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Thank you for your letter dated 27 August, regarding shale gas extraction and seismicity. I am grateful to you for taking the time to write about this important matter.

I recognise your, and your constituents', concerns about the recent seismic events in the Fylde. You are right to point out that we have developed our regulatory protections considerably over the past decade, building on what we have learned from the first hydraulic fracturing operations in 2011. The Government has been clear that shale development must be safe and environmentally sound, maintaining the very highest safety and environmental standards, which we have established as world leaders in safely extracting oil and gas over decades.

The Oil & Gas Authority (OGA) recently announced that operations at Preston New Road are suspended, pending further extensive investigations which must now be undertaken by Cuadrilla. Data from these investigations will assist the OGA's full consideration of whether the assumptions and mitigations in Cuadrilla's PNR 2 Hydraulic Fracture Plan continue to be appropriate to manage the risk of induced seismicity at the Preston New Road site. Hydraulic fracturing operations will remain suspended until the OGA's considerations are complete.

I believe it is important that we follow the scientific advice as our understanding of shale gas exploration in the UK develops, and that we allow our independent regulators to enforce our world leading regulations as they deem appropriate. Separately, the OGA is also undertaking analysis of the data from the first hydraulically fractured well at Preston New Road. The Government will consider the findings from this in due course.

Thank you again for taking the time to write. I hope this information is useful.

Yours ever,

RT HON KWASI KWARTENG MP
Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth