



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place,

London SW1A 2AW

www.gov.uk/decc

REDACTED
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Our ref: 14/0163

18 February 2014

By e-mail to: REDACTEDREDACTED

Dear REDACTED

I refer to your e-mail of 25 January which asked the following:

"Please can you answer the following FOI requests;

- 1. Have any of the fossil fuel companies looking to extract shale gas by 'fracking' or hydraulic fracturing provided DECC with a definitive list of the chemicals that they intend to use during the exploration and extraction processes.*
- 2. If the answer to question 1 is yes please provide me with the information detailing the relevant chemicals, quantities and the name of the gas companies.*
- 3. If the answer to question 1 is no - please can you explain why you haven't request this information?*
- 4. Have any of the fossil fuel companies looking to extract shale gas by 'fracking' or hydraulic fracturing provided DECC with confirmation on how they will dispose of hazardous waste and fracking fluid*
- 5. Please can you confirm what safeguards will be in place to stop fracking wells from being flooded during periods of heavy rain (similar to the flooding experienced in Somerset today!)*
- 6. You recently announced that councils who accept fracking will be given an extra £1.7million per year in business rate tax. Please can you provide me with a copy of the calculations used that gets you to the figure of £1.7million.*
- 7. You recently suggested 75,000 jobs could be created from fracking - please confirm how this figure was calculated and provide evidence that this statement is true.*



8. *Please can you confirm if any members of the DECC staff have held meetings or corresponded over email or phone with any fossil fuel companies in the past 12 months to discuss 'fracking' and the associated works related to fracking? I would like to see copies of any such emails, meeting minutes including names of those involved/attended."*

I can confirm that the Department holds some of the information requested and where this is the case we have included responses in bullet point form to those questions below. We have considered your request in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs) as the information you have sought disclosure of does, in our view, fall within the definition of 'environmental information' as stated in the EIRs. To the extent that the information requested is not environmental, your request has also been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

1. – 3 *Have any of the fossil fuel companies looking to extract shale gas by 'fracking' or hydraulic fracturing provided DECC with a definitive list of the chemicals that they intend to use during the exploration and extraction processes. If the answer to question 1 is yes please provide me with the information detailing the relevant chemicals, quantities and the name of the gas companies. If the answer to question 1 is no - please can you explain why you haven't request this information?*

- So far, hydraulic fracturing for shale gas has only been used by Cuadrilla in 2011 on the Preese Hall site in Lancashire. DECC has not received any further applications to drill for shale gas at this stage. Any company intending to carry out fracking is obliged to provide the relevant Environmental Regulator, (in England the Environment Agency) rather than DECC, with information about the content of the proposed fracking fluid. Therefore in the case of Preese Hall, DECC does not hold a list of the chemicals used in the fracking mix. However, these details can be found on the Cuadrilla's website at the following link: <http://www.cuadrillaresources.com/what-we-do/hydraulic-fracturing/fracturing-fluid/>

4. *Have any of the fossil fuel companies looking to extract shale gas by 'fracking' or hydraulic fracturing provided DECC with confirmation on how they will dispose of hazardous waste and fracking fluid?*

- DECC does not hold this data. You may wish to approach the relevant Environmental Regulator on this point. You can find the contact details of the Environment Agency at the following link: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/contactus/default.aspx>

5. *Please can you confirm what safeguards will be in place to stop fracking wells from being flooded during periods of heavy rain (similar to the flooding experienced in Somerset today!)*



