Dear Ms Lindsay-Thinn,

Thank you for your email of 27 May to the Secretary of State. I have been asked to reply.

Following the Order of the High Court made on 17 January 2014 quashing the decision of the Secretary of State [taken on behalf of the Secretary of State by the then Energy Minister, Greg Barker] dated 9 April 2013 to refuse the application by Halite Energy Limited for development consent for the proposed underground gas storage facility in Preesall, Lancashire, the application must now be redetermined.

Decision-making on applications for consent for nationally significant energy infrastructure falls within the portfolio of Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth. Amber Rudd will not therefore be taking this decision.

You also asked about the process being followed for the redetermination of the application. Rule 20(2) of The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010 sets out the written procedure to be followed by the Secretary of State (or Ministers acting on her behalf) when a decision is quashed. It requires the Secretary of State/her Ministers to (a) send to all parties a written statement of matters with respect to which further representations in writing are invited for the purpose of the Department's further consideration of the application; and (b) give all interested parties the opportunity of making representations in writing in respect of those matters. A Statement of Matters was issued to interested parties on 8 April 2014 and there have been opportunities given by the Department for interested parties to make representations and also to further comment on the representations received. I can confirm that all representations received are being forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate for publication on its Infrastructure Planning Portal http://infrastructure.planningportal.gov.uk/projects/north-west/preesall-saltfield-underground-gas-storage/.

All other relevant information relating to the redetermination of the application can also be found there.

All representations received and other relevant information will also be taken into account in the Minister's decision on the application, which is expected early in the current Parliament. Interested parties will be notified of his decision in due course.

I hope this clarification is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Pridham
Case Manager, National Infrastructure Consents
3rd Floor Area B
3 Whitehall Place
London SW1A 2AW
E: Robert.Pridham@decc.qsi.gov.uk  T: 0300 068 5682
Follow us on Twitter.com/DECCgovuk
Dear Ms Rudd,

I urge you to come clean over the decision-making process concerning the underground gas storage facility proposed by Halite Energy Group in Lancashire. The application, after more than a decade of legal wrangling, is currently being considered by your department, where it had previously been understood that the Secretary of State would determine the outcome. It has now been reported in the media that you will not be involved in the decision.

Following the recent news report (Independent on Sunday, 24th May, 2015) that Halite is represented by the lobbying company headed by your brother, Roland Rudd, I would like to seek clarification that you will not be involved in the decision.

Given that a spokesperson for your department declined to explain who would be taking this decision in your place, I would like to ask what process will be followed for making the determination. In a democracy it is right that citizens know what processes are being followed, especially when it concerns major decisions like gas storage.

The great majority of people in the areas surrounding the proposed development have been clear in their opposition to the plans for many years. I share the safety concerns of local MP, Cat Smith, urge you to come clean about the decision making process and ultimately for your department to turn down Halite’s plans.

Please can you send me affirmation that you have no conflict of interest, or alternatively affirmation that you will be abstaining from the decision-making process?

Yours sincerely,

Anna Lindsay-Thinn

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