

Department of Communications,
Climate Action & Environment,
29-31 Adelaide Road,
Dublin 2 DO2 X285

20th September 2019



McCumiskey House
Richview
Clonskeagh Road
Dublin 14
D14 YR62
Phone: 01 2680180
Email: info@climatecouncil.ie

Dear Minister Bruton

RE: Advice on future offshore oil and gas exploration and recovery in Ireland

The Climate Change Advisory Council welcomes the invitation from the Minister for Communication, Climate Action and Environment to provide advice on the future exploration and recovery of oil and gas resources within Ireland's jurisdiction.

The Council notes the Climate Action Plan envisages a major shift away from oil combustion within heat and transport sectors towards renewables in the coming decade. This recognises the advice provided by the IPCC in its fifth Assessment Report, and its 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C. These have provided compelling evidence that the combustion of the known global reserves of coal, oil and natural gas would result in warming well in excess of the 2.0°C target set out in the Paris Agreement. The literature indicates the combustion of global reserves of coal on its own would lead to warming in excess of 2.0°C. Similarly the combustion of known oil reserves on its own would likely lead to warming of 1.5°C. However, the combustion of the known global reserves of natural gas would not, of itself, exceed 1.5°C warming.

Therefore, the Council advises that the exploration for, and recovery of new offshore oil reserves is not compatible with a low carbon transition.

However, natural gas has been identified internationally as an important transition fuel, as the global energy system switches from carbon intensive fossil fuels to low-carbon and renewable systems on the way to complete decarbonisation. The extent to which natural

gas can enable this transition is linked to the capacity to deploy renewables in the energy system and the viability of appropriate decarbonisation technologies, such as carbon capture and storage, CCS. Research presented to the Joint Oireachtas Committee indicates that if we are to decarbonise the Irish economy by 2050 there will be a need for significant deployment of CCS with natural gas as a component of Ireland's energy system. This reflects the intermittent nature of renewable sources of electricity and the absence, to date, of a suitable alternative backup technology.

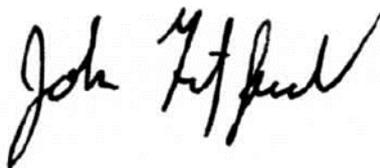
Internationally, the development and deployment of CCS has been limited. Meanwhile, alternative energy storage systems, such as battery storage and synthetic gas production, have advanced rapidly. It is important that climate and energy policy is flexible enough to allow for deployment of the most cost-effective approaches to reduce emissions and ensure energy security as they emerge.

Recovery of newly discovered gas reserves may lead to improved energy security, lower energy costs and facilitate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions during the transition to a low carbon economy. However, the recovery of natural gas reserves should be contingent on the associated deployment of decarbonisation technologies.

On this basis, the Council advises that the continued exploration for, and recovery of new offshore natural gas reserves can be consistent with a low carbon transition. This should be kept under review.

Should you wish to clarify any of the points above, please contact myself directly or the Climate Change Advisory Council Secretariat info@climatecouncil.ie or phone 01 2680180.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John FitzGerald', written in a cursive style.

Prof. John FitzGerald

Chair

Climate Change Advisory Council