

**COUNCIL FOR NATURE CONSERVATION
AND THE COUNTRYSIDE**

An Advisory Council to the Department of the Environment

Room G-07, Waterman House, 5 – 33 Hill Street,

Belfast, BT1 2LA

Telephone: 028905 43184/43050

secretariat-hillst@doeni.gov.uk

www.cncni.gov.uk

ANNEX 5

Mr Alex Attwood MLA,
Minister for the Environment,
Clarence Court,
10-18 Adelaide Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8GB

12th March 2012

Dear Minister,

Re: Dr Tony Bazley

It has come to our attention that various people and organisations have written to you demanding or requesting that you review or rescind the re-appointment of Dr Tony Bazley to CNCC because of his involvement with Tamboran Resources Ltd, a company involved in shale gas exploration and extraction. CNCC discussed this matter at its meeting on Friday and requested that I write to you to express our concern about this campaign against Dr Bazley.

I wanted to assure you that Dr Bazley formally informed CNCC of his involvement with Tamboran before he joined the company, and actually offered to resign if the Council felt that this constituted too great a conflict of interests. Having considered the implications, and the important contribution that Dr Bazley has made, and continues to make, to our work, we agreed that his declaration of interest was sufficient, and that if and/or when we came to discuss issues concerning shale gas we would deal with any conflict appropriately. Many Council members have some reservations about this form of exploitation of natural resources, but we also believe that there needs to be a balanced and open debate about the issues, based on firm scientific evidence, when actual proposals for exploration or extraction come forward.

You will be aware that at the last performance assessment I recommended Dr Bazley for re-appointment on the basis of his contribution to the work of CNCC, which has been consistently of a very high standard. We rely heavily on him for his unrivalled expertise in geology and geomorphology, but he has also provided valuable input on a wide range of other topics. We believe that his involvement with Tamboran Resources does not compromise or negate his ability to give first rate advice on other matters relating to nature conservation and the countryside.

CNCC has been shocked at the aggressive personal attacks on Dr Bazley from opponents of hydraulic fracturing, and we trust that you will defend his re-appointment to CNCC, with the confidence that any potential conflict of interest will be dealt with by appropriate action

at the relevant time. Examination of our Minutes will show that members are asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest at the outset of each meeting. I hope that you will also be reassured that we are in the process of preparing a formal Register of Members' Interests that will be open to public scrutiny.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Casement (Chairman)