

Summary

This briefing provides the background for the documents on the Citizen Space information page which relate to the hydraulic fracture plan for the first well at the Preston New Road (PNR) site:

- Hydraulic Fracture Plan (HFP)
- Environmental Statement and appendices B and L

Pre-Operational Conditions

The environmental permit for operations at PNR, granted to Cuadrilla Bowland Ltd in January 2015, includes a number of pre-operational conditions that have to be met before Cuadrilla can carry out hydraulic fracturing operations.

Pre-operational condition 3 requires our approval of a written HFP. This plan sets out how the operator will control and monitor the fracturing process.

The Assessment Process

We are currently carrying out a detailed technical assessment of the submitted HFP and relevant information contained within the existing Environmental Statement. We need to ensure that there are no unacceptable risks to the environment, in particular to groundwater.

We need to know how the operator will monitor how far the fractures will go to ensure they remain within the permitted boundary; and how they will manage risks to well integrity should there be a seismic event. We also need to be able to confirm where the hydraulic fracturing fluid will be left behind underground, to ensure that the requirements of the permit are met. These assessments may require further changes to the HFP.

We will publish a summary of our decision on the PNR Citizen Space information page when our assessment is complete.

The Oil and Gas Authority regulates the risk of seismic activity and will be making their own assessment in line with their regulatory remit. They also have to give their approval to the HFP.

Useful Information

The Environment Agency Oil and Gas Sector Guidance is available on:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/onshore-oil-and-gas-exploration-and-extraction-environmental-permits>