



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Department of Energy & Climate Change

3 Whitehall Place,

London SW1A 2AW

www.gov.uk/decc

By e-mail to:

Our ref: 14/0622 and 14/0721

13 May 2014

Dear

Thank you for your emails of 10th April and 7th May where you requested the following information.

Email of 10th May

1. Fracking is banned in France because of dangers of Earthquake and groundwater contamination. Why then is the British Government giving financial incentives to French Companies to Frack here in the UK? Already a prolific number of Licences have been granted and issued throughout Britain, with little or no prior consultation with local businesses or residents.

2. Where is the independent scientific and financial evidence that Fracking Operations in Britain will be of benefit to this country and its people? Especially as it is the British Taxpayer who will be funding the £Incentive at the outset.

Email of 7th May

1. Minister of State Michael Fallon declares " Shale Gas and oil operations involve Fracturing Wells drilled over a mile below the surface. At that depth it is HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE ANY NEGATIVE IMPACT CLOSER TO THE SURFACE" Can the Minister give any solid scientific foundation to his opinion ? Especially, as in Germany Fracking was found to cause pollution in surface water and it has now been BANNED. For the same reasons, plus the risk of Earthquake and water drought, Fracking has now been BANNED in France.

2. Would the Minister also explain why the British Government sees fit in these times of AUSTERITY to offer substantial FINANCIAL INDUCEMENTS to



FRENCH FRACKING COMPANIES to come to the UK and carry out that which they are BANNED from inflicting on the French countryside and its people.??

Both of your emails do not contain requests for recorded information held by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). Where a 'request for information' does not contain a specific request for copies of information held by DECC, we deal with such requests as a 'normal course of business' enquiry rather than a formal request for information under the FOIA or EIR. This is in accordance with the guidance given in the ICO publication 'Freedom of Information & Environmental Information Regulations – Hints for Practitioners handling FOI/EIR requests', which states on page 6 "Requests which are not for recorded information, but instead ask questions, such as "please explain your policy on x" or "please explain your decision to do y" are not requests for recorded information and therefore should be treated as routine correspondence." This publication is available on the ICO website, and can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/freedom_of_information/practical_application/foi_hints_for_practitioners_handling_foi_and_eir_requests_2008_final.pdf

In response to the first paragraph of your 10th April e-mail and the second paragraph of your 7th May e-mail, there have been no specific incentives offered to French companies or any other companies for shale gas operations. The Treasury consulted on a shale gas pad allowance that would reduce the tax rate for companies on a portion of their profits from 62% to 30%. This recognises the high start-up cost associates with shale gas operations. Any shale gas drilling will be beneficial to the UK tax payer as revenue will be collected. The British taxpayer will not be funding shale gas operations.

DECC issues Petroleum Exploration and 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, hydraulic fracturing 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.

The second paragraph of your 10th April request is being considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 on the basis that the information you have sought disclosure of, does in our view, fall within the definition of 'environmental information' as stated in the EIRs.

In relation to this second paragraph, the information you requested is available and is accessible to you, as it is already in the public domain. Please see below links to the following publications.

Institute of Directors – Getting Shale Gas Working -
<http://www.iod.com/influencing/press-office/press-releases/new-iod-report-getting-shale-gas-working>

EY report: Getting Ready for UK Shale Gas:
<http://www.ey.com/UK/en/Industries/Oil---Gas/EY-getting-ready-for-shale-gas>.

Strategic Environmental Assessment for Further Onshore Oil and Gas Licensing –
Prepared by AMEC
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273997/DECC_SEA_Environmental_Report.pdf

Report of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee on the Economic Impact
on UK Energy Policy of shale gas and oil.
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/economic-affairs-committee/news/report-publication>.

You ask in the first paragraph of your e-mail of 7th May what the scientific basis is of Mr Fallon’s statement that shale gas and oil activity more than a mile below the ground is very unlikely to lead to negative consequences closer to the surface. The Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering assessed in 2012 that “Fracture propagation is an unlikely cause of contamination. The risk of fractures propagating to reach overlying aquifers is very low provided that shale gas extraction takes place at depths of many hundreds of metres or several kilometres. Even if fractures reached overlying aquifers, the necessary pressure conditions for contaminants to flow are very unlikely to be met given the UK’s shale gas hydrogeological environments.” They further concluded that “Seismic risks are low... seismicity induced by hydraulic fracturing is likely to be of smaller magnitude than the UK’s largest natural seismic events and those induced by coal mining.” These quotes are taken directly from their summary of their report at the following link:

<https://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/shale-gas-extraction/report/>. Their full report is also available at that web address.

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
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London

SW1H 0ET

E-mail: foi.requests@bis.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,

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