

MARK MENZIES MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Shale Consultation
Planning Infrastructure Division
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government
3rd Floor
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

18 December 2018

Dear James,

RE: Compulsory community pre-application consultation for shale gas development.

I am writing with regard to the department's ongoing inquiry into whether applicants should be required to conduct a pre-application consultation with the local community before submitting a planning application for shale gas development.

As you know, I strongly believe that community involvement in the shale gas development process is essential. It is local people who hold the knowledge required to make an informed and considered decision on the matter.

It is my belief that shale gas development should be subject to a rigorous planning process in which local Mineral Rights Authorities play a key part. I do however, recognise the issues that currently surround the planning criteria. It took Lancashire County Council more than 12 months to consider Cuadrilla Resources' planning applications to construct exploration sites at Preston New Road and at Roseacre Wood in my constituency. After appeal it was a further 15 months before a final determination of the company's Preston New Road application was made and the reopened inquiry on traffic management concerns around the proposed Roseacre Wood site has still not been concluded – more than 4 years on from the launch of the original planning application.

Should it be the case that a pre-application community consultation on the matter would speed up the process, I would of course be in favour. What I am clear on however, is that this cannot be used to remove key safeguards which prevent sites from being built at inappropriate locations.

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR FYLDE

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With regard to the method of consultation, I believe that neither of the current formats are fully suitable for the shale gas industry. I do believe that some aspects of these current formats have considerable merit, for example making a statement of the consultation available for public viewing, a minimum deadline period, sufficient publicity of the consultation, and an accompanying application statement with evidence of the responses received and how these have been taken into account.

Whilst this is the case, I strongly believe that a consultation carried out by the applicant will do very little to allay public concern. It is my firm view that any pre-application community consultation should be carried out by an independent body in order to promote public confidence in the process.

Finally, I am clear that any decision reached on the planning process with regard to shale gas sites should apply to all industry applications. Again, in the interest of promoting public confidence, a blanket policy would avoid any loop-holes in the system and maintain consistent high regulations on the shale gas industry.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Menzies'.

Mark Menzies MP