

Good to talk with you earlier. To repeat the background on this, representatives of the Environmental Pillar met with Minister O'Dowd and his officials. They asserted that it was not possible for them to hold a full public consultation, but at the same time they were very keen to ensure that the Terms of Reference for the EPA research included the concerns of the communities that are situated in the areas where fracking was a possibility. They asked the Pillar if they would be willing to work with the groups that represent the concerns of those communities and collate a list of questions that need to be answered by the research. They offered to cover the costs of this process.

The Pillar proposed that the research report, following its academic review should then be put out for a 3 month public consultation prior to any political decision being made.

Following the meeting the Pillar Plenary spent some considerable time discussing this proposal and finally decided on a possible process, but to check it first with some of the anti-fracking groups to see what they felt about engaging with the process as outlined below. If the response is positive then the Pillar intends to employ a person to carry out the following process over the three weeks leading up to the 16th November. This date will have to be checked against the Department of Energy's timetable to ensure the document gets to them in time to have an effect.

Proposed Process

A process of transparent and inclusive engagement will take place with all known groups campaigning against the introduction of fracking in Ireland and Northern Ireland, including the Environmental Pillar, in order to produce a document listing the questions that these groups need the EPA research to answer in order to address their concerns regarding this issue. This statement will include the names of all groups included in the process unless they want to be excluded. The document will then constitute a list of all the questions that the groups want to have included in the Terms Of Reference of the pending EPA research tender and that also need to be addressed in the research project itself. In the document all questions will be listed with equal prominence and without qualification. This process does not preclude the groups concerned submitting their concerns separately. The document will be circulated to all the contributors for verification before being submitted to Minister O'Dowd in the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on 19th November.

The process will include a workshop to which representatives of all the anti-fracking groups will be invited, as well as an email/electronic survey with telephone follow-ups as is necessary.

I have already spoken to ... on this and hope to get Ineke and ... before the day is out, so for now I would appreciate it if you could keep this within your own group.

I hope this is helpful. Please feel free to ring me if you need any clarification.

We kept it within our own group, either it is a group, company, network (facebook), a website (FFI) or a google group and did share it with you because fracking will effect all Irish people

Today, Friday, 26th October 2012 we four received the following email from the Environmental Pillar:

PLEASE FORWARD TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES - Communication from the Environmental Pillar on the TOR for the EPA research on fracking

Communication from the Environmental Pillar on the TOR for the EPA research on fracking

At no time in this process has it been the intention of the Environmental Pillar to speak on behalf of anybody other than itself.

The background to our current discussion about the EPA research is this.

In August the Environmental Pillar adopted a strong [policy position](#) against shale gas exploration and fracking.

We posted the policy [on our website](#) and issued a press release which was [carried in the Fracking Matters newsletter](#). As with all our policy positions we sent it to relevant ministers and officials and asked for meetings.

We were invited to meet Minister O'Dowd at the end of September. Before the meeting Departmental officials indicated that one of the issues on their agenda was the terms of

reference (TOR) for the EPA research. We wrote to the Department saying that in line with the Aarhus Convention there should be public consultation and participation in the process of developing the TOR.

At the meeting the Department maintained that they were not in a position to hold a formal public consultation. But they said they were open to receiving our views on the TOR in writing. We stated that they needed to hear the views of people in the affected communities. They reiterated that they couldn't hold a public consultation but offered to pay for the hiring of a short-term contractor (at an estimated cost of around €4,000) to compile the views of interested parties to be submitted alongside our own.

We agreed to consider facilitating this but made it clear that we could only do so if the groups whose views were being compiled (along with our own) were ok with the arrangement. **It seems now that there is not sufficient consensus for us to proceed down this road.**

The Environmental Pillar fully respects the absolute right of people to represent their own views, and at no time in this process has it been the intention of the Environmental Pillar to speak on behalf of anybody other than itself. **Therefore we are now minded to inform the Department that we are not in a position to hire a contractor to compile those views.**

The Pillar continues to believe the EPA research is important and that making our views known on the TOR is worthwhile. We will continue to prepare our own position on the TOR and we hope others who want to will do the same. It remains the Pillar position that the best context for this would be a Departmental-run public consultation.

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Environmental Pillar members: An Taisce. Bat Conservation Ireland, BirdWatch Ireland. CELT - Centre for Ecological Living and Training. Coast Watch. Coomhola Salmon Trust. Crann. ECO UNESCO. Feasta. Forest Friends. Friends of the Earth. Global Action Plan Ireland, Gluaiseacht. Hedge Laying Association of Ireland. Irish Doctors Environment Association. Irish Natural Forestry Foundation. Irish Peatland Conservation Council. Irish Seal Sanctuary. Irish Seed Saver Association. Irish Whale and Dolphin Group. Irish Wildlife Trust. The Organic Centre. Sonairte. Sustainable Ireland Cooperative. VOICE. Zero Waste Alliance Ireland