerned that a large police force is being deployed to police a small protest.

"Greater Manchester Police have over 400 fewer frontline police officers now than we had in 2010, so we also cannot afford to have any of our local police officers deployed at this protest.

"I am worried that crime could rise locally as a result."

'Proportionate number'



Anti-fracking campaigners set up the camp at Barton Moss in November

In a statement, GMP said the force "respects everyone's democratic right to peacefully protest".

It said: "Due to the nature of the protest, a proportionate number of police officers are required to ensure the safety of all sections of the public.

"These officers are drawn from across the force including specialist departments.

"We will continually keep staffing numbers under review to ensure a sensible but safe number of officers involved in the operation."

Energy company IGas has permission to start drilling to see what type of gas or oil can be found at Barton Moss.

Protesters from Frack Free Greater Manchester are living in tents at the site and say residents support them.

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Barton Moss: Government 'must pay anti-fracking demo bill'

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Sixty officers a day are needed to police the protest

The Government has been urged to pay the estimated £750,000 cost of policing anti-fracking demonstrations in Greater Manchester.

Police and Crime Commissioner Tony Lloyd is writing to the Home Office

arguing that the protests put an extra burden on the force.

About 60 officers a day are needed to police demonstrations over exploratory drilling at Barton Moss, in Salford.

IGas's operation, which began in November, is expected to end in April.

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has said the policing operation has cost £330,000 so far and it expects this will rise to £750,000.

The force said although it normally used 60 officers a day to police the protest, on some occasions this rose to 150.

Jim Battle, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, said: "Policing protests is always a challenge, and in the case of Barton Moss it is incredibly expensive. So far this operation has cost GMP £330,000.

"This comes from the general police budget which could be better spent on local policing."

Fracking costs

Mr Battle also said: "Given that ministers have made fracking a priority for the coming years, we believe central government should now foot the bill for the policing of the inevitable protests."

GMP is arguing that a only a quarter of more than 60 people arrested so far are from Greater Manchester, while others have come from places such as Kent, Bristol, Somerset, Lincolnshire, Lancashire, Southsea and Sussex.

Sussex Constabulary is preparing to make an application to recoup some of the £4m it spent on policing the anti-fracking protests in Balcombe.

A Home Office spokeswoman there was provision for forces to apply for funding if they had spent more than 1% on a policing operation.

She added that ministers also had discretionary power to waive the 1% figure.

GMP could cut up to 700 of its 6,900 police officers to save an estimated £66m from its budget over a three-year period from 2014-15.

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Barton Moss fracking test drilling finds gas in shale rock

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IGAS

IGas began exploring potential energy reserves beneath the area in November

Gas has been found in shale rock at a test drilling site in Salford, an energy company has said.

IGas said it had detected the gas in samples from its test well at Barton Moss.

Drilling will now stop while the samples are analysed, which is likely to take six months, the company said.

About 60 anti-fracking protesters in a camp near the site will have a hearing against their eviction at the Court of Appeal on 16 July.

IGas chief executive Andrew Austin said: "These early exploration results are key to our understanding of the potential resource in the area."

The company also said it now hopes to map a 100 sq km area of the north west to determine where else to drill for shale gas.

About 60 protesters have been camped on Barton Moss Road since test drilling started in November last year.

In March, lawyers for the group won a late legal bid to halt their eviction by landowners Peel Investments.

Protesters set up an anti-fracking camp in Barton Moss in November

A date for a Court of Appeal hearing to challenge the eviction has been set for 16 July, said Green Party candidate and defendant in the case Martin Burke.

"This week's UN report on climate change further justifies the necessary and continuing protest at Barton Moss against fracking.

"We need to face up to the challenge and move away from the mass use of fossil fuels, which will also dramatically improve our quality of life."

Hydraulic fracturing or fracking involves pumping a mixture of water and chemicals into shale rock at high pressure to extract gas and oil.

Environmental campaigners claim the process encourages reliance on fossil fuels instead of promoting investment in renewable energy sources.

Proponents of the process say it unlocks huge deposits of oil and natural gas, increases a country's energy security and boosts the economies of the areas in which it takes place.

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Barton Moss site rally held by anti-fracking protesters

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Some protesters set up a camp last month, in a bid to prevent lorries carrying equipment from entering Barton Moss drilling site

Anti-fracking protesters have taken part in a rally at an exploratory gas drilling site in Salford.

