



**British
Geological Survey**

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Geoscience for our changing Earth

Geo-communications

Communicating Earth Science, MGeol, Plymouth University
Wednesday 20th November 2013

Clive Mitchell

Head of Corporate Communications & Publications
British Geological Survey

In the next 2 hours....

- What makes 'news' newsworthy
- The 'So what' factor
- Understanding the media
- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Broadcast media
- Use of the web
- Social media
- Science festivals & public engagement
- Media monitoring

My background...

- Industrial minerals geologist for nearly 25 years at BGS, mainly overseas (Africa, Middle East, Afghanistan...)
- As an applied scientist I've been communicating with clients/ funders for years (& they still give me money!)
- My involvement with the BGS Press Office began in 2007 with a Central TV weather forecast from the BGS Christmas carol concert!





Clive Mitchell



Sarah Nice



Lauren Noakes

BGS Press Office

- The BGS Press Office is part of the Communications team which is also responsible for web delivery, outreach, internal comms and publications.
- The Press Office aims to create the maximum impact for BGS science via the media
- We do this with press releases, press conferences & briefings, media interviews, web content, social media and videos

So you think its *newsworthy*...?

- Remember news is – **new, unusual, interesting** - apply this test to your own research / work and ask :
 - How would this affect people?*
 - Would anyone else be interested?*
 - Is it all just a big ‘So what?’*
- Issues that affect large numbers of people generally attract media interest e.g. earthquakes, volcanic eruptions & groundwater shortages
- Other factors include: human interest, connection to current news, links to famous people/ events, superlatives, cute animals etc...

Top BGS news stories in 2013

1. Earthquakes
2. Landslides
3. Shale gas
4. Fossils
5. Groundwater/ flooding
6. Geothermal
7. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)
8. Space weather and geomagnetism
9. Archaeological dating
10. Volcanic eruptions and ash



'Average' quake hits East Midlands



EXPRESS

BGS seismologists interpret the Loughborough earthquake, 18th Jan 2013

Weather: Landslide Alert Amid Floods And Rain

The Met Office warns all areas with heavy rain are at risk of landslides and urges Boxing Day walkers to take extra care.

7:15pm UK, Wednesday 26 December 2012



Video: Landslide Warning Amid Heavy Rain

[Tweet](#) 99
 [Recommend](#) 119
 [g+1](#) 8
 [Email](#)

A landslide warning has been issued by the Met Office, as continued heavy downpours sparked fears of unstable cliff faces.

Boxing Day walkers were urged to take extra care in "dangerous conditions" with flooding set to worsen across parts of England and Wales today.

thetrainline.com **Save** money on train tickets

Nottingham to Bristol Temple Meads	Nottingham to Sheffield
£20	£3
Book now	Book now

Excludes £1.50 booking/transaction fee.

Top Stories



Revealed: UK's Most Wanted 'Hiding In Spain'



Illustrious To Help With Typhoon Aftermath



MPs In £3.6m 'Back Door' Funding Scandal

27 June 2013 Last updated at 15:23



UK shale gas resources 'greater than thought'

COMMENTS (847)

UK shale gas resources may be far greater than previously thought, a report for the government says.

The British Geological Survey estimates there may be 1,300 trillion cubic feet of shale gas present in the north of England - double previous estimates.

Meanwhile the government has announced measures to enable shale gas drilling as part of its infrastructure plans.



Osborne: "Local communities should get, for example, at least £100,000 for every fracking well that is created"

