

VOICE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2010

IRELAND STEPPING CLOSER TO A LOW CARBON FUTURE

Have Your Say on Waste Policy!

The Department of the Environment released its new Draft Statement on Waste Policy on July 15th 2010. VOICE urges you to make use of the public consultation period ending on October 1st, to have your say on how Ireland can better manage its waste. The policy statement is to provide the framework for Ireland to meet, or ideally exceed, EU targets for waste management. The policy also aims to underpin the contribution of the waste management sector to our economic recovery.

You can find the Draft Policy and the form for making a submission, by the deadline of October 1st, on the Department of Environment's website at www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Waste

Currently working its way through the Irish legislative system is a new Climate Change Bill, which could potentially be one of the strongest of its kind in the world. The Framework for the Climate Change Bill 2010 has already been released by Minister Gormley and so far, it looks similar to law passed in Scotland and England. However, there are weaknesses that will jeopardise Ireland's reduction of carbon emissions, and assistance to developing countries to adapt to climate change. The details have yet to be released, so there is still hope for it to be improved. The importance of this draft legislation cannot be over-estimated, the sooner real change is cemented into law, the sooner Ireland can lead the way as a country committed to curbing climate change. The legislation should elevate climate

change to national priority, and put Ireland's international obligations into law. The Stop Climate Chaos coalition and VOICE are calling for three main inclusions:

1. a strong law that achieves targets by making real reductions in our carbon emissions and not by buying 'carbon offset credits',
2. ensuring the independent, advisory climate change committee that is planned as part of the Bill, publishes its reports publicly,
3. ensuring that Ireland's financial contribution to addressing climate change is separate from and additional to the overseas development aid budget.

These commitments are in line with the 'polluter pays' principle that would see Ireland reduce its own emis-

Ciara Aucoin and Nick Chiumenti

sions rather than buying credits from other countries. An 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will be required by 2050, and a 3% average annual reduction rate in greenhouse gasses to ensure future targets are met. A Climate Change Committee will oversee the task of reaching targets. The carbon budget will take measure the progress of the country.

However, without the improvements recommended by the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, the legislation could fail to achieve its purpose. Ireland will face real obstacles meeting targets and preventing run-away climate change if the is not strengthened. VOICE, and the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition have targeted the government to strengthen the bill as a matter of urgency.

MASS LOBBY OF TDS ON CLIMATE CHANGE CIARA AUCOIN

On June 2nd in Buswells Hotel in Dublin City centre, at a Stop Climate Chaos event, people from all across the country met their TDs and voiced their concerns about climate change. Constituents told their TDs how crucial it is that the up coming climate bill is sufficiently strong to have lasting implications for big polluters, as well as moving Ireland towards a sustainable future. Using the Stop Climate Chaos website, constituents had emailed their TDs asking to meet with them on June 2nd in Buswells. There was a training session for the constituents by the Stop Climate Coalition about what the climate bill means for Ireland, its targets and its many shortfalls. Over 150 people and 86 TDs attended and 70 TDs signed a 'Climate Commitment' to ensuring the bill incorporates Stop Climate Chaos's three main objectives. Today, with the help of ongoing campaigning, the total number of TDs that have signed the Climate Commitment has risen to 81, just short of a majority of the Dáil.



What You Can Do

Play your part from home by going to the Stop Climate Chaos website and sending an email to your TDs urging them to make the Climate Commitment. For more details on how to send an email direct to your local TD go to;

www.stopclimatechaos.org/takeaction

GM-FREE IRELAND: PROTECTING OUR FOOD AND FARMING FUTURE



The GM-free Ireland Network is an association of individuals and organisations (including VOICE) collaborating to keep Ireland free of genetically modified (GM) animal feed, seeds, trees, crops, livestock, fish and food. Members include farmers, foresters, food producers, food distributors and exporters, leading chefs and restaurants, NGOs, professional associations, doctors, economists, lawyers, journalists, students, and consumers. Its 131 institutional members and the 18 counties and towns which have already declared them-

selves to be GMO-free zones represent over 1 million citizens on both sides of the border.

Scientific evidence from around the world shows that GM food and farming carry numerous health, agronomic, ecological, economic, legal, and food security dangers; including negative impacts on the liver, kidneys, immune systems and fertility of laboratory animals. Yet most Irish meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy produce is made from animals fed on GM soy and maize, and is sold without a GM label to inform consumer choice. Deliberate or accidental release of GM seeds could contaminate Irish farms in perpetuity, causing massive economic losses because there is no market for GM food in Europe.

