

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-648
Ein cyf/Our ref CS/01512/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

13th October 2015

Dear William Powell AM,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the revised wording of petition P-04-648. I understand that the wording of this petition has been altered and as a result my view is requested on the revised wording.

The petition now asks that the Direction be applied to underground coal gasification on the basis of concerns about the technology and to exploratory boreholes, again on the basis of environmental concerns and that it seems illogical to proceed with exploration whilst a moratorium is in place. I am able to offer some comments on these points.

I am currently considering the position with regards to the need for guidance or action in relation to underground coal gasification. I said in Plenary on 16 September that the concerns I have expressed in relation to fracking, for example, are equally valid for underground coal gasification and that it is reasonable, in principle, that unconventional gas be treated in the same way. I am currently giving further consideration to this matter and will report in due course.

Bore holes and test drilling do not necessarily involve unconventional techniques. Drilling boreholes to take core samples is a routine part of engineering works and is undertaken for a wide variety of different reasons, for example, ground investigation is regularly undertaken during the construction of the built environment and boreholes provide essential information. Therefore, as boreholes have been drilled for a long time with no long lasting environmental consequences and they are not an unconventional extraction technique I do not consider that the Direction should be applied to them. Where exploratory boreholes or drilling do involve unconventional methods then the direction applies.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Sargeant', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
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