



SOS Question and Answers Support Sheet

This document sets out the most frequently asked questions from the press, politicians and members of the public that campaign group members may regularly be called on to answer. The aim is to provide everyone involved with a regularly updated version of these to ensure that we are sending out a consistent message with clear fact- based information in all our communications.

1. Question on who SOS are

Who is behind the SOS campaign? What are their aims?

1. Answer

- The campaign is made up of ordinary, local people who live and work in and around Skibbereen. They run businesses, raise families, play sports and take part in cultural activities all within the local community. Most of all, they all love the unique and special landscape and environment of this wonderful part of West Cork.
- The aim of the campaign is to stop this thermoplastic manufacturer building a facility in Skibbereen and to promote development of skibbereen through more sustainable means such as tourism and technology, as is outlined in the agreed Local Area Plan.
- West Cork is Special, Let's keep it that way.

2. Question on where the campaigners are from

This is just a bunch of tree hugging "blow-ins" moaning to their celebrity friends.

2. Answer

- The campaign is proud to have the support of many locals who were born and raised here and many locals who made the decision to move and live and work here. The campaign is very broad and involves everyone: from local teachers to business people, from young people and parents to the elderly and from farmers and food producers to film producers.

3. Question on Jobs

But I have heard that this factory will bring around 40 much needed new jobs to Skibbereen for our young people....?

3. Answer

- The exact number of jobs is very unclear.
- What we know from other similar plants that this same company operate is that the operation can run with relatively low numbers of employees.
- Some of the specialist jobs will be done by people brought in from elsewhere and although there will be some local employment opportunities, it may be less than 20 and the jobs may be unskilled and low paid.



- This land space is large and could open up larger numbers of employment in our community positively impacting the values of Skibbereen (wild atlantic, fishing, food, technology etc).
- An example of this is the Ludgate Hub and how this opened up job opportunities and put Skibbereen on the map.
- We also see this with local food producers who have built successful businesses

4. Question on Jobs and local young people

Young people will continue to leave Skibbereen if there are no decent jobs here?

4. Answer

We agree. That is why our campaign is not just calling for this unsuitable development to be stopped but is actively campaigning for more investment in high quality sustainable jobs that will enhance Skibbereen and not put our environment at risk.

5. Question on Environmental Impact Study

Surely the Council would have carried out a thorough check on the environmental impact before agreeing it.....

5. Answer

- No environmental impact assessment has been carried out.
- Thus, there is no information available to the planners of the possible negative effects to the Ilen Estuary which is home to many protected species of fish, birds and mammals and plants, nor to the Special Areas of Conservation of Roaring Water Bay and the Islands and of Lough Hyne.
- Any destruction of these areas can negatively affect the tourist industry and the inland fisheries, possibly putting many jobs at risk. Particularly at risk could be the shellfish farmers.
- Roaring Water Bay employs 72 people in mussel farming; all of whom could be put at risk.

6. Question on Health and Safety Risk Assessment

You can't open a factory without a proper health and safety risk assessment, can you?

6. Answer

- No fire risk assessment has been carried out despite the potential for the process involving potentially combustible materials and chemicals.
- Skibbereen fire department have been given no detail and no supplementary training to deal with a fire in a thermoplastic compounding factory.
- The Fish Factory fire in Baltimore, had to call in extra resources from Mallow, Middleton and Bantry.



- The air born pollutants of a fire from a Polymer Compounding Factory are a serious health hazard and can include : Heavy Metals, Dioxins, Furans and Polyaromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs).

7. Question on whether it is too late to prevent this factory from going ahead

It has been agreed, whether we like it or not we can't really stop this now. It's inevitable and just too late to do anything isn't it?

7. Answer

- SOS sees this as just the beginning of our campaign and it is far from agreed.
- If the appeals to An Bord Pleanála are not upheld, we aim to request a judicial review of the planning decision and process.
- As the campaign grows and public awareness increases, we will be lobbying our elected representatives and gaining mass support from individuals, businesses and politicians and using legal argument and process and public opinion to pressure the company and An Bord Pleanála to reconsider.
- You can be part of this as there is so much individuals can do to add their support and we within the campaign will support you on how.

8. Question on the location of the factory

This is on the outskirts of town so it's not going to have a huge impact on the local area?

