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Louise McLornan
Democratic Services Officer
Belfast City Council
City Hall, Belfast
BT1 5GS

11th July 2016

Dear Ms McLornan,

SUBJECT: EXPLORATORY DRILLING AT WOODBURN FOREST

Thank you for your letter dated 6th July 2016, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to attend a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of Belfast City Council in relation to Woodburn Forest however we can confirm that we will be unable to attend.

The drilling activities at Woodburn Forest have now been completed.

The process of oil and gas exploration is a highly regulated business and a number of different approvals are required from several statutory agencies before any exploratory oil and gas drilling can be undertaken in NI to ensure there are no real let alone significant risks to the environment if the various conditions governing the exploratory process are complied with.

All the required statutory approvals from the relevant statutory agencies, which included the (as then) Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Department for Environment (DOE) Strategic Planning, DoE Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland and Mid and East Antrim Council, were in place for the drilling of the Woodburn Forest well.

It is important to note that oil and gas exploration and exploitation is nothing new. It has been carried on in Great Britain safely for over 70 years. In Great Britain today, there are 120 onshore sites in production which 250 operating wells producing between 20,000- 25,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day.

Figures released in 2014 suggest there have been over 2,000 oil and gas exploration and production wells drilled onshore in Great Britain (many of which in much more highly sensitive areas than Woodburn Forest), excluding further deep wells for water, salt, coal and geothermal exploration. In addition there have been more than 8,000 exploration and production wells drilled offshore in Great Britain for oil and gas.

Thus the business of conventional exploration is tried and tested. Indeed in Northern Ireland there have been approximately 18 petroleum exploration deep wells drilled

Continued...2

safely over a number of years and many more if exploration wells for coal, geothermal and salt are included.

While the drilling at Woodburn Forest did not ultimately prove successful it was carried out as planned, with no harm to the environment and we sincerely hope that at some point in the future Northern Ireland will be able to take advantage of the economic benefits that could flow from any future discovery of oil or gas.



Andrew Hindle

Chief Executive Officer