



PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON NEW ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) (AGRICULTURE) REGULATIONS.

At the outset I wish to register the concern of the SDLP regarding the timing of the above consultation document. We believe it inappropriate to issue such a document during the July / August holiday period. The subject document was issued on 7th July with a stipulated response date of 1st September 2006.

From telephone conversations made with available members of our Agricultural Discussion Group we did arrive at a few points which we forward for consideration.

First we caution against this becoming yet another anti- agriculture strategy solely dedicated to environmental issues at the expense of the farming community and contributing further to the continued exodus from our farms thus depriving the rural environment of the services of its greatest custodian – the farmer.

The document is somewhat negative in that it threatens a great deal rather than presenting a more positive and encouraging strategy whereby the relevant Departments, DoE and DARD, could work in conjunction with the farming community, who lets face do hold the expertise on many of the scenarios referred to in the consultation paper, to devise a mutually agreed strategy for protecting our heritage and environment. We fear that there is another mountain of bureaucracy hidden within the proposals which defeats the aim of many in their efforts to reduce red tape.

We note references to the possible inclusion of the Planning Service in some decision making relating to the new EHS Strategy. In view of the anti-rural, anti-farmer content of PPS14 and the Planning Service's attitude towards rural dwellers in general we believe it totally inappropriate to allow them to become involved in any additional matters pertaining to the agricultural community. There is a secondary danger if the Planning Service were permitted, for whatever reason, to become involved. Their record of delivery, where recommendations from the Planning Service in many instances are outstanding for periods of up to three years is not conducive to any form of progress or protection as no imaginable project could justify such a measure of delay.

Finally we do welcome the fact that DARD is to be the recipient of this and other responses to the EIA Consultation Document in the sincere hope that the word Agriculture in its title will remain meaningful as it defends our farming industry and we again caution against the Department of Agriculture being used to further the aims and objectives of other Departments or Agencies.

P.J. Bradley
SDLP Spokesperson on Agriculture.
2006.

31st August

