FRIENDS OF THE IRISH ENVIRONMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

Carlingford Lough harbour dumping ‘cross-border issue’.

Brexit cited as justification for development

An environmental group in the Republic has invoked an international treaty requiring the Northern Ireland authorities to consult with members of the public on both sides of the border before approving the dumping of dredged material from Warrenport Harbour in Carlingford Lough.

According to Friends of the Irish Environment, under the Espoo Convention on the impact of transboundary developments, Governments must give neighbouring countries ‘an opportunity to the public in the areas likely to be affected to participate in relevant environmental impact assessment procedures regarding proposed activities’. Both Ireland and the United Kingdom are parties to the 1992 Convention.

Warrenport Port is applying for a marine licence to dump dredged material dredged from the harbour at two sites in the Lough, rather than the current approved sites 22 miles at sea. The border between the Republic and Northern Ireland runs through the centre of the Lough. The Port Authority is citing Brexit as a reason for the work.

The ‘Site Characterisation Report’ states that ‘With Warrenpoint Port situated on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, there is a concern that the United Kingdom leaving the European Union will result in a reduction of present trade entering the Port that is destined for the Republic of Ireland.’

In a submission to the Republic’s Contact Point for the Espoo Convention, FIE Director Tony Lowes pointed out that ‘The proposed disposal sites are located respectively 560 metres from the principle foraging site of the Light-bellied Brent Geese and 620 metres from the second designated site, the only breeding site for Common and Sandwich terns in Carlingford Lough. Both of these sites are Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive.’

The FIE submission cites the Dundalk Sub Aqua Diving and Rescue Club concerns over the ‘richness of diversity of marine life in the Lough’. The group, which has compiled an extensive list of species recorded in the Lough, says that no other dive locations that they regularly visit in Kerry, Donegal, Sligo, Galway, Cork & Antrim compare to ‘the sheer diversity and density of life observed in Carlingford Lough’.

FIE invoked the Espoo Convention to successfully force the United Kingdom Government to consult with citizens of the Republic over the proposed new nuclear plant at Hinckley Point in the Severn Estuary and have an ongoing case under the Convention alleging that greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural intensification in Northern Ireland are adversely affecting the Republic.

James Orr, Director of Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland, who have also raised the issue with the authorities, said ‘We don’t want to see a dirty Brexit and a dirty border in Ireland. What we want to see the free movement of people and goods across the Irish border. But we also need the free movement of clean air, clean water and healthy ecosystems across the island of Ireland.’

Further Information

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FIE submission to Espoo Convention on Carlingford Lough

https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/images/pdf/Carlingford\_Espoo\_23.10.18.pdf