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Dear Mark,

Thank you for your letter of 23 December to Greg Clark, about the resolution passed at the meeting of Gloucestershire County Council on 7 December 2016. Your letter has been passed to the Treasury and I am replying as the Minister responsible for the Shale Wealth Fund.

In relation to the concerns raised over the protection of Gloucestershire's environment, please note that the UK has a strong regulatory regime for exploratory shale activity, ensuring that it will be undertaken safely, respecting local communities and safeguarding the environment. The environmental assessments undertaken by the Environment Agency during the permit application process are completely independent from the Shale Wealth Fund. The Environment Agency, as well as the other regulators, will not allow activities to take place if there is a risk to people or the environment.

The option of sharing the proceeds of shale directly with local residents was included in our consultation on the Shale Wealth Fund last year, as well as options to share the proceeds at a local or regional level. A government response to this consultation will be published in due course.

Thank you for taking the trouble to make us aware of these concerns.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG