

Tamboran U-turn on crucial submission

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The company planning to extract gas from West Cavan has broken its commitment to push regulators to demand chemical-free fracking, The Anglo-Celt can reveal. At a public information meeting held in the Slieve Russell Hotel in Ballyconnell on September 14, Mr Moorman gave assurances that the company would submit a recommendation to the State's regulator over gas extraction, the Commission for Energy Regulation's (CER), that chemicals should be banned from fracturing fluid. If the proposal was enshrined in legally binding regulations the company, which at present only possesses licence options, would be obliged to deliver on their promises.

However the Commission for Energy Regulation's (CER) consultation period closed on September 28, and Mr Moorman said that they after "carefully reviewing" the purpose of the process decided against making a submission.

The use of chemicals in the controversial hydraulic fracturing process has been a key battleground between Tamboran and those opposed to the plan. In late July the company caused surprise by vowing to use only sand and water in their fracturing fluid. This technique has never been used commercially in horizontal gas wells anywhere in the world without the use of a number of toxic chemicals. Despite the company's CEO Richard Moorman vowing to this paper in August that, "If water and sand don't work we're not going to proceed with the project," without the weight of legislation such promises remain unenforceable.

The commitment to make submissions to the CER was made at the meeting in response to a question by Leitrim-based organic farmer Joachim Schaefer on whether a company buying the licence options off Tamboran would be subject to non-chemical fracking conditions. "Today, if some other company came in," said Mr Moorman, "there's nothing in the legislation anywhere that binds anybody to zero chemicals in Ireland. You raised a relevant point, why can't that be in the sales contract, and I don't see why not, because that's consistent with my promise... I agree that the government has to have a role in that respect... Now we are having those discussions.

"Your point is, can we put this to the government? Yes we can. It is my understanding that there are submissions required to the CER by the 27th. You will see in our up-coming submission a request that Ireland regulates zero chemical fracturing - you will see us ask the CER to enact that."

A Tamboran delegation, which included Mr Moorman, had already met and discussed regulation with the CER the week before the Slieve Russell meeting.

Richard Moorman last week told The Anglo-Celt: "We did not send anything to CER. After carefully reviewing the purpose of the CER process, we decided to not put forward any submission. We have high respect for the energy regulators in Ireland and believe they are very capable of managing all the many challenges involved in all forms of energy development. As such, we are not keeping up with any submissions to the CER. We are focused on preparing for the next 18 months of EIA and planning permission."