Top

US can...
British...
Fifth cy...
Cancer

Feat

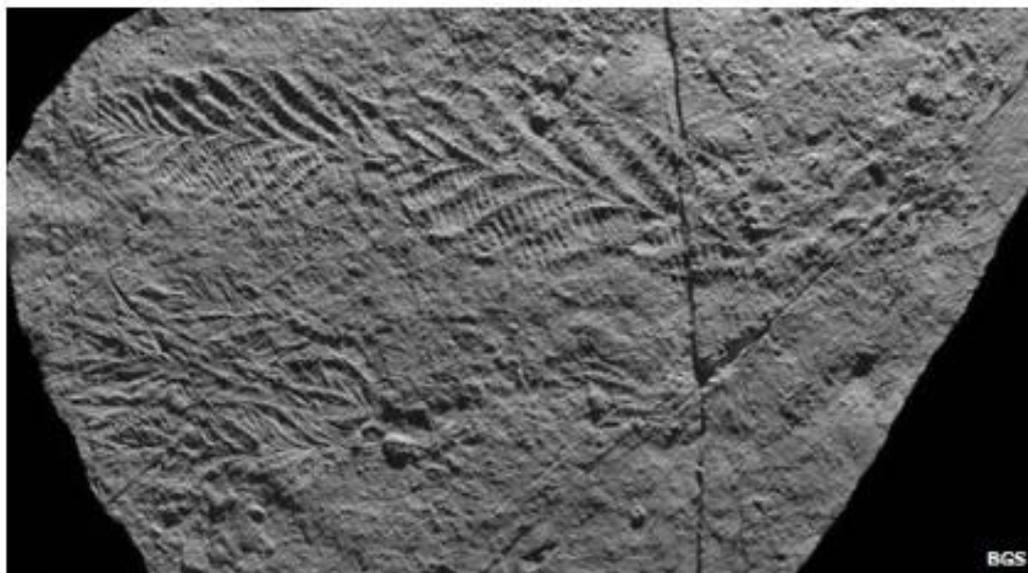
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4 May 2013 Last updated at 09:31



Fossil finds in Leicestershire 'absolutely world class'



This cast shows two of the newly-found fossils

Geologists say thousands more fossils exist at a Leicestershire site than previously realised.

The fossils, which are almost impossible to see with the naked eye, were found at Charnwood Forest.

Top Stories

[US carrier boosts typhoon](#)[British ship to aid typhoon](#)[Fifth cyclist killed in nine d](#)[Cancer hospital in special](#)

Features

[Wanted](#)

A new u
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[The h](#)

Prince C
he was

[Home](#)

The ins
Rocket

Going up - Elevator pitch



- Can you explain your science, using layman's terms, in the short time spent in an elevator?
- This is good practice for media interviews – you have 30 seconds ... harder than it sounds!
- Every scientist should be able to explain their scientific research to any audience
- Lets have a go.....

As an idea, pitch this.....

- Your most recent Geo-Comm Blog
- Your Urban Geologist project idea(s)
- Your argument for or against shale gas exploitation
- Your argument for or against Nuclear Power
- Your argument for or against mineral resource exploitation in the UK
- Robotic mining of the sea floor
- Mining of the asteroid belt
- The future of geological mapping / maps
- The value of geology on the TV

Understanding the media

- Surprisingly, journalists are people too !
- They are after a NEW science story with impact.
- They are not your friend although mostly friendly.
- Deadlines rule – they won't wait while you dither!
- Be honest (to a point) – if you don't know say so.
- Don't be afraid to contact them – but don't hassle!
- Stick to what you know.
- Follow them on twitter – retweet & message occasionally



National journalists

BBC - David Shukman, Jonathan Amos, Matt McGrath, John Moylan, Tom Feilden, Pallab Ghosh

Channel 4 News – Tom Clarke

Daily Mail – Nick McDermott

Daily Telegraph – Richard Gray

Financial Times – Clive Cookson

Freelance – David Derbyshire

Guardian – Alok Jha, Ian Sample, James Randerson

Independent – Steve Connor

Irish Times – Dick Ahlstrom

Observer – Robin McKie

The Sun – Ben Jackson

Sunday Times – Jonathan Leake

The Times – Tom Whipple, Ben Webster, Hannah Devlin



Press releases

- The sole purpose of a press release is to get the interest of a journalist
- It must be clear, immediate and relevant
- The title is crucial
- The 5 W's – Who, What, Where, When & Why
- Key messages
- Pictures may serve the same purpose
- Sometimes a telephone call or email may do the trick instead



Press release exercise

- Have a look at the text provided
- We need a snappy title for the press release
- This is the first, and possibly only, thing a journalist will see
- You need to grab his attention so he opens rather than deletes the email
- OK ideas



**British
Geological Survey**

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Applied geoscience for our
changing Earth

