



Everybody in the construction and associated industries these days is talking about the Green Deal. In particular, there is a clamour to become assessors for the scheme, which claims to be a sure-fire way of recouping the cost of installing environmentally-friendly heating and insulation by savings on your energy bill.

There is no money-back guarantee, of course. Launching the scheme on 28 January, Cleggie said: "The Green Deal will help thousands of homes stay warm for less. Those people will benefit from energy saving improvements – and their energy bills will fall."

There is a group of people who are guaranteed to make money from the scheme – just as they do with all such initiatives. Suddenly, from out of the woodwork has sprung a forest of people offering to train the assessors and all the other operatives involved in the scheme. At around a grand-and-a-half for the three-day course to become an assessor, there is no shortage of people wanting to take up the offer.

Let's just hope that this is one scheme that provides more than just an excuse for a few politicians to pat themselves on the backs and hand a bucketful of our money to some classroom dwellers.

- One place where the Green Deal will undoubtedly be much in evidence will be Greenbuild Expo in Manchester on 8 and 9 May. The show will see more-or-less the entire sustainable construction industry converging on the city for two days. That is great news for those of us for whom the trek to London two or three times a year for networking purposes is more than either the work schedule or the budget can stand.

Alongside Greenbuild Expo, at the Midland Hotel, the Greenbuild Awards will be presented on 8 May. Good luck to all the shortlisted nominees.

- Staying in the North West (well I would, wouldn't I), it appears that fracking isn't such a hazardous activity after all. A report by scientists at Durham University concluded the risk of earthquakes caused by fracking were 'minimal'.

That's all right, then: except, it isn't. According to a release by the university: "But the study also established beyond doubt that fracking has the potential to reactivate dormant faults and described the probable ways in which the pumping of fracking fluid underground triggers this."

Plus, the main concern for those of us inhabiting the areas around fracking sites relates to pollution and disruption to the natural environment.

Greenpeace's energy campaigner Lawrence Carter is quoted by Business Green magazine as stating: "People's apprehensions about fracking go well beyond earth tremors – communities have also expressed concern about noise, disruption, traffic, falling house prices and a general industrialisation of the English countryside."

And in Texas it has been estimated that "...the truck traffic needed to deliver water to a single fracking well causes as much damage to local roads as nearly 3.5 million car trips." That's not to mention the loss of that water to the water cycle.

Not far from the current site in Lancashire, where permission to resume exploration was given recently, is George Osborne's constituency of Tatton, in Cheshire. According to a report in *The Mail* in December: "Professor Peter Styles of Keele University said the rocks in Tatton are of interest to energy firms as they are from the same period as those in Lancashire..."

Guess we'll never know just how safe the process would be there.

**Chris Stokes**