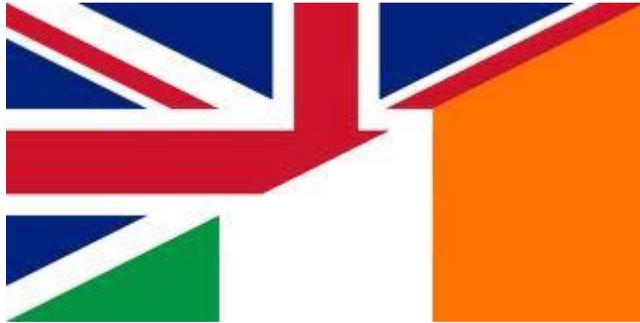


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Interview: Tony Bazley, Regional Director at Tamboran Resources



Natural Gas Europe was pleased to have the opportunity to speak with Tony Bazley, Regional Director at [Tamboran Resources](#), explorer of hydrocarbons. We spoke about the prospects of [shale gas in Ireland](#), an island "at the end of a very long pipeline." Most of the attention is now focused on the [United Kingdom](#), but Bazley said that shale gas could change the cards on the Irish table as well. According to Tamboran, "what is happening in Britain can only help attract investment in Ireland."

Do you see any differences between prospects in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland?

There are no significant differences within the area where we have been granted permits. Rocks do not take account of land borders and all our acreage is within what geologists call the Northwest Carboniferous Basin. It is split nearly 50/50 between the two regions. Our main target is the 400m thick Bundoran Shale. Shale of similar age to major producing shales in the North America and, incidentally, the Bowland Shales in Britain. Our initial research, based on analysing past data using modern techniques, suggests 2.6 to 5.2 TCF recoverable gas. Again the split is 50/50 between the regions but it must be emphasised that this is only an estimate, albeit made by experts with experience of the shale gas industry. They can only be confirmed by exploratory drilling which in itself will have very little impact on the ground.

Do you think that eventual explorations in one of the two countries (Northern Ireland or Republic of Ireland) could pave the way to explorations also in the other?

Although we would like to move at a similar rate north and south, the pace is actually dictated by the licences we hold. Exploration in any part of the Carboniferous Basin is relevant to both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Our first proposed exploration borehole is likely to be in County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland but is only to collect rock samples from depths of around 1km and will not involve hydraulic fracturing. Any work we do will obviously be closely watched by everybody, in the Republic of Ireland as much as Northern Ireland and it will be regulated by the relevant authorities. We will be ensuring we 'get it right' and are dedicated to meeting or exceeding [all applicable regulatory](#)

requirements. We will have robust regulation. A clearly excellent job is needed during the exploration and testing phase, showing we respect the environment and the people.

What do you expect from an Irish shale gas industry?

If the gas is there in quantity it will be a huge boost to the economy. The industry has the potential to give energy security on an island that is at the end of a very long pipeline. It would stabilise and probably reduce prices for a generation or more. Competitive energy prices will help existing local businesses and attract new industry. It would prove an important part of the energy mix, that will supplement intermittent renewable energy sources, like wind turbines. I also expect the industry to prove entirely sustainable from an environmental viewpoint. We know there will not be a negative impact on water, farming or tourism. It will provide local people with distinct advantages in terms of jobs and local investment but the national economy will also benefit. And at the end of a potential bonanza the country must be left a better place, with landscapes untouched, wildlife flourishing and vibrant communities.

Do you think that investments in UK shale gas are distracting investment in Irish shale gas? What's the relationship between developments in the two countries?

It is not a distraction. What is happening in Britain can only help attract investment in Ireland. The UK includes Northern Ireland and it will be surprising if the investments in Britain don't spin off here. We know the interest in Britain will extend over the short stretch of sea between us but Tamboran Resources is an international company with large acreage elsewhere, particularly in Australia and parts of Africa. Santos Ltd, Australia's largest domestic gas producer, has a 14% shareholding. Ireland, north and south, is closely watching the way the industry is developing in Britain and will be learning from it. The scientific community, including those involved with the regulatory authorities, has close relationships with its counterparts, not just in Britain but more widely in Europe.

Do you think that UK operators might be interested in investing in Ireland?

Yes.

You are saying that Ireland will follow the UK in case of significant investments, but could a nascent UK industry be the driving force?

The Republic of Ireland is its own master. It will go its own way in its own time. It is proceeding with caution by carrying out a major study under the supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency. We welcome the study and hope it can be completed within the schedule that has been set. The Northern Ireland Executive will make its own decision on whether or not to proceed.

Given the recent endorsement by the Minister for Energy and Natural Resources Pat Rabbitte, do you see any similarities between the UK and Ireland? Will the Republic of Ireland proceed with a tax regime similar to the one proposed by the UK government?

We appreciate that every government owes it to the people to ensure this industry carries out its business efficiently, safely and sustainably whilst providing maximum benefit in terms

of taxes. At the same time the companies make very large investments with no return in the years of exploration. Each government will proceed in its own way and I can offer no insights into the Republic of Ireland's plans.

Speaking about the population acceptance in Ireland, what is your opinion on the difficulties that might arise there? How do you perceive the public opinion? Do you keep communicating with the population?

Many people are at least aware of the issue. Given the level of media coverage it could hardly be otherwise. Their opinions can be influenced by the media which has played a big part in raising the issues. We have held public meetings and met hundreds of demands by reporters for comment. We meet business people, local people, the regulatory authorities and the elected representatives at both central and local levels. We certainly keep communicating and listening. All the comments, supportive and critical, are taken on-board so they will be covered when we eventually apply for planning permission to drill test wells. We are doing our best to be open and informative but I know we will never do enough to please everyone. Overall I think it is going as well as could be expected at this stage but we are only at the start.

Do you expect the Irish population to be more or less collaborative? Do you expect a strong public resistance?

I hope it will be more collaborative, certainly as time goes by and the true facts are appreciated. We have met and expect a continuing strong resistance from a small sector of the public. We listen to those people and respect their right to make their opinions known. We recognise that in addition to local people there are dedicated anti-development protesters who move from area to area, as has been seen recently in the south of England. It is interesting that the attempt is to prevent any exploration on the basis that if gas is proved then the industry will be unstoppable. We anticipate demonstrations at any site we are drilling, even if they are simple exploratory holes as have been drilled without problems for the past 100 years. I just ask that those protests are peaceful. I believe the general public is open-minded and will listen to the facts.

What would that mean for the shale gas industry?

It will allow the exploration stage, carefully controlled and involving only a few acres, to go ahead so the debate can be based on real figures. Let's see how much gas is there. Only then can the benefits be properly assessed and a decision made about whether to accept the industry. The public knows it always has the final veto through the planning process and its government representatives