



*Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee*

# information

**NFLA Media release - for immediate release, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

## **NFLA All Ireland Forum Galway seminar highlights councillor concerns over inadequate consultations leaving wind energy in the doldrums**

At its autumn Nuclear Free Local Authorities All Ireland Forum (NFLA) seminar in Galway City Hall last Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, councillors from across Ireland raised concerns over the inadequacy of public consultations seeking to develop onshore wind energy on the island. (1)

At a well attended meeting the former councillor, TD and senator Dan Boyle outlined the main issues from his detailed report by Green Foundation Ireland, 'Sustainable Democratic Energy for Ireland and Europe', which raises real concerns over the way private developers are seeking to expand wind energy in Ireland, however welcome such moves are in their totality. (2)

Dan Boyle noted that his report claimed that many consultations of local communities are flawed and held with limited opportunity for the public to take part, and can often play lip service to the public in favour of the developer.

Siting examples of much more democratic consultation processes held in Denmark and Germany, Mr Boyle told the meeting that effective and fair consultations need to be fully open, transparent and encourage communities to be given an active stake in any development of wind energy in their area, over the full life time of the project.

Within the meeting, councillors representing Councils from all parts of Ireland noted their frustrations at inadequate consultations and encouraged statutory improvements are put in place by the Irish Governments, north and south. They welcomed the need for a wide renewable energy mix in Ireland, but felt it must be done in a sensitive way to accommodate the needs and wishes of the local community.

The seminar also held a thorough discussion over the deep concerns of councillors around the increased amount of above-ground electricity pylons across the island of Ireland. The consensus of the seminar was that such developments, including the new North-South interconnector, needed to be reconsidered in reference to the potential for developing underground lines. Councillors urged Eirgrid to listen and respond to the concerns of local communities around such developments.

Further concerns were raised around the huge wind-farms being built in the Irish Midlands, whose wind energy would be exported at a higher tariff to the UK, in a recent deal agreed between the Irish and UK Governments. Councillors believed that the key imperative at the moment is to increase the Irish renewable sector and provide Irish households with such sustainable, clean energy before starting to export it in any great quantity to other countries. This comes at a time when annual Irish carbon emissions have increased due to the large use of imported cheap American coal. (3)

NFLA All Ireland Co Chair, Councillor Mark Dearey said:

"I call on the Irish Government to release equity in the ESB so that the state can become a wind producer and ensure that the nascent wind energy market can develop projects that are welcomed, co-owned and be of real benefit to the local communities they will power and empower. The acid test for the Government in terms of wind energy is to start matching the feed-in tariffs system being developed by many of our European neighbours so as to make it a realisable energy source accessible to households. It is unacceptable that the proposed Midlands mega wind farms are being generated for export while Ireland remains wedded to fossil fuels and cheap American coal imports."

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Ends

**Further information** - Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary – 00 44 (0)161 234 3244 or 00 44 (0)7771 930196.

**Notes to editors:**

- (1) NFLA Media Release, 6<sup>th</sup> October
- (2) Green Foundation Ireland – ‘Sustainable Democratic Energy for Ireland and Europe’, authored by Dan Boyle, 2013. <http://www.greenfoundationireland.ie/participatory-democracy-and-renewable-energy-2/>
- (3) Irish Independent, 10<sup>th</sup> October – ‘Cheap coal and more sheep speak increase in pollution’, <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/cheap-coal-and-more-sheep-spark-increase-in-pollution-29648970.html>

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