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President PESGB  
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Our ref: 01.08.03.10/143P

31 March 2010

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your letter of 23 February on behalf of PESGB members regarding the proposed relocation of the BGS Core Store from Gilmerton to Keyworth near Nottingham. You asked me to carefully consider DECC's duty as owner of the core.

I am of course very aware of the concerns raised by many users of the Gilmerton store about the relocation of cores in particular over the accessibility of the new site, the integrity of the cores and the availability of the cores for teaching.

We transferred the custodianship of the cores in 2005 because we saw the BGS as the logical custodians of the UKCS core collection for the short, medium and long term. It is for BGS to decide how to discharge their responsibilities cost-effectively.

DECC's objective is that the core should help us fully explore for, and then fully develop, the UK's hydrocarbons. To achieve this, the core must be available to the geological community and its integrity must be maintained. We have considered the move and concluded that it does not undermine our objective.

In addition, I understand that the BGS are proposing to ensure that disruption to ongoing work is minimised and that the transition is as smooth as possible for users. We have been assured that there will be no disruption to accessing cores during the Licence Round and that cores relating to active and continuing academic research studies will remain as long as possible in Edinburgh. We also support the proposed establishment of a digital library of core photographs and BGS's plan to work with universities and industry to identify suitable cores and location to provide a detailed teaching collection. BGS are establishing an advisory group to plan the move and ensure that the cores are not damaged. DECC is represented on this group.

I realise that this is not the response that many of the users had hoped for but it does set out our objective for the core clearly and our view of the impact on this objective of the move.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Toole  
*Head of Licensing Exploration and Development  
Energy Development Unit*