PRESS RELEASE

16th May 2012

Let's do the time walk at the British Geological Survey

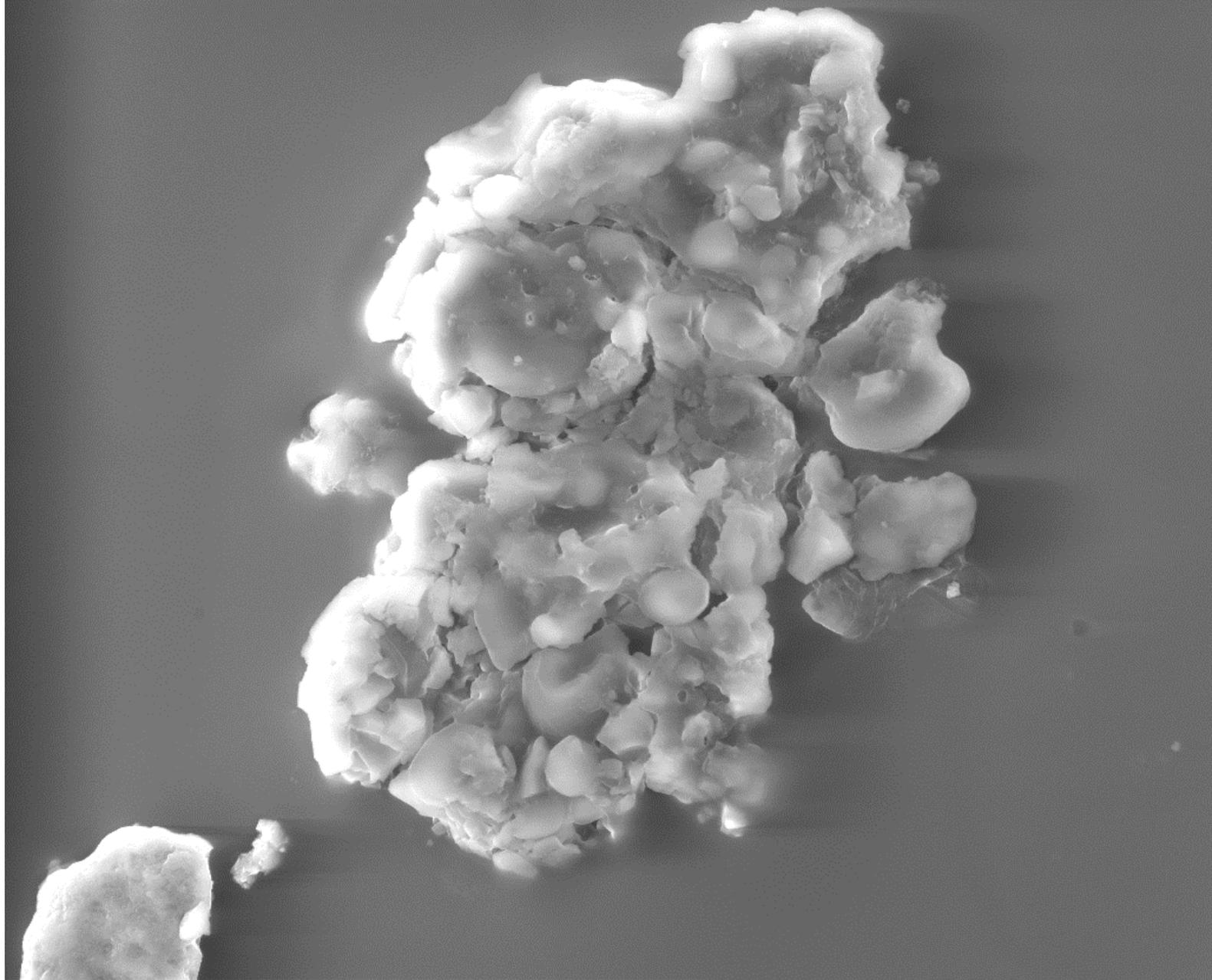
Three billion years of Earth's history squeezed into a 130-metre-long stone concourse, every step bringing you 25 million years closer to the present day. The new Geological Walk at the British Geological Survey (BGS), one of the Natural Environment Research Council's research centres, is part of a recently completed redevelopment. The new development includes a new eco-friendly office for BGS scientists and support staff, reception and conference facility. The UK Government Chief Scientist, Sir John Beddington is officially opening the new development on 17th May 2012.



A picture speaks a thousand words



Volcanic ash plume from the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, Iceland, April 2010



Volcanic ash particle from the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano, Iceland, April 2010

British Geological Survey © NERC

50 μm

Iceland Volcanic Ash Particulate

Press conferences

- Typically for the big stories or events
- Science Media Centre (SMC)
e.g. Shale Gas (seismic mitigation; resources; background briefings); London Earth
Science Festival
e.g. Critical Metals; Earthquakes; Space Weather; Geothermal energy



Dr Alan Thomson
British Geological Survey

PRESS CONFERENCE: British Science Festival, Aberdeen 2012

Broadcast media

- Are you a TV star?
- Or do you have a face for Radio?
- Live or pre-recorded? Live everytime !





LIVE INTERVIEW: Nick Higham interviewing Andrew Bloodworth at BSF 2011

BGS comms team advice.....

