



## IEAGHG Information Paper 2017-IP59; Gas in Europe Comes Under Fire

At COP23, Friends of the Earth released a report that they commissioned to determine how much natural gas Europe can afford to use in its future energy mix. The scientific study 'Natural Gas and Climate Change' was carried out by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in the UK. Its lead conclusion was that EU countries can afford just nine more years of burning gas and other fossil fuels at the current rate before they will have exhausted their share of the carbon budget for maximum temperature rises of 2°C. The report can be found at:

[http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/extractive\\_industries/2017/natural\\_gas\\_and\\_climate\\_change\\_anderson\\_broderick\\_october2017.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/extractive_industries/2017/natural_gas_and_climate_change_anderson_broderick_october2017.pdf).

The report does not include CCS in its assessment as an option for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from natural gas firing for power generation. The reason for excluding CCS is stated by the authors who are sceptical that CCS can be “built-out” at the rate required based on current experience.

Interestingly, the report’s authors exclude NETs technology from their assessments as well. They state that:

*“there is wide recognition that the efficacy and global rollout of such technologies (NETs) are highly speculative, with a non-trivial risk of failing to deliver at, or even approaching, the scales typically assumed in the models”.*

Going further they say that: *“Whilst the authors of this report are supportive of funding further research, development and, potentially, deployment of NETs, the assumption that they will significantly extend the carbon budgets is a serious moral hazard”*

The paper the report authors cite with regard to the “wide recognition” is: ‘The trouble with negative emissions: Reliance on negative-emission concepts locks in humankind’s carbon addiction’. One of the authors of which is the same author as the Friends of the Earth report. This, to me, totally undermines the point they are trying to infer that there is “wide-spread” acceptance that NET’s technology is flawed. The paper that is referenced can be found at:

<http://www.geoengineeringmonitor.org/2016/10/the-trouble-with-negative-emissions/>

Alongside this “scientific Study”, Friends of the Earth launched a separate report 'Can the climate afford Europe's gas addiction?' This report warns that Europe is still planning for decades of fossil fuel use including support and subsidies for new gas infrastructure. It calls for the EU's energy system to be transformed rapidly to be fossil fuel free by 2030. The report can be found at:

[http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/extractive\\_industries/2017/can\\_the\\_climate\\_afford\\_europes\\_gas\\_addiction\\_report\\_november2017.pdf](http://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/extractive_industries/2017/can_the_climate_afford_europes_gas_addiction_report_november2017.pdf).

So, what are Friends of the Earth proposing as an alternative? Well, it comes as no surprise that they want to see:

- The EU’s energy system needs to be transformed rapidly to be fossil fuel free by 2030.
- The EU should urgently aim to reduce its energy demand by moving towards energy sufficiency and investing in energy savings, in particular through the efficiency first principle that systematically prioritises efficiency solutions to new investments in energy supply.



- The EU should plan for a 100% renewable, people-owned energy system. For the energy transition to proceed at the speed required it is vital that citizens and communities have ownership of it and that the necessary legal framework is put in place to enable it.
- The EU should not divert vital funds and resources to false solutions such as carbon capture and storage, unsustainable bioenergy or other false solutions.

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, there is a strong anti-fossil lobby amongst the green NGOs and around the COP meetings. It is strongest and most visible against coal. However, this activity by Friends of the Earth shows that natural gas is second on their agenda. Of course, natural gas combustion drags in other environmental issues related to fracking, pipeline emissions etc.

The value of seeing this exercise for the CCS community is that it highlights where the Green NGO counter narrative has moved. It is no longer about leakage; it no longer says there are no CCS projects in existence. Its focus is now on the build out of CCS that is required under the integrated assessment models for CCS and BIOCCS. The IEA have shown that we are behind the build rate required for CCS to meet the 2C target and GCCSI have shown that the number of new CCS projects coming on stream and under development is slowing. Both points tend to add support to the Green NGO counter CCS narrative. The report IEAGHG has just produced; on industry build out rates<sup>1</sup> will help the pro CCS narrative because it demonstrates that the required build out rates can be achieved where there are strong incentives to do so. The big issue here and the one that we are currently struggling to develop is the “incentives”, both policy and financial, to drive the take up and the build out of new CCS projects.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ieaghg.org/publications/technical-reports/129-publications/new-reports-list/803-2017-tr6>