Energy company IGas has permission to build a vertical test well at the site in Barton Moss, between Barton Aerodrome and the M62 motorway.

Frack Free Greater Manchester said the rally showed "solidarity" to the campaigners who are camped at the site.

IGas said it had no plans for fracking and was "trying to work sensitively" with protesters.

But campaigners fear the process could lead to the discovery of shale gas and future fracking to extract it.

Some protesters set up a camp last month, in a bid to prevent lorries carrying equipment from entering the site.

'Interrupting people's lives'

IGas said the rig would be taken down in three months.

Carmen Peruga, from Frack Free Greater Manchester, said the rally was organised to show the support for the protest camp that the "wider community" has.

She added they wanted to "let them know" that "there are plenty of people wishing them well".

The protesters marched from the main road to the site during the rally.

Andrew Austin, chief executive of IGas Energy, said: "We really respect the right for peaceful protest but interrupting other people's lives does not really seem fair.

"We are trying to work sensitively with protesters to make sure we can continue operations and they can continue their rightful legitimate protest."

He said the firm would conduct "a full consultation with the local community" before submitting planning applications and bids to renew environmental permits if plans for fracking are developed.

IGas said it could have 10 to 15 sites between Manchester and Liverpool, with each area measuring about the size of a football pitch.

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Anti-fracking protest march staged at Barton Moss

12 January 2014 | Manchester

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About 500 people took part in the "solidarity" march

Hundreds of anti-fracking campaigners staged a march through Salford in protest at plans for exploratory drilling at Barton Moss.

Energy company IGas has permission to build a vertical test well at the site in

Barton Moss, between Barton Aerodrome and the M62 motorway.

Police said about 500 people took part in a "solidarity" march with residents of a protest camp set up at the site.

Some protesters estimated the figure was about 1,000.

IGas has said it plans "exploratory drilling" only.

But campaigners fear the process could lead to the discovery of shale gas and future fracking to extract it.

'Strongly opposed'

A spokesman for Frack Free Greater Manchester, which organised the march, said: "We are wanting to help demonstrate that the fight against exploratory drilling at Barton Moss, which is a precursor to a potential double whammy of fracking for shale gas and the extraction of coal bed methane by IGas, is strongly opposed."

The march started at the Salford City Reds' Stadium in Eccles, progressing along the A57 to the junction of Barton Moss Road and Liverpool Road, Barton, where a rally with speakers and live music was held.

The protesters then marched to the drilling site and back to the stadium.

A similar protest was held at the site in December and the previous month four people were arrested in a two-day attempt to block the access road for IGas lorries.

Earlier in January police searched the protest camp, which was set up in November, as they believed a flare was fired at the force helicopter.

Protesters denied any flare was fired from the camp.

Earlier this year, IGas said there could be up to 170 trillion cubic feet (4,810 cubic km) of gas in the areas of northern England it is licensed to explore,

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Barton Moss fracking test drilling finds gas in shale rock

1 April 2014 | Manchester

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IGAS

IGas began exploring potential energy reserves beneath the area in November

Gas has been found in shale rock at a test drilling site in Salford, an energy company has said.

IGas said it had detected the gas in samples from its test well at Barton Moss.

Drilling will now stop while the samples are analysed, which is likely to take six months, the company said.

About 60 anti-fracking protesters in a camp near the site will have a hearing against their eviction at the Court of Appeal on 16 July.

IGas chief executive Andrew Austin said: "These early exploration results are key to our understanding of the potential resource in the area."

The company also said it now hopes to map a 100 sq km area of the north west to determine where else to drill for shale gas.

About 60 protesters have been camped on Barton Moss Road since test drilling started in November last year.

In March, lawyers for the group won a late legal bid to halt their eviction by landowners Peel Investments.

Protesters set up an anti-fracking camp in Barton Moss in November

A date for a Court of Appeal hearing to challenge the eviction has been set for 16 July, said Green Party candidate and defendant in the case Martin Burke.

"This week's UN report on climate change further justifies the necessary and continuing protest at Barton Moss against fracking.

"We need to face up to the challenge and move away from the mass use of fossil fuels, which will also dramatically improve our quality of life."

Hydraulic fracturing or fracking involves pumping a mixture of water and chemicals into shale rock at high pressure to extract gas and oil.

