



# Onshore oil and gas sector

Industry update

Summer 2014

## News

### Revising groundwater source protection zones

We have updated our maps of groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) to prepare for the next round of onshore oil and gas licensing. Groundwater provides a third of our drinking water in England and Wales, and it also maintains the flow in many of our rivers. SPZs are there to protect drinking water supplies. Our SPZ maps show the risk of contamination from any activities in an area that might cause groundwater pollution. We do not allow oil and gas infrastructure to operate in an SPZ 1, which is the area closest to a public water supply.

We have revised the maps to highlight confined aquifers, which are deeper layers of rock that contain groundwater that are bounded above and below by impermeable layers of rock. Historically SPZ maps have focused on regulating activities which occur at or near the surface. With more interest in subsurface activity, including oil and gas exploration, geothermal and ground source heat pumps, the maps now need to show confined groundwater sources which may restrict development in a Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence (PEDL) area.

You can view the revised maps on the ['What's in my backyard'](#) section of our website. You can also download the GIS files for free from our [datashare](#) site.

## Technical update

### Developing a new Best Available Techniques Reference document for extractive industries waste

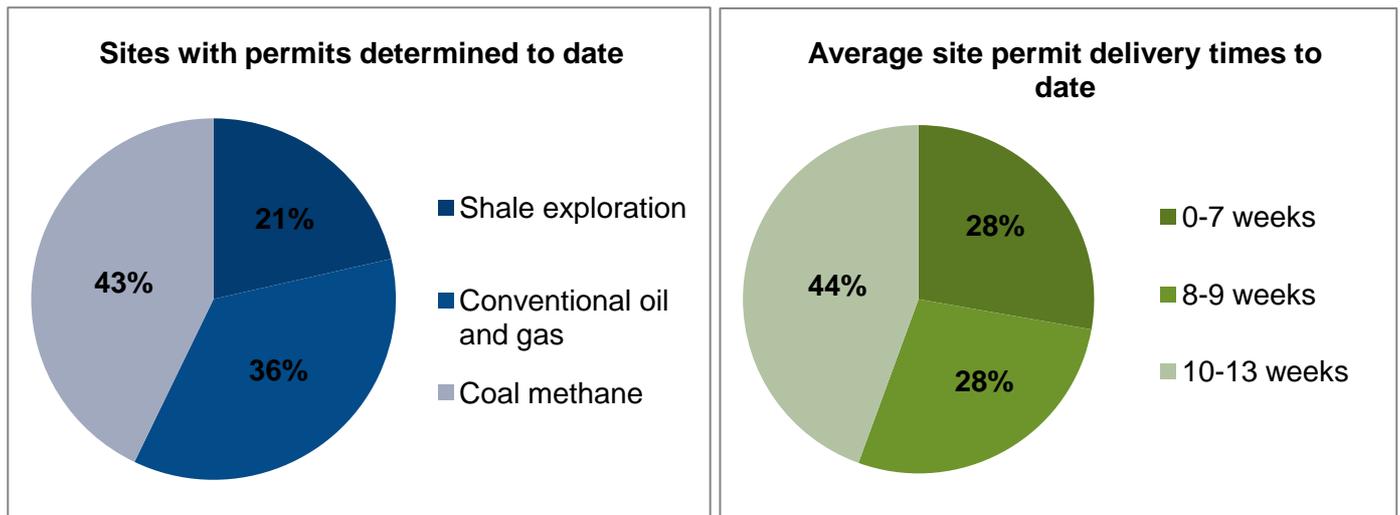
The European Commission held its kick off meeting in May for the development of a new Best Available Techniques Reference Document for the Management of Waste from the Extractive Industries (MWEI BREF). This is being developed under Directive 2006/21/EC commonly referred to as the mining waste directive (MWD). Over the next 12 months a Europe-wide technical working group, including ourselves working with other UK regulators, the oil and gas industry and the CBI will be undertaking a data and information collection exercise of extractive waste activities that may pose a potential environmental or human health concern, resulting from energy fuels (nuclear, coal, oil and gas), metal ores and industrial and construction minerals. This evidence gathering will cover all phases in the life-cycle of these materials and the key environmental issues of safety, waste, and emissions to water, soil, air and other relevant issues such as energy and water abstraction/consumption, noise, odour and vibration, seismicity, visual impact, bio-diversity, land use, climate change and radioactivity. Although the evidence gathering does not commence until January 2015, active operators will be invited to participate during August, to respond by 30 September 2014.

### Defra consultation on an amendment to the EPR regulations for storage of crude oil

Between 7 April and 2 June 2014, Defra held a public consultation on the proposal to limit the applicability of the activity listed in Schedule 1 of the EPR regulations, for the storage and handling of crude oil. The proposal is that crude oil storage, associated with onshore oil and gas extraction, will only be an installation if the storage capacity is greater than 200 tonnes or if storage will continue for more than 6 months. This means that short term, low capacity crude oil storage, associated with exploration of oil and gas would not require an installation permit. Defra received several responses to the consultation, which they are currently considering.

## Permitting

Since June 2013 we have determined permits for 14 sites. We currently have a further 4 sites with permits in determination. Average permitting times are around 10 weeks. (Correct at time of going to print).



## Feature

### Coal bed methane environmental risk assessment published

The Evidence Directorate have produced a report on the assessment of environmental risks associated with coal bed, mine and abandoned mine methane in England. The report will support our technical guidance for onshore oil and gas operations and inform decision making on coal methane recovery.

The report provides an overview of the environmental risks and the risk management controls that we and other regulators can impose to reduce the impact of coal bed and coal mine operations on the environment. The report identifies and assesses these risks across the lifecycle of gas production.

Overall, the study found that given the regulatory controls currently in place, the residual risk from environmental hazards can be reduced.

You can access the full report from the [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) website.

## Publications

- The British Geological Survey in partnership with the Environment Agency have [published a series of maps](#) which show the depth to each shale gas and oil source rock below principal groundwater aquifers in England and Wales. Understanding the distance between the two is important when assessing the environmental risks of shale gas and oil exploration.
- '[Considerations for quantifying fugitive methane releases from shale gas operations](#)' informs the Environment Agency and other industry experts about the options available for quantifying the amounts of fugitive methane released to air from certain onshore oil and gas operations.

## Coming up next quarter

- Onshore oil and gas exploration standard rules consultation report and new rules published
- Further consultation on draft technical guidance

## Contact

For more information on anything in this newsletter, [contact us by email](#).

Please click here to [unsubscribe](#) from our mailing list.