



# Oil & Gas Authority

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Richard Parker

By email to: [request-524655-5f40482c@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-524655-5f40482c@whatdotheyknow.com)

Our ref: FOI-2018-0058

2 November 2018

Dear Mr Parker

Thank you for your emails of 7 & 8 October in which you requested:

On 7 October

*"I am confused as to the role and responsibility of your department in regulating the seismicity and hydraulic fracture plans generally, in particular this site that is local to myself.*

*I understand that from UKOOG that your department are responsible for approving and regulating plans to frack and monitor the induced seismicity, but I can find no remit of this duty on your website.*

*In addition, information on the hydraulic fracture plan for the above site appears to be resident via the environment agency.*

*Do you have any expertise/experience/input into the approval and monitoring of hydraulic fracturing and induced seismicity of unconventional oil and gas sites? Are you responsible for approval of hydraulic fracture plans? Is this role effectively passed onto the EA? Do you have any role in any environmental and public safety aspects concerned with hydrocarbon extraction? Your website indicates that your department/company is primarily, maybe solely concerned with maximising the return/output of oil and gas. Is this correct?"*

And on 8 October

*"On the assumption that you are responsible for approval of hydraulic track plans and the regulation and monitoring of the ensuing seismic monitoring, could you please advise on how and who approved the hydraulic fracture plan for well one of the Cuadrilla fracking site on Preston New Road. Please advise as to the procedures followed and make available to the public the technical contents of the report for us to review, in a similar manner to the way the details of the fracture plan was submitted.*

*In addition, could you please advise as to the review of the operation ability of the surface seismic monitoring array. Has this been checked by a government body or independent third party and why has the number of geophones been reduced from 10 to 8? Please again provide details of this anticipated inspection occurrence."*

We have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and, where relevant, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).



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In regard to your first question:

***“I am confused as to the role and responsibility of your department in regulating the seismicity and hydraulic fracture plans generally, in particular this site that is local to myself. I understand that from UKOOG that your department are responsible for approving and regulating plans to frack and monitor the induced seismicity, but I can find no remit of this duty on your website. In addition, information on the hydraulic fracture plan for the above site appears to be resident via the environment agency. Do you have any expertise/experience/input into the approval and monitoring of hydraulic fracturing and induced seismicity of unconventional oil and gas sites? Are you responsible for approval of hydraulic fracture plans? Is this role effectively passed onto the EA? Do you have any role in any environmental and public safety aspects concerned with hydrocarbon extraction? Your website indicates that your department/company is primarily, maybe solely concerned with maximising the return/output of oil and gas. Is this correct?”***

The OGA's role in relation to onshore oil and gas activity is set out on our website as follows:

***“The OGA regulates the licensing of exploration and development of England's onshore oil and gas resources, and it has strict controls in place to ensure that operators manage the risk of induced seismicity from such operations. The OGA issues well consents, development programme approvals, completion of work programme approvals and production consents.”***

In regard to your second question:

***“On the assumption that you are responsible for approval of hydraulic track plans and the regulation and monitoring of the ensuing seismic monitoring, could you please advise on how and who approved the hydraulic fracture plan for well one of the Cuadrilla fracking site on Preston New Road. Please advise as to the procedures followed and make available to the public the technical contents of the report for us to review, in a similar manner to the way the details of the fracture plan was submitted. In addition, could you please advise as to the review of the operation ability of the surface seismic monitoring array. Has this been checked by a government body or independent third party and why has the number of geophones been reduced from 10 to 8? Please again provide details of this anticipated inspection occurrence.”***

The OGA, in working with the British Geological Survey (BGS), view that the proposed 8 station array is fit for the purpose of detecting the Traffic Light System thresholds as described in the Hydraulic Fracturing Plan (HFP).

You may also be aware that there are an additional 15 BGS UKArray seismometers recording in real time which are situated in the area, forming part of the BGS Baseline Monitoring Project which will be used to independently monitor operations, and the Operator also has access to this data to use in their evaluation.



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If you have not already seen it, the HFP for Preston New Road is on Cuadrilla's website: <https://cuadrillaresources.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PNR1z-HFP-v9.pdf> , you should find the various approvals and consents as annexes.

Details on the way in which Hydraulic Fracturing Plans are considered are set out in pages 30–35 of the OGA's Consolidated Onshore Guidance: [https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/media/4959/29112017\\_consolidated-onshore-guidance-compendium\\_vfinal-002.pdf](https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/media/4959/29112017_consolidated-onshore-guidance-compendium_vfinal-002.pdf)

As this information is in the public domain, it is exempt under Section 21 FOIA and Regulation 6(1)(b) EIR (Information accessible via other means). There is no test of the public interest for the exemption under Section 21 FOIA.

This concludes the OGA's handling of your request

## **Appeals Procedure**

If you are unhappy with the way the OGA has handled your request, you may request an internal review. A request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of receipt of the response to your request and should be addressed to: FOI Manager, Oil and Gas Authority, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3HF Email: [foirequests@ogauthority.co.uk](mailto:foirequests@ogauthority.co.uk)

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications with regard to this request.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the internal review, you may contact the Information Commissioner at [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk) or at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

FOI Officer