

January 24, 2022

### **An Open Letter to the Members of Dáil Éireann:**

As the respective political leaders, climate spokespeople for your political parties as well members of related committees on public health, environment, energy and tourism, we the undersigned organizations write to you today with grave concern about the unfolding events in Northern Ireland. Right now, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Department of Economy are setting the stage for massive fracking operations that would not only contaminate NI's water, air, land and public health but also that of the Republic. We are disappointed and wary, that Sinn Fein will work to stop fracking in the North after a history of empty promises and now welcomed DUP's Energy Strategy that would lock Northern Ireland into more gas and dirty hydrogen as the oil and gas industry attempts to once again to drill and frack this island.

We are writing to you today from around the world in international solidarity with the people of Northern Ireland to raise this issue with your respective political parties and TD's and to inform you that a new policy on petroleum licencing could be voted on in the Stormont Executive as early as this Thursday. If the policy for petroleum licences is approved then it will be increasing difficult to reject drilling and fracking permits. Therefore we have been asking for a policy to prohibit or ban petroleum licencing which will protect the land from the oil and gas industry. While Sinn Fein, have made many statements of opposition during the last 10 years communities in NI have been under threat of drilling and fracking. They have not taken actions to stop the industry. They have a critical votes in the Executive, and they have the power in the Deputy First Minister role to veto DUP plans. Sinn Fein has the power to do more than oppose. They have the power to act. We need them to stop failing before the industry becomes unstoppable. We ask that you speak out on the floor of the Dáil about this matter as well as to communicate to Sinn Fein TD's and political leadership about the disaster that could befall the island if they proceed with the DUP's policy for petroleum licencing and their Energy Strategy plan for gas and hydrogen.

This is an all-island emergency and the situation is as follows. There are two major tracts of land or “licence areas” that have validated license applications by energy companies for drilling and fracking. One tract is in Fermanagh, where a company called Tamboran Resources UK applied for a licence in 2016. This area includes the water source for the Shannon River. Polluting the aquifer for the Shannon with fracking chemicals will harm the fish, wildlife, tourism and economy of the Republic. The other tract covers five council areas of Belfast, Antrim, Newtownabbey, Armagh City, Banbridge, Craigavon, Lisburn, Castlereagh and Mid Ulster. This area near Lough Neagh supplies 40% of Northern Ireland’s drinking water.

There is a review of the petroleum licencing policy that is currently underway. Part of the review was a report done by a pro-industry group called Hatch Researchers. When the report was finished last July 2021, the DUP Minister of Economy Gordon Lyons - who commissioned the report - refused to release it to the public even though the community contributed submissions to it as stakeholders. It only came out in November because a whistleblower gave it to an environmental group - Extinction Rebellion Northern Ireland. The Hatch report omitted the impacts of fracking on public health despite the nearly 2,000 studies and reports that were submitted by health professionals groups as part of the The Concerned Health Professionals of New York and Physicians for Social Responsibility in their 7th Edition of the Compendium of Scientific, Medical and Media Findings Demonstrating Risks and Harms of Fracking (Unconventional Gas and Oil Extraction). Yet even though it is greatly flawed, the report does acknowledge that fracking in Northern Ireland will pollute groundwater and air, damage soil, cause earthquakes, harm plants and animals, and hinder tourism.

While Minister Lyons withheld the Hatch report, he touted with a full press announcement, the release of the Department of Economy’s new Energy Strategy report on December 16th. This report clearly states that their goal is to make Northern Ireland a leading blue hydrogen producer. Blue hydrogen is a new fuel that the gas and fracking industry are heavily promoting because it is a way to sell gas to make carbon intensive hydrogen - which has 20% more greenhouse gas emissions than coal or gas. The gas industry is using many different phrases now to escape the negative reaction to the word fracking. They are also calling it ‘renewable gas’ and ‘low carbon energy’.

Lastly and perhaps most egregiously of all, in our research we found a prominent natural gas company called Firmus Energy has stated in their 2020- 2021 stakeholder report that Northern

Ireland could be “the world leader in hydrogen technology”. Their Chairman wrote “UK Government is exploring plans to virtually reverse flow renewable gas to Great Britain customers”. This means that there is an active plan to extract gas from Northern Ireland to sell in Britain, while at the same time Britain has a ban on fracking. In essence this will make Northern Ireland a sacrifice zone as well as a resource colony. The carbon budget burden would be paid by Northern Ireland’s farmers who would also endure heavy pollution.

