

Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism
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25th February 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

UNDERGROUND COAL GASIFICATION

As you are aware, the moratorium I announced on 28 January related specifically to onshore unconventional oil & gas developments, including hydraulic fracturing, and came further to confirmation by the UK Government that it would devolve onshore licensing powers to the Scottish Parliament. The moratorium on granting planning consents for unconventional oil and gas developments will run while further research and a public consultation is carried out. Our decision came days after the UK Government voted against a moratorium.

In contrast, many of the relevant powers relating to underground coal gasification remain with Westminster and the licensing regime is not being devolved. Underground coal gasification is very different to shale gas developments (which requires hydraulic fracturing) and coalbed methane, which uses very different techniques and technologies.

The Scottish Government position is to take a cautious and evidence-based approach to new energy technologies, including unconventional oil & gas and underground coal gasification. We have been clear that environmental protection is paramount and the views of local communities are taken into account. This has been underpinned by the principle that the highest levels of environmental protection must be enforced, which is why we strengthened Scottish Planning Policy last year in relation to onshore unconventional gas activities through the introduction of buffer zones and additional risk assessments.

The Scottish Government is clear that the development of new energy technologies, such as underground coal gasification, must be consistent with our environmental objectives and we

will continue to take a careful, evidence-based approach to such developments. We will work with SEPA and all relevant regulators to ensure we have the appropriate controls and regulations to protect the environment.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fergus Ewing". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop under the 'F' and another under the 'E'.

Fergus Ewing