

SHALE GAS REGULATORS' FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 18-10-2012

Attending

Mike Thompson (Chair) – Director of GSNI Policy Division, DETI
Nicola McEvoy – GSNI Policy Lead and Liaison, DETI
Derek Reay – GSNI
John White – Minerals and Petroleum Branch, DETI
Ken Logan – HSENI
Nigel McMahon – Chief Environmental Health Officer, DHSSPS
Simon Kirk – DOE, Planning Service
Tom Cowan – DCAL Inland Fisheries
Mark Livingstone – NIEA, Water Management Unit, DOE
David Bell – Industrial Pollution and Radiochemical Inspectorate, DOE
David O'Neill – NIEA, Drinking Water Inspectorate, DOE
Bruce Harper – Environmental Policy Division, DOE

Apologies

Mike Young – GSNI
Allison McMullan – NI Water

Introductions

Mike Thompson (MT) welcomed everyone to the first formal meeting of the Shale Gas Regulators' Forum and thanked them for their participation.

MT provided a brief background to the Forum and the decision by Minister Foster and Minister Attwood to formalise the Forum. The overarching aim of the Forum is to share knowledge amongst government Departments and bodies.

Further commitment made by DETI officials during ETI Committee appearance to formalise the Forum in June 2012.

Overview of Tamboran Licence

Short presentation by Derek Reay (DR).

Mark Livingstone (ML) acknowledged importance of keeping public informed as the licence progresses.

Ken Logan (KL) queried whether environmental studies had begun. DR explained that a site would have to be identified and confirmed prior to any Baseline Studies commencing.

Discussion of Terms of Reference

Discussion around paragraphs 3.5 and 6.3 of the draft Terms of Reference, which references receiving evidence from interested parties. It was agreed by all members that this should be removed from the Terms of Reference as it would be unfeasible and unrealistic for members to consider/review the level of information which could be received. **Action (A1): Remove paragraphs 3.5 and 6.3 from Draft Terms of Reference**

David Bell (DB) suggested reviewing paragraph 3.9 in respect of the interfaces between the various Departments/Agencies. **Action (A2): Revise wording of paragraph 3.9**

A discussion then followed on the appropriate membership of the Forum. It was agreed that the focus of the Forum is regulatory and that membership should be limited to those Government Departments/Agencies with a regulatory role. **Action (A3): Review wording around membership of Forum to ensure clarity.**

The group also noted that the Forum should consider Shale Gas regulation in its entirety and not limit its focus to the licence in Fermanagh.

Baseline Studies

Nicola McEvoy (NMCE) provided a short overview of what baseline studies are currently taking place. There has been a UK-wide British Geological Survey (BGS) study but the study in NI hasn't progressed due to the lack of accessible monitoring sites. It was also thought that a study led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Republic and funded by DCENR, the EPA and NIEA would provide some of the baseline information for NI but this project has been put on hold until new research by the EU is released.

NIEA are responsible for the NI studies on groundwater and have been liaising with counterparts in ROI but the Tamboran licence is still in the preliminary stages.

Derek Reay (DR) gave a brief overview on seismic monitoring and how, following the recommendations which are emerging from DECC, it will be likely that Tamboran will be required to establish a network of seismometers. DR confirmed that there is an existing network but there may be a need to add further sensors for more detailed coverage. To put in context, DR mentioned that Cuadrilla had spent around £5million on such a network although it was noted that the licence in Fermanagh is for a smaller area.

Stakeholder Engagement

Mike Thompson (MT) led a short discussion on the importance of stakeholder engagement. All members agreed that a Shale Gas/Fracking “FAQs” section on the DETI website that members of the public could be referred to would be useful.

Action (A4): Progress FAQs for website.

MT and members discussed the need to further consider the best approach to engaging with stakeholders and what formats such engagement should take.

AOB

All members agreed a timeline of the various regulations required as licences progress, clearly indicating where regulatory responsibility lies, would be useful.

DR mentioned a European gap analysis which is nearing completion, aimed at identifying regulatory gaps. **Action (A5): NMCE and DR to review gap analysis on release and consider if analysis can be used as platform for similar NI study.**

Action (A6): Investigate whether an information portal can be set up to place the latest research on shale gas exploration. In the interim, NMCE will circulate relevant emerging research.

Tom Cowan (TC), queried whether the regulatory forum was a decision making body. MT stated that the Forum had no decision making powers.

Discussion around how often the Forum should meet – it was concluded that the Forum should meet initially in a quarterly to six-monthly bases but that frequency should be reviewed in line with the progress of relevant licences or major developments.

Date of next meeting

To be confirmed but provision for end of January 2013.

Summary of Actions

Reference	Action	Owner	Status
A1	Remove paras 3.5 and 6.3 from Draft ToR	NMcE	Complete
A2	Revise wording of para 3.9 in ToR	NMcE	Revised wording circulated
A3	Review wording around membership of Forum para 4.1 to ensure clarity.	NMcE	Revised wording circulated
A4	Progress FAQs for website.	NMcE	In Progress
A5	NMcE and DR to review gap analysis on release and consider if analysis can be used as platform for similar NI study.	NMcE/DR	Awaiting release of EA study
A6	Investigate whether an information portal can be set up to place the latest research on shale gas exploration.	NMcE	Currently being investigated but in the interim, relevant research will be circulated directly to members by NMcE.