

Statement to Parliament: Hydraulic fracturing consent

My Rt Hon Friend Greg Clark (Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) has today laid before Parliament a Direction ensuring that the Oil and Gas Authority consults the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on onshore hydraulic fracturing operations.

Under Section 4A of the Petroleum Act 1998 (inserted by Section 50 of the Infrastructure Act 2015), operators who wish to conduct associated hydraulic fracturing must apply for a Hydraulic Fracturing Consent from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Hydraulic Fracturing Consent was introduced in the Infrastructure Act 2015 as an additional step to the existing regulatory and permitting regime.

However, it does not apply to wells drilled before the 2015 Act came to force and these are not captured by the requirement to seek a Hydraulic Fracturing Consent.

Today's Direction closes this loophole and ensures that the same approach for consent is taken for all relevant hydraulic fracturing operations, including where the associated well was drilled prior to the 2015 Act coming into force.

For these operations, operators will be expected to meet the same set of standards as required to obtain Hydraulic Fracturing Consent, laid out in the Infrastructure Act 2015.

The government has been clear that shale development must be safe and environmentally sound.

The UK has a robust regulatory system which provides a comprehensive regime for exploratory activities and this direction will ensure that all relevant hydraulic fracturing operations are subject to this final step of scrutiny.