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Mr Sean O'Callaghan
Senior Executive Officer
Cork County Council
County Hall
Cork

4 December 2015

Ref SW 2015 376

Dear Mr O'Callaghan,

I was recently made aware of your correspondence addressed to the Secretary General in which you asked that a Cork County Council motion concerning the Whitegate refinery (and an addendum to the motion) be brought to my attention.

On the Council's motion that a taskforce be established to examine the upgrading of the refinery and to ensure its retention, I would state in the first instance that the Government believes that the presence of an operational refinery on the island of Ireland provides flexibility enhancing the options available to the State in the event of an oil supply disruption and that its continued operation on a commercial basis is highly desirable. Security of supply remains a central objective of energy policy. The Government also acknowledges the economic and employment benefits the refinery provides.

I have given consideration to your proposal to establish a refining taskforce but am not minded to pursue your suggestion at the present moment in time. The owners of the refinery, Phillips 66, advised my Department in October that they were putting the Whitegate refinery up for sale. As this process is underway, I have been advised that the Whitegate refinery will continue to be operated on a business as usual basis. A refinery sale would be a commercial matter between Phillips 66 and a potential purchaser.

With regard to the addendum to the motion which was that the Whitegate refinery should be placed in public ownership, I would draw your attention to the fact that in 2001 the Government of the time decided to sell the refinery and it has been in private ownership since that date. The Government has no plans at present to buy back the refinery.

Fáiltítear roimh comhfhreagras i nGaeilge

Please rest assured that I am in contact with my Ministerial colleagues to discuss the importance of continued operations of the Whitegate refinery.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex White", written over a horizontal line.

Alex White TD

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources