



Oil & Gas
Authority

21 Bloomsbury
Street
London WC1B 3HF

Richard Parker

By email to: request-602036-5948515f@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: FOI-2019-0071

25 October 2019

Dear Mr Parker,

Thank you for your email of **7 September**, in which you requested:

"Following my earlier request entitled 'Traffic light schema for seismic monitoring at fracking development wells at Preston New Road', I would be grateful if you could advise on the seismic event reporting of the operator and supervisory directions of the OGA following the 1.6 seismic event of the 21st August. Could you please advise what events, presumably inclusive of this event were reported by the operator and what directions were instigated by the OGA. There seems to be some confusion over the operation of the TLS and the remit undertaken by the OGA but following my earlier request and your kindly provided answer, it would imply that no fracking would have been permitted following the 'cascaded' amber events after the 1.6 tremor. I understand that Cuadrilla then resumed fracking on the Friday 23rd which did not seem prudent or logical considering there was a substantial event of 0.4 in the early hours of the morning. I understand that the OGA is to provide a supervisory role if the seismic activity is not following the expected pattern predicted by the hydraulic fracture plan. Consequently could you please advise the times of any fracks after the 1.6 tremor of the 21st August and what reporting and liaison occurred to all subsequent seismic events of 0.0 or greater.

Following the suspension of fracking at Preston New Road could you please advise on the decision control of permitting fracturing to continue after the 1.6 seismic event on 21st August. Were any extra conditions needed to be met by the operator other than an 18 hour pause after this event? I understand that the operator performed a number of fracks after this event. Could you please advise on the frack times, pressures and volumes after this event and what response was taken to each amber and red event after the bespoke event.

In addition, could you please advise on more exact locations of the seismic events inclusive and in excess of 0.0 and the locations, times, volumes and pressures of the fracture injections of all the operations conducted at PNR in August 2019.."

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

I will address your questions in turn.

First, you asked *"could you please advise on the decision control of permitting fracturing to continue after the 1.6 seismic event on 21st August. Were any extra conditions needed to be met by the operator other than an 18 hour pause after this event?"*



Oil & Gas Authority

“what reporting and liaison occurred to all subsequent seismic events of 0.0 or greater.”

“what response was taken to each amber and red event after the bespoke event.”

It may help if I explained that, under the traffic light system and the operator’s Hydraulic Fracture Plan (HFP), if a seismic event of magnitude 0.5 ML or above is confirmed (such as the events on 21 August), injection must pause and pressure in the well be reduced, followed by monitoring for a minimum of 18 hours to determine the location and cause of the seismic event and to allow time for the OGA to confirm if the event is in line with the HFP. It also allows the operator to confirm whether their understanding of the area’s geology is still valid.

Following the completion of injection operations on 21st August 2019, three trailing red light events (1.55 ML, 0.87 ML, 1.0 ML) were detected, and operations were paused for a total period of 48 hours. The largest event was reported to be felt locally. Before operations were allowed to resume, Cuadrilla wrote to the OGA and set out a series of steps that were to be taken during and after operations in order to mitigate against further felt events.

The purpose of the HFP is to minimise disturbance to local people and the risk of damage to property. Where the reviewed magnitude and associated ground motion of a seismic event are in line with the HFP, this confirms the geological understanding and injection can resume.

Following the completion of injection operations on 23rd August 2019 trailing seismic events were detected at the Preston New Road site, including a 2.1 and 2.9ML event on 26 August 2019, following which the OGA suspended operations and requested additional data and analysis from Cuadrilla before hydraulic fracturing operations could resume.

The OGA has received initial data from Cuadrilla which still requires further consideration. However, we understand that as of 30 September 2019 Cuadrilla has decided to demobilise the hydraulic fracturing equipment at the Preston New Road site.

Additionally you asked “Could you please advise what events, presumably inclusive of this event were reported by the operator and what directions were instigated by the OGA”

“Consequently could you please advise the times of any fracks after the 1.6 tremor of the 21st August.”



Oil & Gas Authority

“Could you please advise on the frack times, pressures and volumes after this event.”

“In addition, could you please advise on more exact locations of the seismic events inclusive and in excess of 0.0 and the locations, times, volumes and pressures of the fracture injections of all the operations conducted at PNR in August 2019.”

Detailed information including operational timings and data (including pressure, volumes and location) will be released as per the licence clauses, six months following the completion of hydraulic fracturing operations.

In light of this, the information is exempt from disclosure under Section 22 FOIA and Regulation 12(4)(d) EIR. An explanation of the OGA’s reliance on the exemption is set out below.

Section 22 (1) FOIA (future publication) and Regulation 12(4)(d) EIR (Material in the course of completion)

Section 22 of the FOIA and Regulation 12(4)(d) EIR provide that information is exempt from disclosure if it is (i) planned to be published at a future date, and/or (ii) is material in the course of completion.

Public Interest

The OGA considers that it is in the public interest not to make the information available prior to that date, to provide for the analysis of the information to be finalised in a closed user group in order to ensure that scientific rigour is maintained. Early disclosure may create a misleading picture of circumstances and may result in the OGA having to divert finite resources on correcting any inaccuracies at a later date.

Also, Daily Reports including details of the operations on PNR2 up-to the 23rd August 2019 have been released under FOI/EIR and are already publicly available. Which covers some of the information you ask for.

<https://www.ogauthority.co.uk/news-publications/news/2019/onshore-update-pnr-data-release/>

Therefore this information is being refused under Section 21 FOIA and 6(1) EIR (Information accessible via other means). This is an absolute exemption, requiring no test of the public interest.



Oil & Gas Authority

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

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 or at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

FOI Officer.