

July 2018

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about planning practice on shale development.

Shale development has the potential to deliver substantial economic benefits to the UK economy and for local communities where supplies are located. I am glad that the Government remains committed to protecting the environment and ensuring that shale exploration happens safely. Planning decisions on shale exploration applications remain disappointingly slow, which is why I welcome the announcement of a range of measures to help speed up these decisions.

I was a Minister at Defra when the regulations around fracking were being drawn up. They are among the toughest in the world.

A consultation has been launched to consider whether the early stages of shale exploration should be treated as permitted development, and in particular the circumstances where this might be appropriate. This would allow early exploratory work to proceed without requiring planning applications, although planning applications would still be required for fracking.

Other measures include strengthening community engagement by consulting on the potential to make pre-application consultations a statutory requirement, and launching a new £1.6 million shale support fund over the next two years to build capacity in local authorities dealing with shale applications.

A new Planning Brokerage Service for shale applications will also be created, to provide guidance to developers and local authorities on the planning process in order to speed up decision making. Furthermore, to simplify the complex UK regulatory regime for shale gas, a new Shale Environmental Regulator will also be set up, to act as a single coherent face for the public, mineral planning authorities, and industry.

I am confident that these measures will help speed up decision making on shale applications, whilst protecting our environment and ensuring that the voices of local communities are heard.

Yours sincerely



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