

Press release: Ministers seek views on shale planning reforms

A consultation on proposed planning reforms for exploratory shale gas development in England has been launched by the government today (19 July 2018).

Seeking views on early proposals looking at the principle of whether to designate exploratory drilling for shale gas resources as a new form of permitted development, it would mean that planning consent would not be required.

With the government committed to ensuring that strong safeguards are in place, any new permitted development right would have to abide by both environmental and site protection laws and would not apply to exploratory drilling in sensitive areas (such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Exploratory drilling for shale deposits are treated separately to full hydraulic shale gas extraction, both will remain subject to strict planning and environmental controls.

The 14-week consultation, open until 25 October 2018, will make sure that those with an interest in shale development can have their say and input their views.

The government will then analyse the comments and issue its response later in 2018.

Background

A further consultation on any specific legislative reforms will follow the government's response if these are required.

Government will also consult on whether developers should be required to undertake pre-application community engagement prior to submitting a planning application for shale gas development. This consultation will be launched in autumn 2018.

View the [consultation document](#) on Gov.uk

The consultation follows the publication of a written ministerial statement on the 17 May 2018, in which the government announced a range of measures to facilitate timely decision making on shale exploration planning applications.

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Please use this number if you are a journalist wishing to speak to Press
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News story: Emergency response prevents huge fish deaths at the River Mole

Since the weekend, fish have been in distress in the River Mole due to environmental impacts caused by the current hot and dry weather conditions. The Environment Agency has been at the watercourse throughout to take all necessary actions to prevent widespread fish deaths and to use re-oxygenating equipment to boost levels in the river.

Sadly, a significant number of fish, including perch, pike and roach have already died as a result of the naturally occurring incident. Due to the Environment Agency's emergency response it is hoped that now oxygen levels are stable, thousands more fish have now been saved.

Anna Burns, Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

Our officers have worked around the clock to prevent widescale fish deaths at this much-loved river. It is distressing that a large number of fish had perished ahead of our efforts, but our swift emergency response has ensured that many more will now be saved.

We have worked in partnership with Gatwick Airport and Thames Water and we thank them for their valuable assistance regarding this incident. We will all continue to work to prevent further fish deaths and reduce potential harm to local wildlife.

During summer the Environment Agency regularly respond to reports of fish in distress due to natural processes reducing oxygen levels in the water. Hot, sunny weather can lead to low flows in rivers and still water fisheries (ponds and lakes) start to warm up.

Small still waters are particularly susceptible. Rescuing fish is part of the Environment Agency's fisheries management role. Fisheries teams are trained to use aeration equipment or hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels. When necessary, fish will be rescued and transferred to safety.

Members of the public are encouraged to report any sightings of fish in distress to us via the Environment Agency's 24-hour emergency hotline: 0800 807060.

Notice: Notice of application for a drought permit: Windermere

TAKE NOTICE that due to the threat of a serious water shortage in the part of its water supply area served by Windermere, caused by an exceptional shortage of rain, United Utilities Water Limited ("the Company") is applying to the Environment Agency for a drought permit under Section 79A of the Water Resources Act 1991.

Notice: Notice of application for a drought permit: Ullswater

TAKE NOTICE that due to the threat of a serious water shortage in the part of

its water supply
area served by Ullswater, caused by an exceptional shortage of rain, United
Utilities Water
LTD (“the Company”) is applying to the Environment Agency for a drought
permit under
Section 79A of the Water Resources Act 1991.

Notice: Notice of application for a drought order: Ennerdale

TAKE NOTICE that due to the threat of a serious deficiency of supplies of
water in the part of its water supply area served by Ennerdale Water caused
by an exceptional shortage of rain, United Utilities Water Limited (“the
Company”) is applying to the Secretary of State for the Department for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a drought order under Section 73 of
the Water Resources Act 1991.