

Report on meeting with Pat Rabbitte November 15th 2011

A delegation of concerned citizens from the North West met with Minister Pat Rabbitte, minister for communications, energy and natural resources in Dail Eireann on November 15th re the possibility of a licence being granted for shale gas extraction using the method of hydraulic fracturing. The delegation consisted of Aedin McLoughlin, Rob Doyle, Nuala McNulty, Eddie Mitchell and Miriam Hennessy, the meeting was arranged by Frank Feighan, TD. Other attendees at the meeting were: Michael Colreavy TD, Luke Ming Flanagan, TD, Joe O'Reilly, TD, Tony McLoughlin, TD, John Feely and representatives from the petroleum affairs division.

Aedin McLoughlin (AML) began with a presentation to the group on The Environmental, Social and Economic impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing.

Rob Doyle (RD) gave a presentation on Agriculture, Human Health and Economic Concerns

Nuala McNulty (NMcn) presented on Tourism/Ecotourism in the NW, Vision for the area and Government commitment to tourism

Eddie Mitchell (EM) gave a summary of the concerns of the community around shale gas extraction covering the areas of Energy security, Public Health, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Current situation in the US and EU, Tourism and the Aarhus Convention

All attendees received a written copy of the presentation, which was prepared by Eddie & Olivia Mitchell, Aedin Mcloughlin, Robert Doyle, Nuala McNulty, Johnny Gogan, Miriam Hennessy and Michael Ewing.

Minister Rabbitte thanked the group for their presentation which was intelligent and comprehensive. The group discussed with the minister, and other attendees the concerns of the residents in the North West in relation to human and animal health, loss of sustainable jobs, industrialization of the area and breakdown of community should hydraulic fracturing commence in the area.

Minister Rabbitte acknowledged the concerns, discussed the difficulties facing the government and country in relation to energy security, that 90% of our energy is imported and that he has requested that the EPA carry out a study on hydraulic fracturing. RD pointed out that Leitrim, with the number of wind farms it contains is close to carbon neutral. The group discussed the terms of reference of the EPA study on fracking. Minister Rabbitte confirmed that they have not yet been set but that an initial consultation has commenced with Aberdeen University and this would lead to the terms of reference being set, this study will be completed in 2-3 months. EM asked that a full Life Cycle Analysis to include human health be carried out. Minister Rabbitte invited the group to make a submission to the EPA which was agreed. Minister Rabbitte stated that, if there was a public health issue the economic benefits would be irrelevant, he also said that he would consult with the Northern Irish authorities re the granting of the second stage of the licence there as to their rationale for that.

Following the meeting, the group asked Deputy Frank Feighan to arrange a delegation to meet Minister Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and this was agreed.

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