



Mr Andrew Chyba

Our ref: TO2013/00365

12 January 2013

Dear Mr Chyba

- ① Thank you for your letter dated 10 January to Mr Cameron detailing your concerns about fracking. I have been asked to respond as this is a matter for DECC.

It is clear that, even as we move towards a less carbon intensive future, oil and gas are set to remain a vital part of our energy system for years to come. In this context the

- ② Government is committed to ensuring that we maximise economic recovery of UK hydrocarbon resources – both offshore and onshore. This has benefits for investment, jobs and security of supply.

- ③ The Government's position on UK unconventional gas resources matches that which it takes towards conventional oil and gas exploration and development. The Government supports industry's endeavours in pursuing such energy sources so long as tapping of such resources proves to be technically and economically viable, and can be carried out with full regard to the protection of the environment.

- ④ The Government and its regulatory agencies are studying the experience already gained with shale gas exploration and production in the US, where there have been many reports of environmental problems linked to some shale gas projects. While many reports, on investigation by the US authorities, have been found to be unconnected to oil or gas production of any kind, there is evidence in some cases of contamination of watercourses by surface spills of chemicals, etc.; and in some cases of methane in water supplies due to inadequate cementing of the wells.

- ⑤ In the UK, however, we have a long history of onshore gas exploration, and have developed a robust regulatory system to ensure that any such operations will be done to high standards of safety and environmental protection. All onshore oil and gas projects, including shale gas exploration and development, are subject first to scrutiny through the planning system, which allows issues such as impacts on local amenity, traffic movements, etc., to be addressed. They are also subject to appropriate environmental controls, including scrutiny by the relevant environmental agency (for England and Wales, the Environment Agency and for Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency), and are subject to safety regulation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). They also