



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

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[www.decc.gov.uk](http://www.decc.gov.uk)

Our ref: 14/0156

19 February 2014

Dear

I refer to your e-mail of 22 January which asked the following:

*"The information that I would like is:*

- 1) The locations where shale gas wells have been identified?*
- 2) Who owns exploration or fracking permits on these sites?*
- 3) Which energy companies have declared that they used the hydraulic fracking method of shale gas extraction, and on which sites is this process used?*
- 4) A copy of the exploration licence granted by the DECC to Cuadrilla for the Bowland shale site and any subsequent drilling licenses.*
- 5) Information on the date when fracking started at those sites?*
- 6) Results of chemical testing on waste water from the Bowland shale, including the dates of each test.*
- 7) A list of known chemicals used in the fracking mix at the Bowland site*
- 8) Information on whether earthquakes/tremors around the Bowland shale including the dates of each such event, could be associated with the fracking.*
- 9) All correspondence between DECC and Cuadrilla or its representatives concerning the Bowland shale site since fracking began .*
- 10) The number of rejected permits, consents and or licence applications for fracking operations in the UK.*
- 11) Information on legal issues between DECC and companies listed in question 3.*

*If any of this information is already in the public domain, please tell me where it can be found. "*

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. Your request has been considered under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. However, some of the information which you have requested may constitute environmental information for the purposes of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs). As such, to the extent that the information requested is environmental your request has also been considered under the EIRs.

**1) The locations where shale gas wells have been identified?**

Petroleum licences are not specific to shale gas and do not give permission for operations, but grant exclusivity to licensees in relation to hydrocarbons (including shale gas but also other forms) within a particular licensed area. All operations, such as drilling, fracking or production, however require planning permission, and applications are subject to public consultation. They also require access agreement with relevant landowner(s), Environment Agency permits, HSE scrutiny, and DECC consent before operations can commence.

Exploration for shale gas is still at an early stage in Britain, so the term “shale gas well” does not have any precise meaning. However the following wells have been drilled which were planned to drill into or through strata regarded as prospective for shale gas, although this may not have been the primary target of the well.

Well Name	Company	Location	Licence
WEST NEWTON 1	RATHLIN	YORKSHIRE	PEDL163
KIRBY MISPERTON 8	THIRD ENERGY	NORTH YORKSHIRE	PL080
CRAWBERRY HILL 1	RATHLIN	YORKSHIRE	PEDL183
ANNAS ROAD 1	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165
INCE MARSHES 1	IGAS	CHESHIRE	PEDL190
BECCONSALL 1Z	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165
BECCONSALL 1	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165
BANWEN 1	UK METHANE	BRIDGEND	PEDL148
ST JOHNS 1	UK METHANE	BRIDGEND	PEDL148
GRANGE HILL 1Z	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165
GRANGE HILL 1	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165
PREESE HALL 1	CUADRILLA	LANCASHIRE	PEDL165

Other companies are in the process of drilling or making plans for drilling on other sites in the UK in order to assess shale gas potential.

**2) Who owns exploration or fracking permits on these sites?**

Petroleum Exploration & Development Licences (PEDLs) are not specific to shale gas and do not give permission for operations, but grant exclusivity to licensees in relation to hydrocarbons (including shale gas but also other forms) within a particular licensed area. All operations, such as drilling, fracking or production, however require planning permission, and applications are subject to public consultation. (They also require access agreement with relevant landowner(s), Environment Agency permits, HSE scrutiny, and DECC consent before operations can commence.)

Licence operators and partners can be viewed by clicking on a particular licence number on the on the Government website via the following link: [https://www.og.decc.gov.uk/information/licence\\_reports/onshorebylicence.html](https://www.og.decc.gov.uk/information/licence_reports/onshorebylicence.html)

**3) Which energy companies have declared that they used the hydraulic fracking method of shale gas extraction, and on which sites is this process used?**

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 frack for shale gas at this stage.

**4) A copy of the exploration licence granted by the DECC to Cuadrilla for the Bowland shale site and any subsequent drilling licenses.**

Cuadrilla’s licence can be found here: [https://www.og.decc.gov.uk/web\\_files/recent\\_licences/oglicences.htm](https://www.og.decc.gov.uk/web_files/recent_licences/oglicences.htm). As explained above, the licence covers exploration and production and there is no separate drilling licence.

**5) Information on the date when fracking started at those sites?**

Fracking at Preese Hall took place in April/May 2011.

**6) Results of chemical testing on waste water from the Bowland shale, including the dates of each test.**

DECC does not hold this data. You may wish to approach the Environment Agency on this point.

**7) A list of known chemicals used in the fracking mix at the Bowland site**

This can be found on Cuadrilla's website at: <http://www.cuadrillaresources.com/what-we-do/hydraulic-fracturing/fracturing-fluid/>

**8) Information on whether earthquakes/tremors around the Bowland shale including the dates of each such event, could be associated with the fracking.**

A detailed study on this was carried out. The full report of the findings can be found here: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15745/5075-preese-hall-shale-gas-fracturing-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15745/5075-preese-hall-shale-gas-fracturing-review.pdf)

**9) All correspondence between DECC and Cuadrilla or its representatives concerning the Bowland shale site since fracking began .**

We are unable to comply 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. 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 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.

The amount of information you have requested is substantial. 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 you have requested. I regret that we cannot provide the information you have requested as the effort to administer your request would exceed the appropriate limit prescribed by Section 12 of the FOIA.

**Reformulating this part of your request**

You may wish to refine your request by narrowing its scope by being more specific about what information you particularly wish to obtain. For example by focusing on specific pieces of correspondence or providing a narrower timeframe for the documentation which you wish to obtain. I should though add that if the scope of your request is reformulated, to the extent the request is for environmental information, exceptions to disclosure under the EIRs may still apply. Concerning 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 narrower request.

**10) The number of rejected permits, consents and or licence applications for fracking operations in the UK.**

DECC does not hold this data.

**11) Information on legal issues between DECC and companies listed in question 3.**

We do not understand the context of this question – you will need to clarify what information you are seeking for DECC to consider whether it holds such data or not.

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](mailto: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

*Oil & Gas Licensing Exploration & Development  
Energy Development Unit*