

Letter received from Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Employment

Date: Feb. 13, 2012

I refer to your further correspondence on hydraulic fracking. With regard to environmental concerns, there are strong regulatory processes in place involving An Bord Pleanala, the EPA, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, the Commission for Energy Regulation and others that would apply to future projects. All of these bodies other than An Bord Pleanala would have an involvement at both the exploration and production phases. All of these processes are subject to a range of national and EU legislation, including the Environmental Impact Directives and they all include a public consultation phase to ensure that concerns of the community are heard.

I understand the question of what specifically could be injected into wells, in terms both of water or chemicals would be subject to environmental impact assessment and regulation by the EPA in particular under its IPPC licensing regime (Integrated Pollution Prevention Control License). Potential issues such as the nature or density of drilling well pads, or the related traffic movements, are issues that would be addressed by An Bord Pleanala as part of the normal planning process.

An exploration project which would likely involve 1-3 exploration wells would require:

- A consent from the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (who would be advised by the EPA and the National Parks and Wildlife Service); and
- A development consent for the well pads.

A production project that might involve a large number of wells and well pads would require all of the following consents:

- A planning consent from An Bord Pleanala under the Strategic Infrastructure Act
- An IPPC License from the EPA
- A Plan of Development consent and a Gas Act consent from the Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
- A Gas Act consent from the Commission for Energy Regulation (to bring gas to the national grid)
- A Safety Case approval from the Commission for Energy Regulation (the Commission is currently developing its safety framework).

There is scope for Ireland to benefit economically from its indigenous oil and gas resources; however, these benefits will only be realized through effective regulation. I believe the above consent processes and public consultation is robust enough to ensure that any decision made by the Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in relation to hydraulic fracking in Ireland is an informed one.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Employment