

Chief Executive's Department



file:
**Belfast
City Council**

Your reference

Our reference SW/np

Date 9 September 2015



COPY

Mr Jonathan Bell
Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Netherleigh House
Massey Avenue
BELFAST BT4 3XX

Dear Minister Bell

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION AT WOODBURN FOREST

I wish to advise you that the Council, at its monthly meeting on 1st September, passed the following notice of motion:

"This Council notes that Woodburn Reservoir in Carrickfergus provides water to a significant part of the City and expresses concern that Infastrata have been permitted development to conduct exploratory petroleum drilling at this location using harmful chemicals; it notes that the current law governing permitted development in Northern Ireland is less robust than in England, where petroleum exploration requires planning permission and notes further that 75% of fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground to prevent dangerous climate change and does not regard this process as in line with the legal requirement of the DOE in Article 1 of the 2011 Planning Act to further sustainable development.

This Council therefore expresses concern that no Strategic Environmental Assessment was ever conducted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment ahead of the adoption of a petroleum exploration plan or the issuing of the East Antrim Petroleum Exploration Licence.

Accordingly, the Council calls upon the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Minister for the Environment and Mid and East Antrim Council to urgently review the decision to grant permitted development for exploratory drilling in Woodburn Forest with a view to reversing that permission and for the Minister for the Environment to amend the law so that petroleum exploration always requires full planning permission."

Whilst appreciating that matters relating to mineral development, including oil and gas, fall within the remit of district councils under the Planning Act 2011, there exists scope for government departments to call in "regionally significant developments". Given the concerns outlined regarding the fact that the Woodburn Reservoir supplies water to a significant part of Belfast; perhaps you might consider the decision of Mid and East Antrim within a regional context and, perhaps, agree that your Department could re-examine that decision through the call-in mechanism.

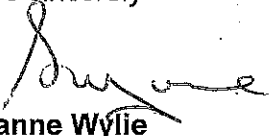
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**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

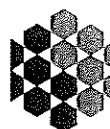
I would be grateful if you could consider the issues raised and advise me in due course so as I update the Council in this matter.

Yours sincerely


Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive

Letter issued by post
22 September 2015 NP

From the Office of the Minister



Department of
**Enterprise, Trade
and Investment**

www.detini.gov.uk

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Your Ref: SW/np

Our Ref: DETI COR 1219/2015

Ms Suzanne Wylie
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 5GS

St
5 November 2015

Dear Suzanne,

PETROLEUM EXPLORATION AT WOODBURN FOREST

Thank you for your letter of 9 September in relation to concerns about the proposed drilling by InfraStrata Plc in Woodburn Forest, Carrickfergus, under Petroleum Licence PL1/10. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The concerns raised in your letter are issues regulated by a number of organisations and I note that your letter has also been sent to the Minister for the Environment and to Mid and East Antrim Council.

I am therefore responding regarding the issue directly concerning the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI); namely the matter of no Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) having been carried out by DETI.

The EU SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) applies to plans and programmes whose first formal preparatory act was on or after 21 July 2004. The current petroleum legislation in Northern Ireland specifies an "open door" system whereby companies can apply for any unlicensed area of Northern Ireland at any time. As such the petroleum licensing regime for Northern Ireland has remained essentially the same since the late 1980s and predates the SEA Directive. Accordingly a SEA was not deemed necessary by DETI at the time of issuing PL1/10 to InfraStrata Plc.

I trust you will find the above helpful.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan F. Bell

JONATHAN BELL MLA

Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

11.11.15

Copied to:

Siobhan Toland

Stephen McCrory

Barry Flynn

Chief Executive's Office		
Date	6.11.15	
Seen by CX		
Referred to		
ACX	Corp Comms	Dem Serv
GR	SPP	Bus Supp.
Dev	F&R	H&ES
P&L	P&P	Other
Ref	SW 16/11	



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