



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

Department of Energy and Climate Change  
Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil  
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London  
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██████████  
Email : ██████████

[foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foi@decc.gsi.gov.uk)

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

DECC ref: FOI2015/24009

26 November 2015

Dear Mr ██████████,

Thank you for your email of 28 October 2015, requesting the following information:

***"I refer you to DECC's quarterly information for January - March 2015 document available on the gov.uk website:***

***[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/468573/Baroness Verma - Meetings with external organisations - Jan - Mar 2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468573/Baroness_Verma_-_Meetings_with_external_organisations_-_Jan_-_Mar_2015.pdf)***

***I am seeking information on the meetings between Baroness Verma and the following organisations: - February 2015 Shale Gas Task Force Energy issues***

***Please provide:***

- ***Any meeting minutes***
- ***Meeting readouts***
- ***Briefing notes***
- ***Or other meeting memoranda***
- ***Emails between the parties involved in the lead up to and after the meeting***
- ***If it was a meeting where food was available, then the menu and costs of the food provided***

***Please also provide information on meetings including:***

- ***Date***
- ***Time***
- ***Place***
- ***Length of the meeting***
- ***Attendee list (including name (where disclose-able under requirements of DPA) and job title of each attendee)."***

Your request is being considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 ('the EIRs') 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.

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the Department only holds some of the information falling within the terms of your request.

Some of the information relating to personal data has been withheld under Regulation 13(1) of the EIRs. Redacted copies of information held by DECC are attached to this letter under **Annex A**.

**Annex A** includes:

- **Meeting readouts** – Note A
- **Briefing notes** – Note B
- **Emails between the parties involved in the lead up to and after the meeting** – Note C

The following is additional information that we hold that has not been included in Annex A:

- **Date**
  - 24 February 2015
- **Time**
  - 1400-1445
- **Place**
  - DECC, 3 Whitehall Place, London
- **Length of the meeting**
  - Approximately 45 minutes
- **Attendee list (including name (where discloseable under requirements of DPA) and job title of each attendee)**
  - Baroness Verma (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, DECC)
  - Chris Smith (Chair, Shale Gas Task Force);
  - [REDACTED] (Policy Manager, Office of Unconventional Gas & Oil);
  - Representative of Edelman (Shale Gas Task Force secretariat)

The following information is not held by DECC:

- **Any meeting minutes**
- **Or other meeting memoranda**
- **If it was a meeting where food was available, then the menu and costs of the food provided**

### **Regulation 13(1)**

Some of the information held constitutes personal data and has been withheld. Regulation 13(1) of the EIRs provides an absolute exception for personal data which than falls to be dealt with under the Data Protection Act (DPA).

Personal data of third parties can only be disclosed in accordance with the data protection principles. In particular, the first data protection principle requires that disclosure must be fair and lawful and must comply with one of the conditions in Schedule 2 of the DPA. We do not think it is fair to release the names and contact details of DECC staff below Senior Civil Service level, or staff in other organisations, and do not think that any of the relevant conditions in Schedule 2 of the DPA apply. As a result, the names and contact details of staff in DECC below Senior Civil Servant level and staff in other organisations have been redacted from your copy of this information.

## **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 the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, as they provide a shared FOI advice service to DECC:

Information Rights Unit  
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 at the top of this response 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 of Unconventional Gas and Oil

## Annex A

### Note A

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 February 2015 18:04

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] Bourne Emily (Electricity Market Reform); [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Meeting with Baroness Verma and Lord Smith tomorrow - note

All,

Some information provided to Baroness Verma today by Lord Smith regarding the Shale Gas Task Force (of which he is Chair). [REDACTED] – please note the proposed publication of the TF’s first interim report on 25 March, with a focus on the “local impact” of shale gas projects. As the TF is independent of Government, Lord Smith has not provided any details of the TF’s views or conclusions on the first phase of its work, only the outline below of how it is organising its work.

The TF plans to produce four subject-specific interim reports during 2015, with a final “comprehensive” report updating each strand to be released in Spring 2016 (at which time the TF would stop work). Schedule:

1. 25 March – Local Impacts – e.g. planning applications, community engagement, regulatory system, traffic & noise, health.
2. End June – Immediate Environmental Issues – e.g. groundwater, waste fluids, methane emissions & flaring, well integrity.
3. Late summer – Climate Change
4. November/December – Economics – e.g. both national and local economic opportunities and challenges
5. Spring 2016 – Final report – all issues.