- Any development that is planned near a main river or a flood defence, including a sea defence, will require flood defence consent from the Environmental Regulator. The Environmental Regulator is a statutory consultee in the planning process and can object to any development that they consider to be at high risk of flooding. The Environmental Regulator will continue to assess each site on a case by case basis and work with operators and local planning to ensure sites are protected from flood risk.
- 6. You recently announced that councils who accept fracking will be given an extra £1.7million per year in business rate tax. Please can you provide me with a copy of the calculations used that gets you to the figure of £1.7million.**
- The estimate of up to £1.7m a year for a typical site per annum is based upon the Valuation Office Agency's estimate of around £3.5m rateable value for a 12 well shale gas site. This is based on the use of industry estimates and has been reached by using the same valuation approach as is currently adopted for on-shore oil wells on the 2010 rating list. The value of such sites will vary annually in line with production volumes. The estimated rates bill has then been calculated from the provisional non-domestic rating multiplier for 2014/15 which is 48.2p of rates bill for every £1 of rateable value. The Valuation Office Agency will have to come to a view on how to rate shale gas developments in due course.
- 7. You recently suggested 75,000 jobs could be created from fracking - please confirm how this figure was calculated and provide evidence that this statement is true.**
- The Institute of Directors report 'Getting shale gas working' provides a scenario where 74,000 jobs could be supported by the shale gas sector. The report can be found at the following link: <http://www.iod.com/influencing/press-office/press-releases/new-iod-report-getting-shale-gas-working>
- 8. Please can you confirm if any members of the DECC staff have held meetings or corresponded over email or phone with any fossil fuel companies in the past 12 months to discuss 'fracking' and the associated works related to fracking? I would like to see copies of any such emails, meeting minutes including names of those involved/attended.**
- DECC has previously published information relating to correspondence between the Office of Unconventional and Gas (OUGO) and UK Onshore Operators Group, Centrica and IGas. This can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/correspondence-and-meetings-between-the-office-of-unconventional-gas-and-oil-ukoog-centrica-and-igas>
 - DECC also published details of correspondence between OUGO and Centrica, this can be found here:



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/correspondence-and-meetings-between-cuadrilla-and-the-office-of-unconventional-gas-and-oil>

- I can confirm as well as this previously released information a number of members of DECC staff will have held meetings or corresponded with companies during the last 12 months to discuss existing and proposed oil and gas activities which may or may not have included fracking. However we are unable to comply further with this part of your request for the reasons below.

Environmental Information

We believe that the exception in regulation 12(4)(b) of the EIRs applies to the information you have requested at point 8. This exception provides that a public authority may refuse to disclose information requested when the request for information is manifestly unreasonable. This exception is subject to the public interest test. We have applied a presumption in favour of disclosure as required by regulation 12(2) of the EIRs.

In applying this exception we have considered the public interest in disclosing the information. We recognise that disclosure could enhance public understanding of shale gas issues and facilitate the accountability and transparency of Government decisions

However the amount of information you have requested is substantial. Gathering it together would be likely to cause a significant cost and diversion of resources from the Department's other work. We believe that your request would place a substantial and unreasonable burden on the resources of the Department and remove resources available to undertake the core work of the Department.

We therefore consider the balance of the public interest lies in favour of withholding the information

Non-environmental Information

Section 12 of the FOIA allows public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

There will have been numerous contact with companies over the last 12 months resulting in large volumes of correspondences. Gathering the information you have requested would be likely to involve a significant cost and diversion of resources from the Department's other work. We estimate that it will take us in excess of 3.5 working days to search for, identify locate, retrieve and extract the information relating to the extraction of shale gas and fracking that you have requested. Therefore point 8. of your request will not be progressed further.

You may wish to refine point 8. of your request by narrowing its scope and being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain. For example by

focusing on a specific project, meeting, or company or providing a narrower timeframe for the documentation which you wish to obtain. However, I should add that if the scope of your request is reformulated, to the extent that the request is for environmental information, exceptions to disclosure under the EIRs may still apply. In relation to any non-environmental information, you may wish to bear in mind when clarifying your request the £600 limit mentioned above. Exemptions to disclosure may still apply under FOIA to any refined request.

Appeals procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be sent to the Information Rights Unit at:

Information Rights Unit (DECC Shared Service)
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0ET.
E-mail: foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

REDACTED

Office for Unconventional Gas and Oil
Department of Energy and Climate Change,
3 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2AW