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Can gas decarbonise? – Interview: Jonathan Stern, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

Gas is a clean, readily available and economically attractive fuel, which produces half the CO₂ emissions of coal. It has a proven track record of helping reduce atmospheric pollution, and has a key role to play in the transition to a low-carbon future by partnering with intermittent renewables. That, at least, is the way the gas industry would like the world to see things. But the message often presented by the media – and the one that policy makers mostly hear – is that gas is a major contributor to CO₂ emissions, and that its supposed carbon advantage over coal is to a large extent cancelled out by methane leakage – a far more potent greenhouse gas than CO₂. Moreover, the production of gas – whether by fracking or conventional means – is environmentally damaging, gas pricing is volatile and unpredictable, and gas is vulnerable to cut offs in supply for political reasons. Gas Matters spoke to Professor Jonathan Stern of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES) and discussed how gas can be presented in a light that will gain the support of policy makers.

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