

**For immediate Release  
29<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

**Local People to say 'NO' to fracking.**

There will be an opportunity for people in Northern Ireland to express their opposition to Hydraulic Fracturing for natural gas (also known as fracking) next week. It will happen on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2011 when a petition with thousands of signatures will be presented to the Assembly at Stormont.

The presentation will coincide with a debate by MLA's with the Motion calling for a Moratorium on Fracking.

Plans are in place to allow fracking over a large area of Northern Ireland. Licenses have been issued for Central Larne-Lough Neagh Basin, Lough Allen Basin- including Fermanagh, Rathlin Basin and Rathlin Island.

People are being asked to show the Assembly that they are opposed to this dreadful, destructive extraction process happening in Northern Ireland.

A film 'Gasland' depicts the potentially destructive nature of this process as it is currently happening in various parts of the USA.

The film has been called a 'horror movie and wake up call to the process of fracking. The film highlights communities who, lured by the promise of profit, are now experiencing the consequences of fracking including the loss of potable ground water (i.e. water pure enough to be consumed), flammable taps and general environmental degradation.

Support for the anti-fracking movement in Northern Ireland is coming from across many of the political parties here.

South Belfast Alliance Anna Lo MLA said:

*"We support having a moratorium on the issue of fracking. There must be thorough scientific research carried out on this matter, all results would need to be very closely examined and we need to monitor outcomes in other areas. We believe that a moratorium is required to provide an opportunity to ensure that all relevant scientific research can be conducted. We also need a full environmental impact assessment on the issue. We also believe that more resources should be devoted to renewable energy as we see this as a positive and sustainable way forward as regards meeting our energy needs."*

Dr Alasdair McDonnell, MP, Leader of the SDLP said

*"I have clear reservations about the practice of fracking and have signed EDM 2292 (Early Day Motion at Westminster) along with my party colleagues. There are serious concerns about the*

*damage that fracking does to the environment and it is critical that a full and robust environmental assessment is made before we even consider the practice. I believe we would be better to place investment in renewable energy generation rather than the deeply problematic process of fracking.”*

Bairbre de Brún, MEP, Sinn Féin recently said

*“Why in the face of difficulties with fracking elsewhere have these licenses been granted without more research being done?*

*In the face of places like France, Canada and New York State refusing to allow this kind of exploration to go ahead why are we racing to embrace this in the north of Ireland?*

*People in Northern Ireland really want to know if these questions and more that have arisen in other places are being answered? As far as I am concerned they are not being answered and as a result fracking should not go ahead in Northern Ireland. My view is that a moratorium on hydraulic Fracturing should be the very minimum response”*

The opposition to fracking also extends to the National Trust which is the largest conservation organisation in the UK entrusted with the care of a large portion of our heritage including landscape. Their opposition is set out in the following statement:

“The sudden commercial interest in extracting methane gas from shale deposits (or 'fracking') is worrying. Such deposits extend across substantial parts of the British Isles, and although we have not yet been approached directly for permission on our estate, there are applications anticipated or approved close to some of our properties - in Lancashire, South Wales and in Northern Ireland.

The starting point for our response to such proposals is our Energy Policy. In this we are clearly committed to reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, in order to reduce our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. Opening up new sources of such fossil fuels can only increase GHG emissions and exacerbate the damage we are doing to the planet.

For this reason we are opposed in principle to such gas extraction.

We believe it would be much better to invest in renewable energy sources - such as the programme of PV panels we are installing in many of our properties in Wales.

We are obviously concerned by the various reports of pollution associated with shale gas extraction, the inadvertent release of methane and the scares of nearby earthquakes off Blackpool. If further investigation confirms these risks, this will reinforce the strength of our opposition to this activity”

Friends of the Earth Director, James Orr, said:

*"We need to wake up and decide what type of energy future we want for Northern Ireland. The stark choice is between safe and clean renewable energy or the legacy of toxic pollution of water and farmland from gas fracking.*

*There is too much evidence from other countries of the potential environmental nightmare that gas fracking can cause. As well using our energy more carefully our power should come from the wind, sun, biogas, and the tides - this will cut emissions and boost the economy by creating new businesses and jobs.*

*How on earth are we going to regulate gas fracking when we can't even regulate someone dumping illegally or causing water pollution? The price to pay for a bad record of environmental regulation is that we are simply not capable, without an Environmental Protection Agency, of regulating this type of activity."*

**For more information please call Tyler McNally 07874862292**

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

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1. Gas 'fracking' is shorthand for the term hydraulic fracturing. It involves drilling down vertically into shale rock with a borehole lined with concrete and metal then horizontally forcing into shale rock at high pressure large quantities of water, sand and chemicals to release the gas.
2. Northern Ireland is currently the only part of Britain or Ireland without an independent regulator and enforcer of environmental legislation. A recent consultation exercise carried out by the DoE revealed 83% of respondents supported an Environmental Protection Agency.
3. Many countries such as France and Canada have placed a moratorium on gas fracking. In England Cuadrilla's shale gas exploration near Blackpool had to be halted earlier in the year amid concerns they were causing earth tremors. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-13599161>
4. There is growing opposition to gas fracking in Northern Ireland : <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/northern-ireland-no-fracking-required-here/sign.html>; No Fracking Here, FaceBook Group: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/243550102336845/>
5. A number of petroleum licenses were issued in Northern Ireland in 2011, one of which was for shale gas extraction in County Fermanagh issued to Tamboran Resources Ltd. It is believed that exploration drilling cannot be carried out without additional consents from several regulatory authorities including DETI, HSENI, Planning Service and NIEA.

6 The Energy and Climate Change Committee of MPs acknowledged safety concerns with fracking earlier this year: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/energy-and-climate-change-committee/news/new-report-shale-gas/>

7. A new Friends of the Earth short film on why we should say 'No' to Fracking in the Ribble Valley and across England can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahcdnCro7eE>

**Gasland'- About the Film:**

"The largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history has swept across the United States. The Halliburton-developed drilling technology of "fracking" or hydraulic fracturing has unlocked a "Saudi Arabia of natural gas" just beneath us. But is fracking safe? When filmmaker Josh Fox is asked to lease his land for drilling, he embarks on a cross-country odyssey uncovering a trail of secrets, lies and contamination. A recently drilled nearby Pennsylvania town reports that residents are able to light their drinking water on fire. This is just one of the many absurd and astonishing revelations of a new country called GASLAND. Part verite travelogue, part expose, part mystery, part bluegrass banjo meltdown, part showdown."  
<http://www.gaslandthemovie.com/>