It is shocking that the DUP’s meticulously crafted pro-fossil fuel Energy Strategy, which would be damaging to Northern Ireland, has not been condemned by Sinn Fein. If Sinn Fein keeps failing to act, the Irish Centre for Human Rights 2021 report showed they will be complicit in allowing major human rights violations in the communities in Northern Ireland.

In closing, when the unanimous vote to ban fracking in Ireland came to the floor of the Dail for a vote, Sinn Fein’s Deputy Brian Stanley stated, *“In my time as an elected representative I have seen all types of dodgy reports being thrown up by consultants and being brought before the EPA, councillors and this House. We need to be careful about who is drawing them up.”* If ever there was a time for “dodgy reports” to be stopped, now is that time and Sinn Fein needs to act as an all-island party with the best interests of all the people and the water, air and land at the heart of their decisions.

Please join us in raising this on the floor of the Dail and demand with us that Sinn Fein protect our shared natural resources and landscape by 1) using the power they have in Deputy First Minister Position in the North to veto and or take action to safeguard human rights, 2) to ensure there is a full independent NI public health impact assessment with full community participation that the Hatch report omitted before Petroleum Licensing Policy Review is considered, 3) work with other parties in the Executive to ensure a policy to prohibit petroleum licencing, 4) condemn DUP’s Energy Strategy and blue hydrogen plans to protect communities from lock in to fuel poverty and exploitation.

We are launching a new international campaign this week called the International Solidarity Campaign to Ban Fracking in Northern Ireland. Our first action is to call on Sinn Fein to stop fracking. Go to [www.sinnfeinstopfracking.squarespace.com](http://www.sinnfeinstopfracking.squarespace.com) for more info.

Thank you,

Andy Gheorghiu Consulting  
Andy Gheorghiu  
Germany

Belcoo Frack Free  
Tom White  
Northern Ireland

Bloody Sunday March Committee  
Rónán Moyne  
Northern Ireland

City of Binghamton Residents Against  
Hydrofracking  
Isaac Silberman-Gorn  
United States

Ecojustice Ireland Community Interest  
Company  
Declan Owens  
Ireland

Extinction Rebellion  
Ciara Quinn  
United Kingdom

Family  
Ger Kelly  
Ireland

Farmers For Action  
William Taylor  
Northern Ireland

Fermanagh Fracking Awareness Network  
Mark Scott  
Northern Ireland

Food & Water Action Europe  
Frida Kieninger  
European Union

Foyle Ethical Investment Campaign  
Jim Keys  
Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland  
Frack Action  
Julia Walsh  
United States

Fracking Free Clare  
John Higgins  
Ireland

Fridays For Future  
Magdalena Sedlmayr  
Ireland

Fridays For Future Dublin  
Anjelica Foley  
Ireland

Friends of the Earth Scotland  
Dr Richard Dixon  
Scotland

Futureproof Clare  
Melina Sharp  
Ireland

GreenFaith  
Fletcher Harper  
International

GreenWatch  
Cormac Mc Kenna  
Republic of Ireland

Just Transition Greens  
Roisin Cuddihy  
Ireland

LAMP Fermanagh  
Dianne Little  
Northern Ireland

Liberty Hill CIC  
Trevor Armstrong  
Fermanagh, Northern Ireland

Love Leitrim  
Jamie Murphy  
Ireland

NCAD Sustainability Society  
Thomas Oisín Morelli  
Ireland

New Gas F\*ck That  
Max Fulham  
Ireland

Noarc21  
Colin Buick  
UK

New Yorkers Against Fracking  
Betta Broad  
United States

Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Pennsylvania  
Edward Ketyer, MD  
United States

Prehen Historical and Environmental  
Society  
George Mc Laughlin  
Northern Ireland

Save Our Sperrins  
Fidelma O'Kane  
Ireland

The Gathering  
Mary McGuiggan  
All island group

The Organic Centre, Leitrim  
Dervilla Keegan  
Ireland

Uplift  
Tessa Khan  
United Kingdom

Wicklow One Future  
Sophie Rieu  
Ireland

Young Friends of the Earth Europe  
Josef Boraai  
Europe

Zero Waste Eglinton  
Mary McGuiggan  
Derry City, Northern Ireland

Zero Waste North West  
Marian Farrell  
Northern Ireland