To spark a shale gas revolution, shift mineral rights from the Crown to landowners [1]

Written by **Sam Bowman** [2] | Wednesday 16 January 2013

Shale gas seems to be sparking an energy revolution in the United States, but has made little traction in the UK.In his column for*The Scotsman*yesterday [3], Peter Jones discussed the main problem with shale in the UK compared with the US:

> *The big reason was succinctly put by Charles Hendry MP, when he was energy minister: ?The situation here is very different from that in the United States, where, for example, landowners own the mineral rights beneath their homes. That is not the case in this country, so there is not the same economic driver.?*
>
> *Discussing this recently with two Scottish economists, Gavin McCrone and Donald MacRae, the answer suddenly occurred to me. Why don?t we create the economic driver?*
>
> *Simply put, we could do that by changing the law so that the rights to minerals in the ground under our feet belong, not to the Crown (ie, the government) but to the landowner.*
>
> *...in Scotland, why have onshore wind turbines multiplied? Partly, it is because the owners of the land on which they sit, mostly moorland with otherwise little economic value, get an annual rent with payments also often going to nearby communities. Without that income, I doubt that the onshore wind industry would be half the size it is.*
>
> *By changing the law, the same could be done to popularise shale oil and gas.*

It's an interesting idea. Of course (as Peter admits), it would be over-optimistic to hope that such a move would yield as much gas as it has in parts of the US, but it would give people more of a reason to look.

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