- Work with your press office
- Interviews – be available, take your press officer, don't forget to breathe, don't look at the camera and be yourself
- Stick to what you know, keep it short and simple, (avoid jargon) and spell out your organisation name in full, repeat it and check it is credited correctly



Quiz time.....

1. Earthquakes – how is the size expressed?
2. Landslides – what has caused increase in last 18 months?
3. Shale gas – who is Ed Davey?
4. CCS – what does this mean?
5. Sinkholes – what are they?
6. Radon – a big issue in the SW, where does it come from?
7. Shale gas – resources are measured in TCF, what is that?
8. Government – who is David Willets?
9. Nuclear Energy – what is the NDA?
10. Iceland – which volcano caused disruption in 2010?
 - a) Grímsvötn (Grims-vert-n)
 - b) Popocatepetl (Pop-o-cat-a-petal)
 - c) Eyjafjallajökull (Aya-fee-yat-la-yur-kurch)



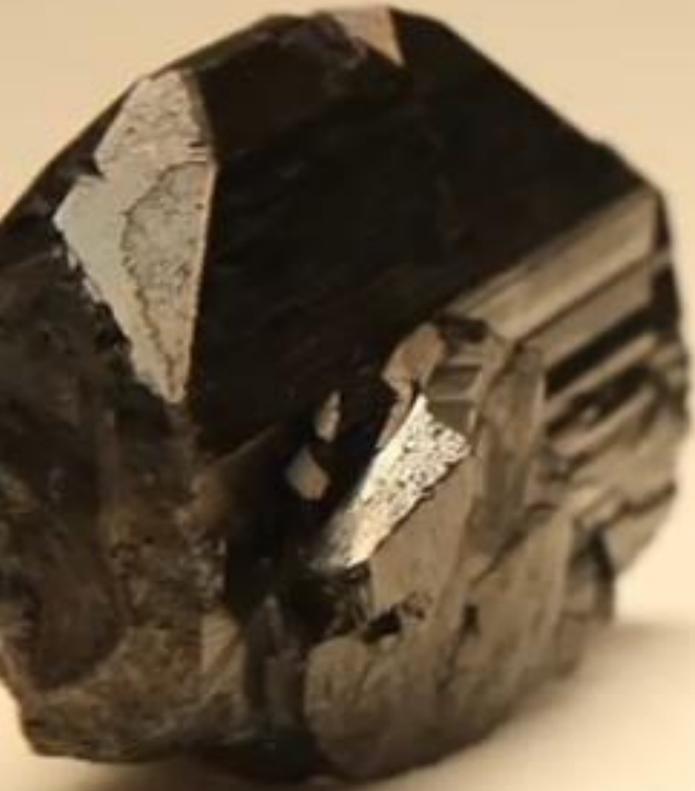
Web

- BGS News Room
- BGS in the Media
- Press Releases
- Research News & Awards
- Newsletter
- Highlights – our web editor creates web pages for every ‘story’ and continually updates them
- Videos

e.g. Tungsten – Cutting Edge and Critical

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b1LgVNq1Jk>





Tungsten

Cutting Edge
and Critical



1:21 / 9:41



Tungsten: Cutting edge and critical



bgschannel · 169 videos



Subscribed



833 views



7



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To tweet or not to tweet?

- Whether or not to use social media is a dilemma - banning its use is not a solution, it's a missed opportunity
- In my opinion, its fine but remember to moderate your choice of words to suit a wider audience
- Practice this four word social media policy:

Act Like A Grownup

and follow me on Twitter! @CliveBGS



- Tweets >
- Following >
- Followers >
- Favorites >
- Lists >



- Who to follow · Refresh · View all
- 
ITW ROCOL @rocol ×
 Follow Promoted
 - 
Owain Morgan @o_owain ×
 Follow
 - 
QueenMargaretUni @QMUniver... ×
 Follow
- Popular accounts · Find friends

- Trends · Change
- #ThankYouSachin
 - #FF_A7la_Special
 - #Dubai
 - #AMAs



Clive Mitchell
@CliveBGS

Minerals Geologist & Press Officer for the British Geological Survey. Chairman @EIGConference 2014. Real Ale brewer. YouTube/CliveJM. Views expressed are my own
Nottingham, UK · bgs.ac.uk/staff/profiles...