Environmental campaigners claim the process encourages reliance on fossil fuels instead of promoting investment in renewable energy sources.

Proponents of the process say it unlocks huge deposits of oil and natural gas, increases a country's energy security and boosts the economies of the areas in which it takes place.

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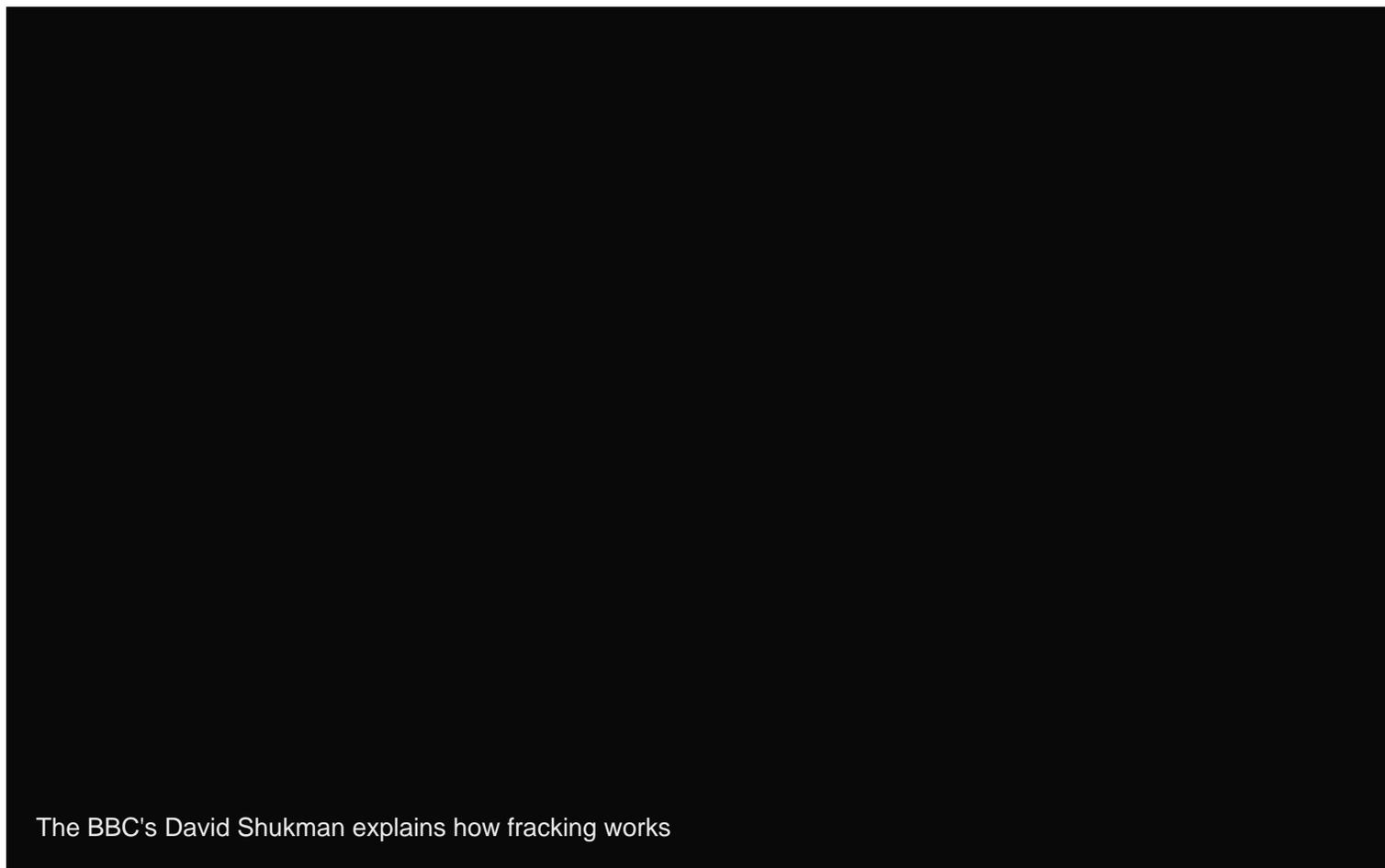
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What is fracking and why is it controversial?

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The BBC's David Shukman explains how fracking works

Drilling companies suggest trillions of cubic feet of shale gas may be recoverable from underneath parts of the UK through a process known as "fracking".

