



Ein cyf/ OAQ54464

Julie James AM
Minister for Housing and Local Government
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

23 October 2019

Dear Julie

Response to OAQ54464 on petroleum exploration and extraction boreholes

In Plenary on 9 October, David Rees AM raised an issue about deep borehole testing. He considered deep boreholes could be perceived as a precursor to fracking, which may cause unnecessary anxiety in communities.

Boreholes are drilled regularly across Wales for a variety of purposes, including civil engineering projects, water supply, and geothermal energy and many do not require planning permission. However, I confirmed petroleum exploration and extraction boreholes (of any depth) require a petroleum licence from the Welsh Government and planning consent from the local planning authority. Given our clear intent to avoid the continued extraction and consumption of fossil fuels, I committed to raise this matter with you to consider the need to update or refresh guidance to local authorities.

You will be aware of my Written Statement on 10 December when I was clear hydraulic fracturing of petroleum will not be supported in Wales. Planning Policy Wales 10 is also clear: the continued extraction of all fossil fuels, including shale gas and coal bed methane, are not compatible with our decarbonisation targets.

The instruction provided to Local Authority Planning Officers in December 2018 states "where a local planning authority does not propose to refuse an application for a petroleum development, including the drilling of exploratory boreholes, the authority must notify the Welsh Ministers."

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Gohebiaeth.Lesley.Griffiths@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Lesley.Griffiths@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I understand David Rees' concerns about communities who may be nervous if they see borehole applications being submitted. Although existing onshore petroleum licence holders are entitled to make an application for an exploratory borehole for petroleum, I consider our policy position is clear. We wish to keep fossil fuels in the ground. Further to my commitment to David Rees, I would be grateful if you could consider whether you see the need for further guidance to Local Authorities on this matter.

I am copying this letter to David Rees AM.

Regards
Lesley

Lesley Griffiths AC/AM

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd, Ynni a Materion Gwledig
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs