



Fracking is in the news again – this time following an adjudication by the Advertising Standards Authority that a leaflet produced by shale gas extraction company Cuadrilla and posted through thousands of doors in Lancashire last year contained elements that breached its guidelines in respect of claims that can and cannot be made in advertising materials.

In all, the ASA upheld six of the complaints made by the anti-fracking group Refraktion; another was partly upheld.

The issue was the same as any involving extravagant claims of quality for any product or service – it has to be true, demonstrably true and not contain any exaggeration (legal, decent, honest and truthful, as the slogan used to run).

The response of Cuadrilla is that it would: “Continue to provide the best scientific information to those people who live in the communities where shale gas exploration will take place.”

If the company had paid to have that statement printed onto a leaflet and posted through my door, I'd have complained to the ASA myself.

Cuadrilla expressed itself “disappointed” by the ruling. Its chief executive Francis Egan, however, said it was “...important to note the ASA has confirmed that hydraulic fracturing can be done safely”.

He also said that Cuadrilla believed “...the ASA should have consulted scientific experts before

reaching its conclusions.”

I think we all say Amen to that.

- A British LibDem MEP has argued that an increase in coal use in the EU – for the first time in many years – and a stalling of investment in green energy investment is because the current price for carbon in the emissions trading scheme is too low.

Fiona Hall MEP wrote in the online newsletter Public Service Europe: “The ETS is the largest carbon trading scheme in the world and is designed to drive down emissions from the power sector and heavy industry on an annual basis to achieve Europe's 20% GHG reduction target by 2020. Setting a carbon price was also meant to promote low carbon investments and drive innovation into green technology.

“Yet, the current EU carbon price is almost 10 times lower than was expected when the ETS was agreed in 2008 – due to the large oversupply of emission allowances in the wake of the economic crisis. The current carbon price of less than €3 per tonne of carbon dioxide – against the €30 originally envisaged – is too low to stimulate investments in low carbon technology. Instead, last year Europe saw an increase in the use of coal for the first time in the recent years.”

- Following celebrations to mark its 40th anniversary in March it now has an opportunity to prove its mettle once more in the County Council elections next week. The party is fielding over 900 candidates, including one in my constituency for the first time in many years. There are also candidates in both St Anne's North and St Anne's South in Lancashire, one of the areas where Cuadrilla is looking to extract shale gas.

Can't wait for Thursday!

Chris Stokes