



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Petroleum Extraction Policy statement**

DATE **10 December 2018**

BY **Lesley Griffiths, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs**

The new onshore petroleum licencing powers in Wales, which commenced in October this year, have been an opportunity to consider our whole approach to the extraction of petroleum in Wales. In the summer, I published a consultation on petroleum extraction which set out the Welsh Government's view we should not hold any new onshore petroleum licensing rounds or support hydraulic fracturing "fracking" for petroleum.

[I am pleased to publish today the summary and analysis of the responses to the consultation.](#) We received over 1900 submissions and would like to thank the public, businesses, industry bodies and community representatives for their consideration.

The response to the consultation has demonstrated overwhelming support for our proposed policy. Many who responded also expressed the view Welsh Government should go further than its opposition to fracking and not allow any extraction of petroleum, particularly coal bed methane. The principle of keeping fossil fuels in the ground and reducing future reliance on fossil fuels in Wales was a common theme.

Respondents raised concerns about the long-term effects of petroleum extraction on health, the environment, climate change and impact in particular on local communities in licensed areas. The dominant view was greater levels of petroleum extraction in Wales would lead to an increase in emission levels through both extraction and use, whilst limiting Wales' ability to reach its emissions reduction targets.

When balancing the evidence of risks against minimal increase in prosperity and also the need to achieve decarbonisation targets, the public responded by stating they saw no future in beginning a new fossil fuel industry. Public opinion was that switching to energy alternatives, which emit far less pollution is both achievable and preferable. However the

petroleum industry view is that extraction of petroleum can be managed and regulated safely and offers the opportunity for a source of locally produced petroleum.

The evidence Welsh Government commissioned presented the current expert knowledge on the scientific appraisal of extraction and financial benefits to Welsh communities. There were concerns raised about missing data for the risks of fugitive emissions from coal bed methane. The lack of extraction sites anywhere in the UK means information on CBM is limited. The response from the majority of respondents was if we don't extract any petroleum then the impact and risks during production and decommissioning will not occur. This approach was supported as the way to give certainty to communities near licensed sites and to avoid unnecessary disruption and harm.

Having considered the evidence, the risks, and the responses we have received to the consultation, I confirm today hydraulic fracturing "fracking" of petroleum **will not** be supported in Wales.

To help deliver on my commitment in 2016 to reduce the use of fossil fuels I also confirm we **will not** undertake any new petroleum licensing in Wales. Individual licences will only be considered to ensure the safe management of abandoned mines or to support scientific research.

Following the transfer of powers, there are 13 existing licences in Wales which are still live. The recently revised 'Planning Policy Wales' has placed fossil fuels as the least favoured fuel in the energy hierarchy. PPW sets the policy framework against which all planning applications will be determined, including for existing licences. The recent Notification Direction also means Local Planning Authorities must also notify the Welsh Government if they intend to approve applications for any petroleum extraction development.

Although offshore licensing is a reserved matter, the principles set out in the consultation can be a relevant consideration for Welsh Ministers' marine licensing decisions in relation to offshore petroleum extraction.

The United Nations Paris Agreement has set the context for tackling one of the biggest threats we face, climate change and the challenge of decarbonising the global economy. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (2015) Act requires Welsh Ministers to ensure a sustainable and prosperous low carbon Wales now and in the future. Welsh Government is acting across Government to deliver a low carbon future.

We now need to optimise the opportunities and benefits of the global transition away from fossil fuels and ensure Wales is not left behind. Through our ambition to tackle climate change, we will build a Wales which is prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning and united and connected. We will achieve this by listening to voices in the community and laying the foundations that support all of Wales and by reducing our future reliance on fossil fuels.