8. Answer

- The site is right next to the Retirement Village, Skibbereen Football Club, the Golf Course and the Ilen River and the Wild Atlantic Way.
- The prevailing wind wind direction will carry the toxic emissions across the town, the schools and the playgrounds 24 hrs a day.
- Quite apart from the risks of pollution and fire, there is the increased traffic coming straight through Skibbereen, the danger of spillages in transit, the risk to water courses which flow into our rivers and into our coastal waters and the potential for damage to the marine environment and the seafood industry in the area.

9. Question on the factory being under the category of 'Light Manufacturing'

It's just light manufacturing, so its impact will be minimal?

9. Answer:

- A Light Industrial building means an industrial building in which the processes carried on or the machinery installed are such as could be carried on or installed in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

- Plastics manufacturing is a major part of the chemical industry, and some of the world's largest chemical companies have been involved since the earliest days, such as the industry leaders BASF and Dow Chemical
- This facility will have 4 X17 metre chimneys to disperse the emissions of fumes, dust and particulate.
- It will have machinery running 24 hours a day.
- Toxic chemicals need permanent refrigeration.
- There will be 4X16 metre silos being filled and emptied of plastic pellets regularly.
- The processing of toxic chemicals in such a sensitive area cannot legitimately be described as light industrial activity.

10. Question on there not being a chance this factory will go ahead

They will never agree this, will they?

10. Answer

- If local residents had not raised objections and gone to considerable time and financial expense to appeal against the County Council Planning Decision the bulldozers would already be preparing the land for this factory to be built.
- The more we can raise public awareness and support for our campaign the better chance we have to stop this.
- Every poster, leaflet, tweet, facebook share and conversation can help.

11. Question on balancing economic benefits and environmental impact

You have to balance the economic benefits with the environmental impact. If we want zero impact we wouldn't be able to do anything?

11. Answer

- This campaign is not opposed to economic development in Skibbereen. In fact we welcome appropriate, sustainable and responsible inward investment. We want to see jobs created in the tourism, food and technology sectors such as the work being done by the Ludgate Hub and the growth of companies such as Spearline Lab which offer good quality skilled jobs that do not have an adverse impact on our environment.

12. Question on the company having plants worldwide

This company have plants all over the world and the process doesn't seem to have caused problems in these places?

12. Answer

- The company headquarters in Winona USA is required to report via the Toxic Release Inventory and is set in a Non Attainment Area, which means air pollution levels are persistently high.

- Indeed this area of Winona falls below National Ambient Air Quality standards for pollution levels for ozone, lead, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter.
- Particulate matter refers to small solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air and mostly formed as a result of complex reactions of chemicals such as sulfur dioxide.
- Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye.
- Others are so small they can only be detected using an electron microscope and can be made up of hundreds of different chemicals.
- They are so small that they can be inhaled and cause serious health problems.
- Winona includes a large area of Impaired Waters, which means the regulations and controls are not stringent enough to meet the water quality standards set by states for the quality of surface and ground waters. The factory is close to the banks of the Mississippi and pollutants found in the river include Mercury and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBS).
- The Mississippi River ranks 2nd in the nation for total toxic discharges.
- The company will be manufacturing thermoplastic resins which it will ship as tiny pellets called 'Nurdles'. The University of Gothenburg have found that 60% of the identifiable plastic in the Rhine is 'Nurdles' and can be traced back to polymer compounding facilities along the banks of the river.
- From one company alone the annual spillage into the environment was 3 billion nurdles. This one company was following industry best practice guidelines and it's motto was not one nurdle spilled.

13. Question on the factory not affecting individuals personally

This will not affect me personally, so why should I care?

13. Answer

- Anyone who has a job in tourism, who has children or grandchildren growing up here, or who just loves the beautiful environment here should care and get involved to ensure that the River Ilan remains one of the cleanest rivers in Ireland, that the South West Coast of Ireland stays free of micro-plastics, that our air remains free of toxic release emissions and our roads are not clogged with heavy goods vehicles.

14. Statement on not wanting to get involved

Look I agree with you but I can't get involved publicly in this because of my job, business, position, family situation etc?

14. Answer

- There are lots of ways of helping the campaign. By signing a petition, putting up a poster, sharing social media posts or making a donation small or large to the campaign you will be providing great support and making a real difference. The campaign will be more effective if we can call on lots of people to do small tasks rather than relying on a few to do everything.



15. Question on going to Judicial Review/Court

If this is going to end up in court, how can we compete with the Government and a huge corporation?

15. Answer

- If this is going to end up in court, how can we compete with the Government and a huge corporation? We are learning from other campaigners all around the world about how you can change minds and challenge bad decisions. As Nelson Mandela said: "It always seems impossible until it is done...."