Reports will be placed on the TF website and briefed to the press, with a press launch for each.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

[REDACTED]



Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change

[REDACTED]

Policy Manager, Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil

E: [REDACTED] T: [REDACTED]

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### NOTE B

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 23 February 2015 19:51  
**To:** PS Baroness Verma  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] Bourne Emily (Electricity Market Reform); [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Meeting with Baroness Verma and Lord Smith tomorrow  
[REDACTED]

Good to speak to you earlier. As promised by [REDACTED]:-

**Background on the Shale Gas Task Force** (key source - <http://www.shaletaskforce.uk/about-the-task-force>)

The Task Force on Shale Gas was created in October 2014, with funding from companies with an interest in shale development in the UK (including Centrica, Cuadrilla and GDF Suez). Its mission is "to provide a transparent, trusted, independent and impartial platform for public scrutiny, discussion and information about shale gas exploration and production in the UK". The Task Force is chaired by Lord Smith and has a three-person "panel" (comprised of two academics and a journalist), along with three "advisory experts" (two energy consultants and an academic). Lord Smith is responsible for "ensuring impartiality and independence from funders", who receive updates on the Task Force's work every six months. The Task Force toured Lancashire sites in October 2014 (meeting members of the local community and business representatives) and is shortly to visit US shale sites and policy-makers in Washington. We understand that the Task Force is intending to publish an interim report soon, but understandably we have not been consulted on this.

#### **Top lines on shale gas**

"Home-grown shale gas can help secure our energy supply, while bringing jobs to areas around the UK and help reduce our impact on the environment.

"Now we face a decline in offshore reserves, with Britain set to import well over half of its demand for oil and gas resources by 2025.

"To make us less reliant on imports from abroad to create jobs and grow local economies, we must explore for shale gas.

Shale can be developed while protecting the environment. Independent expert regulators examine companies' proposals and just will not allow hazardous operations.

"In June 2012 the Royal Academy of Engineering/Royal Society independent review of the scientific and engineering evidence on risks associated with UK shale gas development concluded: "the risks can be managed effectively in the UK, if operational best practices are implemented and enforced through regulation.""

#### **Top lines on the Infrastructure Act**

"The Government has developed a package of safeguards which are presented in the clearest possible way.

"We want to give the shale industry the best possible chance of success in the future, so it's important we provide clear reassurance in law that environmental impact assessments, groundwater monitoring and other measures are in place before hydraulic fracturing can occur.

"Above all we want to provide legal clarity to the public, parliament and operators on what the requirements are. Linking to the licensing system enables a definitive check of these conditions to be made before a hydraulic fracturing consent can be issued.

"The majority of these conditions are already Government policy, carried out voluntarily by industry or part of Environment Agency or HSE every day working practice. So this amendment is intended to provide clear reassurance in law, and to give this nascent industry the best possible chance of success.

"We can confirm that this will include National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. We will clarify in secondary legislation which areas are 'protected groundwater source areas' and 'protected areas' by the end of July."

I will come up shortly before 2pm tomorrow to attend the meeting.



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Policy Manager, Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil

E: [REDACTED] T: [REDACTED]

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#### **NOTE C**

**From:** Secretariat Task Force on Shale Gas [mailto:Secretariat@shaletaskforce.uk]

**Sent:** 28 November 2014 17:28

**To:** PS Baroness Verma

**Subject:** Task Force on Shale Gas – Request to meet

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find below an email I am sending on behalf of Lord Smith, Chair of the Task Force on Shale Gas, requesting a short meeting with Baroness Verma in her position as Energy and Climate Change Minister.

Best wishes,



Dear Minister,

I am getting in touch at the request of Lord Chris Smith, Chair of the Task Force on Shale Gas, to request a short meeting with the Minister following a reference you made to the Task Force when speaking during a recent debate on the Economic Affairs Select Committee report on The Economic Impact on UK Energy Policy of Shale Gas and Oil.

For background, the Task Force was established in September 2014 and brings together eminent scientists and relevant environmental and economic experts, with the aim of producing a series of reports over an eighteen month period. It aims to provide a transparent, independent and impartial platform for public scrutiny, discussion and information about shale gas exploration and production in the UK.

Lord Smith would welcome the opportunity to brief you on the timings of the initiative, and to provide further details on the interim reports the Task Force is hoping to publish ahead of its final report with recommendations.

If you would be interested in taking a meeting, please do let me know and we will liaise with your office accordingly.

Yours sincerely,



Task Force on Shale Gas

Secretariat

T: [REDACTED]

W: [www.shaletaskforce.uk](http://www.shaletaskforce.uk)