



Department for
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Our ref: MCB2024/19216
Your ref: RF31627

23 December 2024

Dear Richard,

Thank you for meeting with me on 4 December and for sharing further information regarding the tragic events that occurred in Cleat Hill following the drilling of a borehole for a ground source heat pump.

I would like to reiterate my sincere condolences to the families of your constituents Paul Swales and Julia Harris, who sadly lost their lives as a consequence of the explosion. My sympathies also go out to all of the families who have been affected.

As discussed, my officials and I will continue to work with colleagues across Government in dealing with the incident. I have engaged with the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution regarding your concerns regarding assurance for the evacuated households returning to their homes. I have contacted the Minister for Rail regarding East West Rail plans to drill boreholes in the area.

Ground-source heat pumps, like air-source heat pumps, are key technologies that can help to transform how we heat our homes to reduce carbon emissions and tackle climate change. Though this is an extremely rare and isolated incident, we will consider whether further action, such as changes to standards or regulations, could help prevent such a tragic event from reoccurring when heat pumps are installed in the future, in light of any findings from the investigations by the Police and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

HSE is committed to ensuring that health and safety legislation does not prevent innovation and progress and contributes towards enabling a safe transition to Net Zero across all industry sectors. [The Borehole Sites and Operations Regulations 1995](#), which provides requirements for drilling below 30 metres in mining areas, is the responsibility of HSE. HSE has no current plans to bring drilling for the installation of ground source heat pumps within the scope of The Boreholes Sites and Operations Regulations 1995 (BSOR). HSE considers the overarching Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and other existing regulations to be sufficient to ensure that the hazards of bring drilling for the installation of ground source heat pumps are managed appropriately. However, HSE continues to consider where new legislation or legislative change may be required to address the risks of new and emerging technologies.

My officials will continue engaging with HSE regarding BSOR, and with the Ground Source Heat Pump Association regarding their Vertical Borehole Drilling Standard.

Yours sincerely

DR MIATTA FAHNBULLEH MP
Minister for Energy Consumers