1,523 TWEETS 834 FOLLOWING 659 FOLLOWERS Edit profile

Tweets

 **Metalbanker** @Metalbanker 20h 👍

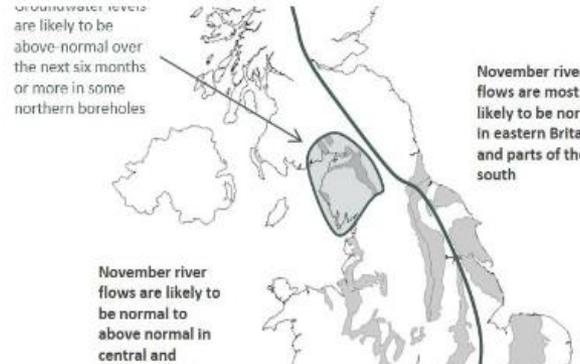
#Cerium Nano-sized Electron Sponge Uncovered Using X-rays : Science : Nature World News bit.ly/HVCw14

Retweeted by Clive Mitchell

Expand Reply Retweeted Favorited More

 **Clive Mitchell** @CliveBGS 13 Nov

Groundwater forecasting now available monthly from @BritGeoSurvey via Hydrological Outlook hydoutuk.net pic.twitter.com/vRMLvqqPPj



November river flows are likely to be above-normal over the next six months or more in some northern boreholes

November river flows are most likely to be normal in eastern Britain and parts of the south

November

BGS Social Media Guidance

- Use of personal social media is permitted to communicate BGS science/ information
- Follow the NERC code of conduct:
 - Integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality
 - Avoid Government policies, practices and controversial issues, and avoid personal attacks and politics
 - Check accuracy & sensitivity, use common sense, if unsure seek advice or don't post
 - Postings considered inappropriate may result in disciplinary action



Science Festivals

- Cheltenham Science Festival (June)
- Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition (July)
- British Science Festival (September)
- Ideas for future events?

Outreach / Public Engagement

- National Science & Engineering Week (NSEW)
- Open Days at Keyworth & Edinburgh sites
- Discovering Geology
- School Seismology project
- BGS Keyworth site tours including geological walk





BGS Press Officer keeping on eye on Keyworth Open Day 2013



Tsunami wall demonstration, Murchison House Open Day 2013

How to keep track....

- **Cision** is an online monitoring service we use that keeps track of the BGS in print, broadcast and online media.
- You can set up your own free media monitoring using **Google Alerts** (www.google.com/alerts) – this can be set up to email you as stories emerge
- Keep a record of ‘hits’ and web links where available



09 November 2013

Outlet: Daily Telegraph

Title/ programme: [Fracking 'is safe... and it's coming soon'; We're tackling fracking myths, says minister](#)

Media Group: Print

Media Type: Daily Newspaper

Publication Date: 09/11/2013

Extract: ... been concentrated in the North, but Mr Fallon said the South could also be in line for fracking. Next year, the **British Geological Survey** will publish a map of England, identifying sites most ...

Outlet: ENERGY LIVE NEWS

Title/ programme: [Shale gas is 'saving the planet from coal'](#)

Media Group: Internet

Media Type: News Web Sites

Publication Date: 09/11/2013

Extract: . If I can extract 10% of that and the **British Geological Survey** says the same thing, we can power the UK for 50 years.

[Link to Source](#)

Outlet: Telegraph

Title/ programme: [Fracking 'is safe... and it's coming soon'](#)

Media Group: Internet

Media Type: Online Print Version

Publication Date: 08/11/2013

Extract: for fracking. Next year, the **British Geological Survey** will publish a map of the "southern basin" of England, identify

[Link to Source](#)

News

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[Fracking 'is safe... and it's coming soon'](#)

Telegraph.co.uk - Nov 9, 2013

Mr Fallon said its report will conclude that **fracking** is largely **safe**, and will say there is no risk of contamination of water supplies. The report will be part of a drive by the Government to dispel fears about shale gas, which have led to protests against energy ...

[Water report 'says fracking is safe'](#)

BBC News - Nov 9, 2013

A study by the water industry has concluded that "**fracking**" to extract shale gas is **safe**, the government says. Opponents say water used in the process could be contaminated and could enter domestic supplies. UK Water Industry Research, a research body ...

[Minister's vow on fracking 'myths'](#)

Belfast Telegraph - Nov 9, 2013

... **safe** and affordable energy system, based on cutting energy waste and developing Britain's abundant renewable power potential." A recent report by Public Health England said an initial review suggested the risks to people's health from **fracking** were low ...

[Prepare for fracking, UK minister tells Southern England](#)

RT (blog) - Nov 11, 2013

Michael Fallon said that a study by the water industry, due to be released in a few weeks, will conclude that **fracking is safe**. Fallon, a conservative minister, who has posts in the business and energy departments, which might be why he knows the results of ...

