

Campaigners Celebrate as Court Quashes Controversial Oil Terminal Decision

Environmental campaigners have welcomed the High Court's decision to quash planning permission for the controversial redevelopment and expansion of the Cloghan Point Oil Terminal on Belfast Lough. The court ruled that Mid & East Antrim Borough Council had failed to follow the correct process in reaching its decision to grant planning permission to LCC (the company behind GO petrol stations) for the creation of a major fossil fuel import and distribution hub at the dormant site.

The ruling follows an application by Clodagh Miskelly, a member of Stop Whitehead Oil Terminal (SWOT), for a judicial review of the Council's decision on the grounds that it was unlawful, irrational and unfair.

Clodagh Miskelly said, "I am delighted with today's outcome. We hope the council will now reconsider its decision to give the green light to this unwanted and unneeded development and look forward to their full consideration of the concerns we have raised.

"We welcome the Department for Infrastructure's commitment to issue a direction to allow it to consider calling in the application. There needs to be an open and transparent process for scrutinizing this proposed development. The proposal has implications for the marine environment and navigation in Belfast Lough. It would impact negatively on Northern Ireland's urgent need to move away from fossil fuel infrastructure and to meet its targets for net zero carbon emissions. These implications have strategic and regional significance beyond the scope of a local planning application and need to be considered by the Department and the Executive in the light of the Climate Change Act."

Clodagh Miskelly also thanked the individuals and organisations who have helped the campaign by writing letters, sharing information and making donations. "In particular, I'd like to thank our legal team who made today's victory possible. The support of PILS and Garden Court Chambers has enabled us to stand up for the environment, nature and the health of local people against bad decision making. We won't hesitate to return to court if necessary to protect our environment from the threats posed by the development of unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure."

The judicial review is the latest round in SWOT's six-year fight to prevent the redevelopment of the Cloghan Point site which is currently used to store oil for the Republic of Ireland.

Hilary McCollum of SWOT said, "Our environment needs to be protected and restored, not put at risk from pollution and climate change. We've seen what's happened to Lough Neagh when commercial interests are put ahead of safeguarding the environment. Belfast Lough is home to a diverse range of species from dolphins and otters to seabirds and shellfish. The kelp forest near the terminal is part of vital blue carbon stores that help to combat climate change.

"We hope the council will now consider the legal points raised in our challenge and refuse permission for the redevelopment of Cloghan Point."

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