The GM-free Ireland campaign holds the Irish and UK governments accountable for protecting their citizens

by prohibiting the environmental release of GMOs and phasing out the use of GM animal feed on this island. The network was launched in 2003, when the Government played a leading role in introducing GM food and farming in the EU. After years of public awareness and lobbying, the campaign scored a political victory when the Government adopted a tentative GM-free policy in 2007, and in 2009 when it officially agreed to

- prohibit field trials and cultivation of all GM crops in the Republic
- introduce a voluntary GM-free label for food, including meat, poultry, eggs, fish and dairy produce from livestock fed with certified non-GM animal feed.

However, the Government has failed to implement any of these policies, and farm-

CATHERINE CAULWELL

ers are told that certified non-GMO feed is not available or is too expensive, despite its widespread adoption in competing EU Member States. As a result, Irish meat and dairy produce is being removed from EU supermarket shelves across the EU.

The Government is now under political pressure to accept a new EC proposal that would require Ireland to support the approval of new GMOs at the EU level, in exchange for the EC recognising our legal right to ban GM crops based on legally undefined "ethical" grounds, which could expose Ireland to lawsuits and punitive trade sanctions from the WTO.

To get informed and find out how you can help, please visit the GM-free Ireland web site at

www.gmfreeireland.org and join GM-free Ireland on Facebook at;

www.facebook.com/pages/GM-Free-Ireland/133963953300806

IRELAND'S WATER PROTECTION. CO-OPERATION FROM DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE VITAL

CIARA AUCOIN AND SINEAD O'BRIEN

To mark World Water Day on March 22nd, the Sustainable Water Network (SWAN), and VOICE recreated a beach spoiled by pollution outside Leinster House, highlighting failure to protect Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal waters.

World Water Day was the day plans for the protection of Ireland's waters were to

be sent to Europe. The River Basin Management Plans were to pull together the complex array of water legislation to manage water in an integrated way to prevent pollution and degradation of waters. But the plans fall far short of doing this.

Our coastal waters face many threats from agricultural run-off, fish-farming, dredging, bilge water discharge, and sewage from indiscriminate housing



developments. To protect our coasts, these pressures must be addressed in an integrated way. With no national strategy for managing coastal zones, the River Basin Management Plans should have provided the ideal opportunity to address our coastal pollution problems. But they fall so far short of this they are laughable. There is no action plan to protect coasts, nor even a full list of threats. A marine monitoring programme due, under law, to be in place by 2007, still isn't,

RAINWATER HARVESTING – TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR RAINY DAYS!

SARAH RUBALCAVA



Dark rain clouds are on the horizon, as are domestic water charges and water metering. Earlier this year, in freezing conditions, extreme water shortages were experienced nationwide. If rainwater harvesting had been common practice homes would have been able to use the rainwater for toilets, which use between 3-7 litres for one flush (older toilets up to 13 litres!).

The roof of an average home has the potential to direct 100,000 litres of rainwater into a storage unit each year. Although water delivered to homes and businesses is treated to drinking water quality at high cost, only about 2% of it is actually used for drinking purposes. Rainwater harvesting reduces the demand for mains water, and even if only used for toilet flushing and garden use, it's estimated that 50% savings

of household water can be achieved with use of rainwater.

There is clear potential for significant savings in agriculture, schools and factories. Agriculture is thirsty, but stored and filtered rainwater can be used widely on the farm. A DIT study estimated that a rainwater collection system supplied 47% of a farm's needs. Larger buildings such as schools and factories tend to have larger roofs, so can collect considerable volumes of water. Another major benefit of rainwater harvesting is that rainwater is collected and stored for later use, reducing excessive run off in urban areas, which lead to flooding.

In the UK, the rainwater harvesting industry has seen a huge growth in recent years. In Germany, the use of 'grey water', rainwater or water used for other household purposes but still suitable for non-drinking water uses, is now compulsory for new houses. Even in Ireland rainwater

harvesting systems have been installed in a retirement village in Cork, and a small housing estate in Clogherhead, Co. Louth.

The EU is developing a directive to support water saving measures in public and private buildings, closely following the Water Framework Directive and energy conservation policies set for buildings. The new Eco-design Directive, which focuses on energy consumption, may in the near future include water consumption standards for such items as taps and showers.

Government policies and regulations for the construction industry should strongly



consider the use of these systems, which could rolled out along the same lines as the energy saving building standards.

so that for much of the coast we don't even know for certain what state the water is in.

To address these deficits, co-operation between Departments and authorities is vital. Whilst the Department for the Environment, in conjunction with Local Authorities, have the primary role in the river basin planning process, full cooperation from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF) is vital if these plans are to be brought up

to a satisfactory standard. Many of the threats to our freshwaters and coastal waters fall under the remit of DAFF.

VOICE and SWAN are calling on DAFF to prioritise water protection and ensure protection of our inland and coastal waters. DAFF must ensure a comprehensive inspection regime, act swiftly to address pollution from fish farming, and ensure that the Forestry Bill is fully compliant with the Water Framework Directive.

