

PRESS RELEASE

16th December 2011

UK Shale Gas and Groundwater Methane

The British Geological Survey is undertaking a new project to establish the baseline of methane levels in groundwater throughout the UK. Evidence from the USA has shown very high methane concentrations in groundwater in areas of shale gas exploitation, which have been directly related to shale gas operations. However there is considerable uncertainty as to the source of methane, its migration pathways and transport processes, and crucially there is no baseline data on methane concentrations in groundwater from before the onset of shale gas exploitation.

In the UK, the BGS are therefore establishing a baseline for methane in groundwater in different aquifers **before** shale gas development gets underway, against which future environmental impacts can be assessed and appropriate management decisions taken.



Mam Tor – a prominent Peak District hill is made partly of Carboniferous Shale, the same shale that's being drilled in Blackpool BGS©NERC

Professor Mike Stephenson, Head of Energy at the British Geological Survey says "this is a unique survey which will serve as a baseline for all future shale gas activities and ensure that we protect our precious groundwater."

The survey will establish the background concentrations of methane in groundwater in different hydrogeological settings with an initial focus on those areas identified for future shale gas exploration, starting with the northwest of England.

Ends



For further details or to arrange media interviews please contact:

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Notes for Editors

The following are available for interview:

- Prof Mike Stephenson, Head of Energy, British Geological Survey
- Dr Rob Ward, Head of Groundwater Science, British Geological Survey

For additional information go to: www.bgs.ac.uk

Photographs are available from our ftp server:

<ftp://ftp.bgs.ac.uk/pubload/Groundwatermethane>

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Courtesy of the British Geological Survey (BGS©NERC)

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.