

Out of sight, out of regulation? Ensuring sustainable underground governance in the UK

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Without using or exploiting underground space and resources, the world we live in would not be possible. Without iron ore there is no iron, without coal or gas there would have been no largescale industrialisation, without oil no plastics, without silicon no smartphone, without underground train systems no fast transport across the world's largest metropolises. And in many areas of the world, without access to groundwater, life and settlements would not be possible. Underground space also plays a huge and important role in our cultural lives. The wall paintings of Lascaux are in a cave, humans settled underground and still today for instance people in Coober Pedy, Australia live partially in caves known for their constant temperature. In many cultures we bury our ancestors underground or in catacombs, underground is almost synonymous with criminal activity, people hide underground during wars either to protect or to escape from the enemy and hell is of course a place underground. The purpose of this article is to introduce the topic and to ask what the current situation of underground space governance and regulation in the UK using key themes and aspects related to underground space, such as property rights, regulation, fracking and nuclear waste disposal.

The question therefore is: *how can an improved and sustainable governance of underground spaces in the UK be ensured?*

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