

# Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 4972 Email [hclgcom@parliament.uk](mailto:hclgcom@parliament.uk) Website [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

Kit Malthouse MP  
Minister of State for Housing  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Rt Hon Claire Perry MP  
Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth  
Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy

23 October 2018

Dear Kit and Claire,

Thank you for your letter of 8 October in response to our questions regarding the two ongoing consultations concerning shale gas.

While I am reassured that the Committee's findings will be taken into account when the Government formulates its responses to the consultations, I remain concerned that impact assessments have not been produced for either consultation. The Government's [Consultation Principles](#) state:

**Consultations should be informative**

Give enough information to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses. Include validated impact assessments of the costs and benefits of the options being considered when possible; this might be required where proposals have an impact on business or the voluntary sector.

I acknowledge that Impact Assessments are likely to form part of later public consultations should any of the proposed changes be implemented. However, there is clear value of such analysis at this early stage when the principles, and thus the direction of Government policy, are being established.

In the context of our letter of 5 September, I would be grateful if you could respond to our question in paragraph 7 about whether, if the Government chooses to go ahead with the proposed move of fracking planning applications to the NSIP regime, it would be introduced through primary or secondary legislation.

On a different note, I observed that the [Government's guidance on fracking](#) was updated on 11 October to reflect the appointment of a Commissioner for Shale Gas and the creation of the Shale Environmental Regulator Group (SERG). I would welcome clarity on whether any additional changes were made in the October update of the guidance document and whether any further changes are envisaged. It is disappointing given the Committee's report and our correspondence that these changes were not brought to our attention. I ask that you also clarify and share the following regarding the appointment of the Commissioner for Shale Gas:

- Application pack
- Application process including how long it was advertised (length of the recruitment campaign), where the role was advertised, sifting and interview process, total number of applicants, number of applicants shortlisted and number of applicants deemed appointable
- Responsibilities
- Remuneration, expected time requirements and length of tenure
- Declaration of interests and CV of the successful candidate

Furthermore, I would be grateful if you could explain the expected working arrangements of SERG and whether SERG is the Shale Environmental Regulator envisaged in the shale gas [Written Ministerial Statement](#) of 17 May.

Finally, I note that it has been [reported](#) that the Government may consider revising the traffic light seismicity monitoring system for shale gas and fracking. Given the pertinence of fracking commencing at the Preston New Road site, I would be grateful if you could indicate whether the Government intends to review the traffic light system and if so, the details and timescale for such a review.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', written in a cursive style.

**Clive Betts MP**  
**Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee**