

P-04-422: Fracking – Correspondence from the First Minister to the Petitioner

Dear Gareth,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the Welsh Labour Government's position on shale gas.

As you are aware, oil and gas licensing is a matter for the UK Government. The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) issues Petroleum Exploration and Development licences (PEDLs) through licensing rounds which enables a developer to pursue exploration for certain conventional and unconventional oil and gas including shale gas.

Prior to any drilling in Wales, a developer would require the appropriate planning consent and the necessary regulatory permissions including those undertaken by Natural Resources Wales and the Health and Safety Executive.

In Wales, planning responsibility for mineral development including shale gas is devolved and falls initially to Local Planning Authorities to determine applications in accordance with their development plan and national planning policy. Our current national planning policy advocates a precautionary approach for mineral development and the overriding objective set out in Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) is to provide a sustainable pattern of mineral extraction.

Our 'Energy Wales – a Low Carbon Transition' document of March 2012 sets out our ambition to create a low carbon economy that delivers jobs long term wealth and benefits to the people of Wales. Energy Wales recognises the essential role of gas in that transition as a flexible, responsive and reliable energy source with lower emissions than those from coal – subject to the method of extraction.

The Welsh Labour Government believes that further research is required to understand the unconventional gas resource in Wales and the impacts associated with its exploration and potential development. We are supportive of the robust regulatory processes that apply to shale gas exploration and development which, together with our precautionary planning approach to minerals development in Wales, should ensure the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect the environment and society.

In the run up to the next General Election, Ministers in the Welsh Labour Government will of course be discussing policy positions on a range of issues with our shadow cabinet colleagues, ahead of the UK election manifestos.

Best wishes,

Carwyn Jones