[British minister says fracking is safe, and coming soon](#)

UPI.com - Nov 9, 2013

LONDON, Nov. 9 (UPI) -- A British government minister says "there are genuine concerns" but shale gas **fracking is safe** and will come soon, possibly throughout England. Michael Fallon -- minister of state in the Department of Energy and Climate Change ...

[There mustn't be a north / south divide when it comes to fracking](#)

Spectator.co.uk (blog) - Nov 9, 2013

Despite all the scaremongering, **fracking** is as **safe** as any other form of energy extraction. Fallon tells the Telegraph that Water UK is soon to say that it won't contaminate water supplies. Given all this, the sooner this country gets **fracking**, the better.

[Has your area been identified for fracking?](#)

Burnley Express - Nov 9, 2013

In addition, essential water supplies could easily be contaminated at source while vast volumes of

Search this story

Any content

Articles

Sorted by relevance

Sorted by date

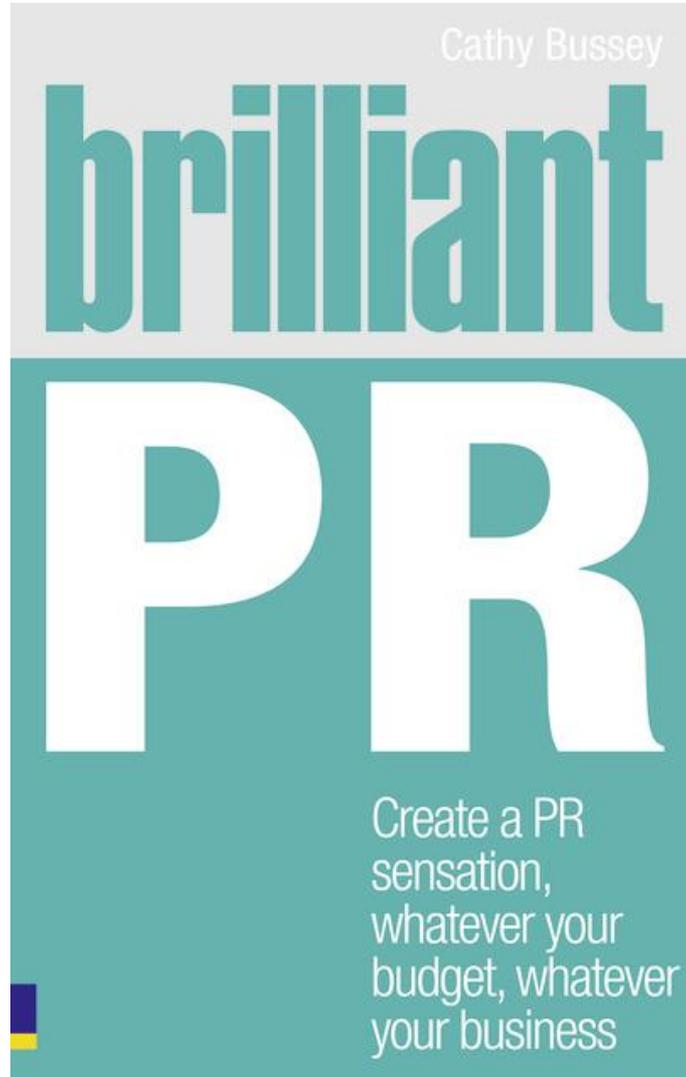
[Reset options](#)

When a big story breaks...

- Twitter is often first to tell us a story is breaking, usually an earthquake
- Next the phone starts ringing off the hook, typically starting mid-morning & slows down mid-afternoon
- All day it's a scramble to find scientists (& get them to talk), keep track and cover all requests
- Email alerts from our online monitoring service start piling up in my inbox
- Often it lasts for several days gradually tailing off



Recommended reference



Most of what I have told you (and much more) is covered in the book,

Brilliant PR

by Cathy Bussey

(deputy editor of **PRWeek** magazine)



Where can I get training.....

- **Introduction to the News Media**
Run by the Science Media Centre, ½ day session with real journalists, FREE !
- **Media Fellowships**
British Science Association scheme, 3-6 weeks working with the media, 10 per year.
- **STEM Ambassador**
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics Network (STEMNET)



Key take home messages...

- Science stories have to be interesting
- Stick to what you know
- Be brave, take the plunge, its worthwhile and fun!



Thank you for your attention



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