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Marine and Natural Resources

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5<sup>th</sup> September 2005

Dr. Caroline Lucas  
Green Party MEP  
Suite 58  
The Hop Exchange  
24 Southwark Street  
London SE1 1TY  
United Kingdom

Dear Dr. Lucas

I wish to refer to your recent representation to An Taoiseach which he passed on to me for direct response to you regarding issues which you have raised in connection with the Corrib Gas Field.

I would like to clarify the position about the 5 Rossport men who were jailed. These men were not jailed because they were protesting which is within their rights to do but as you quite rightly say for being in breach of a High Court Order preventing them from interfering with the development of the Corrib Gas Field. They remain in jail as they are not prepared to purge their contempt to the High Court which is a requirement of the Court for their release.

I understand from Shell E&P (Ireland) Ltd that it is not the case that a Court Order has been granted when the grounds for doing so were unlawful. The interlocutory injunction was granted to Shell E&P Ireland by the President of the High Court on 4 April 2005. This Court Order prohibits obstruction to SEPIL's activities on specific lands in Rossport which are not the same as those the subject of the Minister's complaint regarding Shell's welding work. In addition, this welding work commenced on 7 June 2005, some two months after the injunction was granted.

You may wish to note that Shell have apologised to me for being in breach of a condition attached to their Pipeline Consent and have agreed to undo the welding work on the pipeline.

The developers application to my Department for approval to develop the Corrib Gas Field went through a rigorous legislative process under various acts administered by my Department and the consent and approvals were given only after they were found to meet the requirements of that process.

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The application for consent to construct a pipeline was examined in detail under that process both by technical experts in my Department and an outside pipeline consultant. The pipeline consultant's study of the proposals addressed design methodology, operating conditions, pipeline material quality and protection from interference. The conclusion of this evaluation indicated that the design code has been selected in accordance with the best public safety considerations, and is appropriate for the pipeline operating conditions and subject to the developers undertaking to comply with a number of conditions laid down in the then Minister's consent the design is generally in accordance with best national and international industry practice and the pipeline is considered to meet public safety requirements.

While the design pressure of the pipeline is 345 bar, the normal working pressure will be in the range 120-135 bar and the maximum working pressure will be 150 bar. I might also add the working pressures quoted above will only be experienced during the initial four years of production and will then decline substantially over the life of the field.

In order to allay any fears that the residents on the pipeline route might have I recently commissioned a comprehensive health and safety review of the proposed onshore pipeline which is in addition to the comprehensive assessment undertaken both within the Department and by an independent pipeline consultant of Shells original proposals. All documentation received from the developers including the Quantified Risk Assessment and the independent assessors' opinions on this will be assessed in that context. It is intended that the new review will address issues around the risks of disruption of the pipeline due to third party interference and otherwise. I have also asked the Company to examine engineering adaptations to the pipeline installations at the landfall with a view to isolating the onshore section of the pipeline from ever experiencing reservoir pressures. I await the Company's responses in that regard.

You may wish to note also that each application received in the Department for approval was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with environmental law. Also in accordance with that law the EIS was put into that public arena and the public were invited to forward any observations they had to various named environmental bodies within a specific time frame.

In addition, the examination of the EIS by my Department was done by a Marine Licensing Vetting Committee (MLVC) which consisted of experts in relevant environmental fields. The MLVC as well as the Department also engaged a firm of consultants to advise them. The conclusions of this intense examination was that the project would not have any significant effect on the environment which was a requirement before approval could be given.

As regards the peat land into which the pipeline will be laid some 1.5 metres underground this has also been considered by experts in that field.

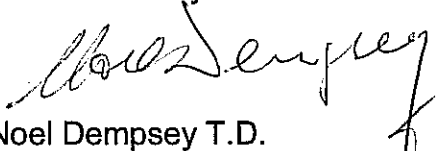
The environment conditions of all applications are being examined by an Environmental Monitoring Group set up by me consisting of various environment experts in the field relevant to the Corrib development. Shell will not receive approval from me to turn on the gas until the environmental conditions as well as a number of technical conditions attaching to approvals and consents are fully adhered to.

Shell like any other petroleum company has received approvals to develop the Corrib Gas Field since they were entitled to having met the legislative criteria set down. I am surprised to understand from your letter that you feel Shell apparently manipulated the legal system. As regulator for petroleum development in Ireland I would not allow this to happen by Shell or any other petroleum company.

There has been a lot of misinformation in the public arena about this development which I am anxious to have corrected. While the residents of Rosspoint may have concerns about the pipeline you might be interested to note that they have never engaged in any dialogue with officials in my Department in the matter of the safety of the pipeline who have the details about the design codes of the pipeline and would have been prepared to discuss them. Indeed my Department wrote to them back in the year 2001 about the pipeline and invited them to meet with the officials. Not one of the residents responded to the letters. You can appreciate therefore that claims are being made about the pipeline by people who do not have the full facts about it. In many cases where information is given to people they are reluctant to accept the validity of it. You will appreciate therefore that this is a difficult position for me.

I trust this letter has clarified any misinformation you have been given about the Corrib Project. I hope you will be assured from the information I have given you that this development will be carried out to the highest international standards.

Yours sincerely



Noel Dempsey T.D.  
Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources