



07 September 2012

The Rt Hon Edward Davey, MP
Secretary of State
Department of Energy and Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
SW1A 2AW

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to you following the recent publication of the report by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering into shale gas extraction in the UK to set out our thoughts about next steps in this area. We have strong concerns about the impact of shale gas on climate change and the adequacy of the current regulatory regime to mitigate risks to the local environment. Specifically we urge you to:

- Delay making any decisions about further shale gas exploration and production until (1) a full climate impact assessment has been carried out; and (2) the Environment Agency has completed its risk evaluation of the current regulatory regime
- Revisit the Sustainability Appraisal produced for the 14th onshore licensing round

The climate impact of shale gas is currently poorly understood due to a lack of reliable data, but some evidence suggests that the overall climate impact of shale gas extraction and use could be greater than that of conventional gas and as great as that of coal. Furthermore, scenarios within the recent report from the International Energy Agency 'Golden Rules for the Golden Age of Gas' showed that exploiting the world's resources of unconventional gas would be incompatible with preventing dangerous levels of climate change, setting the world on course for a global temperature rise of 3.5°C.

The Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering report made it clear that assessing the climate change impacts of shale gas had not been part of its brief and stated that *"decision making would benefit from research into the climate risks associated with both the extraction and use of shale gas"*. It is imperative that this climate impact assessment is carried out before any decisions are taken about further shale gas exploration or production and we urge you to make clear that this will be the case.

The report also highlighted the local environmental risks associated with shale gas and concluded that improved regulation and monitoring are needed in several aspects of the extraction process. Recommendations included systematic baseline surveys of existing contaminants in groundwater, stricter well integrity regulation, improved overall co-ordination between regulatory agencies with a single body taking the lead, development of shale gas specific guidelines to deal with the scaling up of risks if a nationwide industry develops and requirement for an Environmental Risk Assessment for all shale gas operations.

The Environment Agency is currently undertaking a risk evaluation to assess the adequacy of the current regulatory regime. Given the issues raised by the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineers, it would be premature for the government to make a decision on whether shale gas drilling is allowed to proceed prior to the completion and consideration of the Environment Agency's review.

We also feel strongly that the Sustainability Appraisal of the forthcoming licensing round did not anticipate the potential impacts of shale gas extraction. For this reason we feel that the SEA should be revisited at the earliest opportunity paying particular attention to the potential climate, water and ecological impacts of this licensing.

For the reasons described above, we cannot be confident that the exploitation of unconventional gas reserves is compatible with ensuring that global temperature change does not exceed 2 °C. We urge you to ensure that a climate impact assessment of shale gas production and the Environment Agency's review are completed and their findings taken into account before any further policy decisions are taken on the future of shale gas in the UK.

We would be happy to meet you and your officials to discuss these issues further.



Mike Clarke
Chief Executive
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David Nussbaum
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Andy Atkins
Executive Director
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