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Plaid MEP backs moratorium on 'fracking'

Press release from Plaid MEP Jill Evans

Plaid MEP and party President **Jill Evans** called for a moratorium on the controversial process known as 'fracking' for shale gas. Ms Evans joined forces with other MEPs in a cross party bid to halt the practice.

'Fracking' or hydraulic fracturing is a process where companies drill underground, injecting water and potentially toxic chemicals to fracture rocks deep underground and release shale gas.

The UK government acknowledged recently that this was the cause of minor earth tremors in the Blackpool area. There are concerns, too, about the pollution of the water table.

MEPs voted in Strasbourg on two reports on the controversial practice. This comes ahead of widely anticipated proposals by the European Commission to regulate the exploitation of shale gas, expected next year.

Jill Evans jointly tabled an amendment with more than a hundred MEPs to call for an EU moratorium. MEPs backed calls for caution, notably a ban in sensitive areas, and underlined the need for tougher regulation and proper application of existing EU rules, but fell short of supporting a complete moratorium.

Speaking from Strasbourg, the Party of Wales MEP said:

"This is an issue of great importance to us in Wales. Areas all over the country are being targeted for test drilling.

"All of Wrexham and Flintshire as well as neighbouring parts of Cheshire have been included in a licensing scheme for test drilling. I recently spoke at a well attended public meeting in Wreccsam. Permission for two test bores had been granted to private firms in 2009 at Penley and Bowling Bank, Wrexham. People are really worried about this untried and untested technique.

"Plaid Cymru is calling for a total ban on fracking until all of the safety concerns have been addressed.

"We want to see the National Assembly given responsibility for energy projects. That is the only way to ensure that Welsh energy resources are exploited sensitively, sustainably and safely in the interests of the people of

Wales."

Note:

The amendment reads:

On the basis of the precautionary principle and on the principle that preventive action should be taken, taking into account the risks and the negative climate, environmental and health impacts involved in hydraulic fracturing and the gaps identified in the EU regulatory regime for shale gas activities, urges Member States not to authorise any new hydraulic fracturing operations in the EU;

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