



**Department  
of Energy &  
Climate Change**

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Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March to Edward Davey, enclosing correspondence from your constituent, redacted redacted redacted redacted redacted redacted redacted redacted redacted, about geo-engineering, in particular the Stratospheric Particle Injection for Climate Engineering (SPICE) project.

I would like to reassure you that the intention for this project was never to inject sulphur particles into the atmosphere, as described in the Independent article. The article is referring to a hypothetical scenario.

The SPICE project began in October 2010, funded by two of the Research Councils; the Natural Environment Research Council and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. It comprised two lab based and one field based components. The field technology test would have involved pumping water (not sulphur) to a height of 1km through a suspended hose, held aloft by a helium-filled balloon. This was simply to gain a better understanding of how the equipment and water droplets would behave in such conditions. At no point did it seek to perform geo-engineering, or release any substance other than water.

However, you may be aware that in May 2012, the researchers decided to cancel this test before any field work took place, not because the project was viewed as unsafe, but due to a combination of legal issues regarding patents, and a realisation that more public engagement needed to be done.

EU Environmental Impacts Assessments are largely designed to cover public and private infrastructure projects with the potential for significant environmental impact<sup>1</sup>. However Research Councils assess the research they choose to fund, including the environmental impacts.

In addition, the Research Councils, as any UK body, are bound by the law, and neither they, nor the researchers, committed any criminal offence during this project.

I would like to assure you that our original statement in our response to your letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 2012 holds true; to the best of our knowledge, no geo-engineering or cloud seeding is taking place in or affecting UK airspace, including activities to deliberately place sulphur dioxide or other substances into the atmosphere. Any geo-engineering activities are currently restricted by decisions and agreements under both the Convention of Biological Diversity and the London Convention and its Protocol, to which the UK is a Party.

It is important to emphasise that the Government's priority is, and should be, to tackle the root cause of climate change through reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions from human activities and to adapt to any unavoidable impacts. However, should the need ever arise to deploy geo-engineering techniques in the future, a thorough understanding of all the options available to counteract dangerous climate change and knowledge of their risks and benefits will be needed. This understanding can only be developed through relevant, careful and responsible multi-disciplinary research.

A full version of the Government's position on geo-engineering research is available [online](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/120688/Government_view_on_geo-engineering_research.pdf) at:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/120688/Government view on geo-engineering research.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/120688/Government_view_on_geo-engineering_research.pdf).

Yours ever,

**GREGORY BARKER**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/eia-legalcontext.htm>

