



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

The Rt Hon Claire Perry MP
Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth

Department for Business, Energy &
Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Sir Mark Hendrick MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

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Dear Sir Mark

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Thank you so much for your email dated 22 January, which follows on from my letter of 26 November, regarding shale gas exploration in Lancashire. I am grateful to you for taking the time to share your further concerns on this topic.

The Preston New Road site is the UK's most monitored oil and gas site for seismic activity, with more specialist equipment on location than anywhere else. Because of this monitoring, a large number of events have been recorded which would go unrecorded elsewhere in the UK where the same equipment is not present. These were within the safe bounds of their pre-agreed Hydraulic Fracturing Plan which must be approved by the regulator, the Oil and Gas Authority, and none of the events we have seen have been a danger to either people or property.

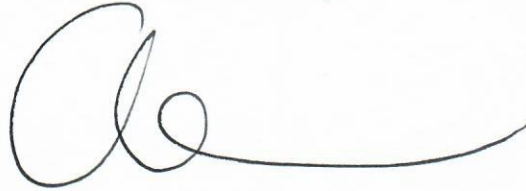
With regard to the use of propane to assist the combustion of the natural gas during flaring, this is standard industry practice, done for a variety of onshore and offshore operations, to ensure that the flare pilot lights are lit and that there is no unintentional venting of methane to the atmosphere.

As part of the Traffic Light System (TLS) operators must pause operations if a minor seismic event of magnitude 0.5 or greater is detected and the pressure of fluid in the well will be reduced immediately. The 18 hours pause provides adequate time for the regulators to review the data of the event and determine if operations are safe to proceed. The regulators have the ability to extend this pause if there are any grounds for concern. The Traffic Light System is working as intended and as I recently stated in Parliament, the Government is not considering changing the guidance on seismicity.

The British Geological Survey (BGS) estimates there are around 20 to 30 seismic events with a magnitude of 2.0 or greater every year somewhere in the UK or immediate offshore area. Furthermore, the BGS expect several hundred seismic events with a magnitude of 1.0 or above and several thousand with a magnitude of 0.0 or above. The regulators have reviewed the events at Preston New Road and were content that there were no issues around well integrity or ground water contamination, and therefore operations were allowed to proceed.

Once again, I appreciate you having taken the time to write on this matter. I hope that this information is helpful to you and your constituents and provides reassurance on the measures we are taking to ensure that shale development is safe and appropriately regulated.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a smaller 'P' and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

THE RT HON CLAIRE PERRY MP
Minister of State