



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Minister of State for Business, Energy and
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//² March 2020

Dear Brockham Oil Watch

Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2020, addressed to the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, the Rt Hon George Eustice MP, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP and to me, about stimulation of oil and gas wells. I am replying on behalf of the Government as this matter falls within Ministerial portfolio.

The Government has been clear that the development of domestic energy sources must be safe – both for local communities and the environment. In the UK, we have been regulating our oil and gas industries, both onshore and offshore, for many years and have tough regulations in place to ensure on-site safety, prevent environmental contamination, mitigate seismic activity and minimise emissions.

It remains our policy to be guided by the evidence, as demonstrated by our Written Ministerial Statement of 4 November 2019, where we confirmed our decision to take a presumption against issuing any further Hydraulic Fracturing Consents unless compelling new evidence is provided. Details can be found at:
www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-11-04/HCWS68/.

You have requested that the current moratorium on shale gas exploration should be extended to all other forms of well stimulation using acid and other techniques to enhance the productivity of onshore oil and gas wells.

Acidisation is a common technique carried out to clean and develop wells. It is widely used in the water industry as well as the oil and gas industry and is regulated by the Environment Agency (EA). Before allowing acidisation to take place, the EA considers the proposed activity, the chemicals and products used in the process, waste management (including the management of fugitive emissions) and the environmental setting. It will not allow companies to operate unless they can demonstrate how they will provide a high level of protection to people and the environment. If a company does not comply with the permit, the EA has a range of enforcement measures available to it and can, where considered appropriate, stop or suspend site activities. The EA is satisfied that the current regulations provide a high standard of environmental protection.

You may be interested to know that the EA have produced a frequently asked questions document on the use of acid at oil and gas exploration and production sites. More details can be found at:

https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/onshore-oil-and-gas/onshore-oil-and-gas-regulation-information-page/supporting_documents/Acidisation%20FAQs%20January%202018.pdf.

It should also be noted that the Oil and Gas Authority gave examples of when a hydraulic fracturing plan is required in their consolidated onshore guidance which can be found at: www.ogauthority.co.uk/media/4959/29112017_consolidated-onshore-guidance-compendium_vfinal-002.pdf.

Thank you again for your letter. I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kwasi Kwarteng', is positioned above the printed name.

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