

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

The UN Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was adopted on 25 June 1998 in the Danish city of Aarhus.

Under the Convention, Principle 10 sets out a fundamental right to “live in an environment adequate to your health and well-being” and is protected by 3 distinct rights:

- Right of Access to Information – Your right to know.
- Right of Access to Public Participation – Your right to have your say.
- Right of Access to Justice – Your right to access a legal remedy if your rights are infringed.

Normally, the law allows for members of the public and environmental non-governmental organisations to ask for a review of decisions from the public authority which may affect their environment.

The Irish Government intends to introduce new legislation to restrict the key rights conferred on citizens by the Convention. Specifically, they intend to **dramatically increase the cost** for community and environmental groups to seek redress by appeal to the High Court. This will be in direct breach of the provision of the Aarhus Convention that such an appeal must give access to “adequate and effective remedies ... and ..be fair, equitable, timely and **not prohibitively expensive (Article 9(4) and Article 9(5)).**”

As a minimum, the Government should make it clear that, in cases where no jeopardy to the national interest is involved, the current provisions applying to community environmental parties shall remain unchanged.

There is a deadline of **Thursday January 15** to make your voice heard on this issue, which is of vital importance to all those concerned about the rights of citizens, and especially the right to act in defence of our environment.

Please email your views to this address:

Aarhus@dcee.gov.ie

Also contact your TD and make it clear that you expect them to act in defence of the rights of the citizens they represent. Your rights in relation to this are

crucially important and were hard won.
Do not let the Government deprive you of them.