

Environment Advisory Unit,  
DCCAЕ,  
Custom House,  
Dublin.  
D01 W6XO .

7<sup>th</sup>. March 2019

BY EMAIL TO [padadmin@dccaе.gov.ie](mailto:padadmin@dccaе.gov.ie)

**Re: Further Information Response arising from consultation regarding exploration drilling on the Iolar Prospect in the Porcupine Basin NEXEN Petroleum UK Ltd**

Dear [REDACTED]

I refer to the letter of application dated 07 November 2018 by NEXEN Petroleum U.K. Limited ('NEXEN') to carry out proposed exploration drilling activities on the Iolar Prospect in the Porcupine Basin and your department's proposal to make a screening determination in accordance with EU Directive 2014/52/EU.

A consultation process was commenced for this application on or about 15 November 2018 with a deadline for submissions of 15 December 2018 and to which An Taisce made a submission. Following correspondence suggesting that the first consultation process was deficient, a second consultation period was notified from 21 December 2018 to 21 January 2018, to which An Taisce also made a submission.

On or about 12 February 2019, your Department decided that further information was required from NEXEN and notified the applicant and An Taisce of this fact. The wording of the request for further information was not made public.

By letter dated 21 February NEXEN responded to the said request, enclosing *inter alia* what is stated to be the request wording.

Members of the public including An Taisce have been invited to make submissions in relation to the further information received. An Taisce submits as follows:

**An Taisce is a membership-based charity | Join at [www.antaisce.org/membership](http://www.antaisce.org/membership)**

An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland | Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin, D08 X2A3, Ireland | [www.antaisce.org](http://www.antaisce.org)  
+353 1 454 1786 | [info@antaisce.org](mailto:info@antaisce.org)  
Company Limited by Guarantee | Company 12469 | Charity CHY 4741 | Charity Regulator No. 20006358  
EU Transparency Register No. 89747144047-77

**Directors:** Karl Dowling (Secretary), Philip Kearney, Christopher Massi, Muiris O'Ceidigh, Patricia Oliver, Judy Osborne (British), John Pierce (Chair), Garrett Poynton, Charles Stanley-Smith (British), John Sweeney.

1. An Taisce is disappointed that deficiencies in the application and the assessment process highlighted in our earlier submissions were not addressed in the request for further information or in the response to same.
2. Very little, if any, of the information sought by the Department in its further information request was supplied by NEXEN in its response. The standard reply appears to be that the information sought is already in the application documentation, which is clearly not the case or the Department would not have issued the request.
3. The further information response has not resulted in any amendment to the application documentation.
4. The Appropriate Assessment screening report still does not meet Irish and European law requirements and protections.
5. Even if considered in light of the response by NEXEN, the current EIA screening report still fails to meet the requirements of EU law. There is insufficient information to enable the Department to make an assessment in accordance with Annex III of the EIA Directive. Cumulative impacts with future exploration or past exploration in this or other licensed areas has not been addressed at all in the further information response, despite a clear request to do so.
6. The Archaeological Assessment Summary Report remains inadequate for the purposes of an EIA screening. It is not acceptable that the results of the ROV survey will not be available for assessment at EIA screening stage, despite the making of a further information request and the corresponding lengthening of the assessment process.
7. There is still insufficient information on the presence of tuna and other fish species in the zone of drilling and it remains the position of An Taisce that any consideration of the impact on fish is premature and should at least await the outcome of fisheries surveys by the Marine Institute programmed for later in 2019. The pre-drilling fisheries study is still lacking in any assessment of risk to fish from a blowout or other form of leak of petroleum during the drilling operation.
8. There has still been no proper assessment of climate change impacts and effects. We note that NEXEN has not provided information requested by the Department in this regard.
9. An Taisce remains of the view that this screening application process should be terminated pending the establishment of an independent and objective process for assessing exploration and development applications for oil and gas projects. Email correspondence is still being directed to the Petroleum Affairs Division, despite an attempt to create an appearance that the process is wholly under the control of a separate unit in the

Department. To ensure objectivity and the prioritisation of environmental protection such assessments need to be managed by an outside body.

10. The public notification process for this process remains inadequate. The notification of the further information response remains buried in the Department's website where it is not easily discovered by the general public.
11. Key documents within the application have been withheld from public scrutiny including the generic well proposal, permits for use and discharge of added chemicals and the Financial Responsibilities Assessment. An Taisce hereby formally requests copies of same to enable a complete response to this submission.

If this process is to continue it is clear that another further information stage will be required. An Taisce respectfully requests that as well as seeking the information that was not supplied in the first request, the second request should be broadened to encompass the omissions highlighted in our submissions.

If you have any questions about the content of this correspondence, please contact the undersigned. A copy of any decisions in related to this matter should be communicated to An Taisce, Tailors' Hall, Back Lane, Dublin 8 for the attention of the undersigned and also by email to [heritage@antaisce.org](mailto:heritage@antaisce.org).

Yours sincerely,

  
Advocacy Officer