

Joint Committee on Climate Action.

Houses of the Oireachtas

Leinster House

Dublin 2

Public Session Submission on

“The impact of fracked gas on the climate and its impact on Ireland’s climate goals should we facilitate the importation of fracked gas from North America into Ireland”

Oral Presentation by Eddie Mitchell - Love Leitrim

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Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for inviting me. I'm honoured to be here and as a Leitrim person I wish to thank the Committee for its work scrutinising the fracking ban.

I come to the fracking imports issue from the perspective of being part of an affected community. Although we banned fracking in 2017 we are aware now, that we live in a gas basin. Our neighbours in Fermanagh are facing another application for a petroleum licence that will involve fracking. The people who warned us about the impacts of the fracking in North America are getting sicker. In 2017 we knew that the United States intended to export their gas and take a 15% stake in the global LNG market. They were talking about lending Europe their gas until we got over our fear of fracking. Seeing renewed interest in the Shannon LNG terminal we raised our concerns with people in Kerry and Clare.

We learned a lot about decision making over 6 years dealing with petroleum licencing in Leitrim. Unwritten or silent policy played a big part to facilitating the avoidance of high-level assessment of the cumulative impacts of exploiting shale gas in Ireland. As a result, people didn't know what was going on until after licencing decisions were made. Well, we're lucky. Joe McHugh was the Minister for Natural resources and in 2016 he acknowledged the lack of policy and created the space to ban fracking. Wise political oversight protected us.

The Irish people are only learning now about the plan to import fracked gas into Europe. The European plan to diversify gas sources coming into the E.U. was first considered as part of the TTIP trade deal. We know there were environmental concerns expressed within the Commission about unconventional gas entering the European energy mix. Although the trade deal negotiations ended, president Juncker and president Trump made a Trade Agreement in July 2018. Any questions about the origin of gas coming into the Shannon Estuary were met with consternation from Irish authorities. It was none of our business where the gas came from. These were commercial decisions for the operators involved and the Department had no jurisdiction outside the state.

The new owners of Shannon LNG are New Fortress Energy. They are a U.S. gas exporter whose business model was described in their Securities and Exchange Commission filing as focused on bringing stranded gas assets from Pennsylvania to the global LNG market including to the Shannon Estuary.

The fracked gas exporter almost has permission to supply ½ the current demand for gas into Ireland without the Irish public being aware of it.

Under the Lisbon Treaty we retain our right to determine our choices between different energy sources.

The Irish people are entitled to decide if we want fracked gas in the energy mix. Last Friday, by approving Shannon LNG's inclusion on the PCI list the Minister has made a regulatory decision that sets the framework for consent without policy on fracked gas in the Irish Energy Mix. He did this despite there being clear opposition to fracked gas in the energy mix.

Major energy infrastructure projects need public support. They need to have a social licence. We have seen the damage done to the Rosspoint community. That was never meant to happen again. The minister has put trade over climate and a just transition without bringing the Dáil with him.

I'm calling on the Oireachtas committee to exercise political oversight and help the parliament develop policy around the climate impacts of imported fuels in our energy mix. Thank you.