

Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-422
Ein cyf/Our ref AD-/01130/13

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Bill,

9 August 2013

FRACKING

Thank you for your letter of 23 July to Carl Sargeant seeking information about the number of officials in Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government which have technical knowledge and/or long standing experience in the field of unconventional gas / fracking, including what external expertise is available.

As unconventional gas exploration in Wales is in the early stage there has been no requirement upon Natural Resources Wales all its predecessor organisations to issue environmental permits to unconventional gas developers.

Natural Resources Wales has access to all guidance material from legacy bodies such as that developed by the Environment Agency to deal with unconventional gas exploration and staff from its predecessor body Environment Agency Wales contributed to the development of this guidance. Natural Resources Wales is undertaking a review of resources required to deal with unconventional gas exploration in Wales. This will focus on their role as an advisor, a regulator and enforcer of unconventional gas exploration in Wales.

Currently NRW have technical expertise should it need to regulate exploratory activities for unconventional gas, including for example:

- The EC Mining Waste Directive
- Radioactive Substances
- Groundwater & Contaminated Land
- Site-Based Regulation
- Advice & licence in relation to designated sites
- Legal aspects

In terms of external expertise, I am advised that NRW have a Transition Plan in place with the Environment Agency to provide access to experts, as well as a range of consultants and advisors working in this field. Currently it is not contracted to any external organisation to provide support.

In respect of Welsh Government, officials have discussed and are continuing to discuss unconventional gas matters with a number of UK Government Departments, regulatory bodies and geological specialists including the Department of Energy and Climate Change, the Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), British Geological Survey (BGS) and Wales based academia. Officials also participate in DECC chaired meetings on unconventional gas regulation alongside other devolved administrations and regulatory bodies including NRW, the HSE and the Environment Agency.

Finally officials have also tendered for the procurement of a specialist report to assess any geological or environmental issues particular to the areas in Wales where unconventional gas exploration or development might take place.



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