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a technique designed to recover gas and oil from shale rock. But how does it work and why is it controversial?

What is fracking?

Fracking is the process of drilling down into the earth before a high-pressure water mixture is directed at the rock to release the gas inside.

Water, sand and chemicals are injected into the rock at high pressure which allows the gas to flow out to the head of the well.

The process can be carried out vertically or, more commonly, by drilling horizontally to the rock layer and can create new pathways to release gas or can be used to extend existing channels.

The term fracking refers to how the rock is fractured apart by the high pressure mixture.

Is fracking taking place in the UK?

No. Drilling for shale gas is only at an exploratory phase in the UK.

However, reserves of shale gas have been identified **across large swathes of the UK**, particularly in northern England.

More than 100 licences have been awarded by the government to firms in the UK, allowing them to pursue a range of oil and gas exploration activities in certain areas.

But before firms can begin fracking they must also receive planning permission from the relevant local council.

The government has said it would make a final decision on whether to allow drilling **at two sites in Lancashire**, after the application was rejected by Lancashire County Council in June. An appeal will be heard next year.

Applications have also been submitted in **Yorkshire** and **Nottinghamshire**.

Downing Street has said shale gas **planning applications in England are to be fast-tracked** to crack down on councils that delay decisions.

However, Labour has called for a moratorium on fracking "until we can be sure it is safe".

Governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have all said they will oppose fracking - until further research is completed into its environmental impact.

Has test drilling been completed?

In 2011, energy company Cuadrilla suspended test fracking operations near Blackpool, in Lancashire, after **two earthquakes of 1.5 and 2.2 magnitude** hit the area

A subsequent study found it was "highly probable" that shale gas test drilling triggered the tremors.

A government-appointed panel said there could be more tremors as a result of fracking, but they will be too small to do structural damage above ground.

It recommended greater monitoring and that operators should observe a "traffic light" regime, with tremors of magnitude 0.5 or above triggering a "red light" and an immediate halt.

What are the advantages of fracking?

Fracking has driven down gas prices in the US

Fracking allows drilling firms to access difficult-to-reach resources of oil and gas.

In the US it has significantly boosted domestic oil production and driven down gas prices. It is estimated to have offered gas security to the US and Canada for about 100 years, and has presented an opportunity to generate electricity at half the CO2 emissions of coal.

The industry suggests fracking of shale gas could contribute significantly to the UK's future energy needs.

The Task Force on Shale Gas, an industry-funded body, has **said the UK needs to start fracking** to establish the possible economic impact of shale gas - saying it could create thousands of jobs.

Why is it controversial?

The extensive use of fracking in the US, where it has revolutionised the energy industry, has prompted environmental concerns.

Fracking uses huge amounts of water, which must be transported to the fracking site, at significant environmental cost.

Environmentalists say potentially carcinogenic chemicals used may escape and contaminate groundwater around the fracking site. The industry suggests pollution incidents are the results of bad practice, rather than an inherently risky technique.

There are also worries that the fracking process can cause small earth tremors.

Campaigners say that fracking is simply distracting energy firms and governments from investing in renewable sources of energy, and encouraging continued reliance on fossil fuels.

"Shale gas is not the solution to the UK's energy challenges," said Friends of the Earth energy campaigner Tony Bosworth. "We need a 21st century energy revolution based on efficiency and renewables, not more fossil fuels that will add to climate change."

Following the Paris climate change deal, Friends of the Earth chief executive Craig Bennett said Mr Cameron must "end Britain's scandalous support for fossil fuels, including fracking".

What does the government say?

An anti-fracking protester writes messages on a wall in Lancashire

The government believes shale gas has the potential to provide the UK with greater energy security, growth and jobs.

Prime Minister **David Cameron has repeatedly spoken** of his support for fracking, saying it could support tens of thousand of UK jobs and reduce bills.

"I want us to get on board this change that is doing so much good and bringing so much benefit to North America. I want us to benefit from it here as well," he has previously said.

What about National Parks?

Claire Marshall explains how fracking could be done in national parks

In January, MPs overwhelmingly rejected an outright ban on fracking but ministers did pledge an "outright ban" on fracking in national parks.

However, in December **MPs voted to allow fracking** at 1,200m below national parks, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads and World Heritage Sites.

Critics, including Labour and Greenpeace, accused the government of a U-turn.

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