Urgently, if Ireland is to avoid legal proceedings, the marine monitoring programme, which is now three years overdue, must be delivered.



Your Water Footprint

Also Included in this newsletter is a leaflet titled *Your Water Footprint* which describes the concept of a personal 'water footprint' and all the ways we use water indirectly without knowing it. It looks at the issues of water stress and scarcity, describes the process of water treatment and also offers tips and advice on how you can reduce your personal water footprint. We would like to thank our sponsors and hope that you at home find it useful.

Pilot Waste Project

VOICE is currently working with local groups around the country on a pilot waste audit project. The aim of this project is to get a broad overview of the characterisation of household waste and to assist households of various sizes to reduce the amount of waste they produce. How much of our daily rubbish is made up of food waste? How much of it is non-recyclable plastics? This project will give households the opportunity to see for themselves the exact types and amounts of materials they are sending to landfill and will show them ways to reduce the amount disposed of on a daily basis.

THE CATERING INDUSTRY CAN REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE FOOD WASTE

JENNIFER ENNIS

Earlier this year the latest measure to divert waste from landfill in Ireland came into force, the Food Waste Regulations (SI 508 of 2009). These regulations mean that food waste from most catering businesses must now be segregated from other waste and appropriately treated.

As part of these Regulations, businesses will have to adopt measures to prevent food waste. These measures are not only a requirement of the regulations, but can reduce loss of earnings due

to wasted food, helping to lessen some of the €200million worth of food waste produced by commercial industries every year in Ireland.

The key element of these new regulations came into force on July 1st 2010, so the catering industry is now looking to curtail food wasted and subsequently disposed of. Food waste arising from the catering industry can be reduced using the three R's of waste minimisation: reduce, reuse and recycle.

LIFE WITHOUT A WHEELIE BIN

GARY CLARE

So I've taken the plunge and completely done away with the wheelie bin. Actually wheelie bins; they are now both gone! I never did like the look of them around the place. Too much plastic. Some folks have built wooden huts to house them but I'm not convinced....

It actually forces great discipline and save money too. I can attribute making this happen down to a handful of simple steps – all within the grasp of the average household. First, dustbins around the house should ideally be segmented. This forces you to consider the nature of your waste right at the beginning of the process. Second, I would recommend grabbing a few collapsible



garden bags. These are cylindrically shaped 'pop up' bags that hold 160 litres of waste – about two thirds of a standard wheelie bin, and weigh a few ounces! They are incredibly durable. I have been stuffing them with recycled waste for a year and no tears. They can be purchased at most garden shops or ordered online from €10. I tend to make a trip to the recycling centre every 2-3 weeks. As they are collapsible it

WHEELS ARE CLEARLY COMING OFF THE FLUORIDATION WAGON

ROBERT POCOCK

The European scientific committee (SCHER) charge with investigating fluoridation, has published its preliminary opinion, and it is a landmark in being an official outright rejection of fluoridation in Europe. This committee of Europe's top scientists says, this '*crude measure of systemic fluoride treatment is rather ineffective and without a detectable threshold for dental and bone damage*'. Every third Irish child bears testament to the truth of this statement.

SCHER goes on to say that '*No obvious advantage appears in favour of water fluoridation as compared with other topical applications of fluoride ... water fluoridation plays a relatively minor role in the improved dental health*'.

Also, in the March edition of

the peer-reviewed Toxicology, children were again shown to be at risk from the one-size-fits-all policy of water fluoridation. The author Dr Robert Verkerk, specifically referred to the situation in Ireland where every third child is affected by dental fluorosis. VOICE had informed readers of the Irish Independent the previous month that this condition is not considered a health problem by the Health Minister's advisers. However, the Health Minister's fluoride advisers, The Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, have never had the services of a toxicologist!

This preliminary opinion is damning, and confirms VOICE's long-held opposition to this form of mass medication with an unapproved product, fluorsilicic acid.

makes for convenience after you have unloaded your recyclables.

In terms of non-recyclables, the quantity seems to decrease month on month. Much gets composted. Wood ash from the pellet burner and occasional open fire is great for the soil, or so I'm led to believe! The neighbourhood cats are well fed, and they no longer have to resort to trying to break into the wheelie bins – there are none! Apparently the fox population has been impacted due to the introduction of wheelie bins? Plastic bin sacks were always going to be more accessible!

Beyond this, it forces you to consider your household food intake. Having excess food is no longer a good thing, so you tend to 'right size' the weekly intake. Not a bad thing and again this makes environmental and financial sense, not to mention the health benefits.

Don't get me wrong; the wheelie bin has served us well for many years. The Green variant in particular has contributed to mass adoption of recycling nationwide particularly in built up areas. We just decided that in these lean times it was surplus to requirements. I'm wondering if the bins themselves are recyclable...

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