



New Climate Science Denial Group Launches in Ireland

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The inaugural meeting of a newly formed climate sceptic group, the Irish Climate Science Forum (ICSF), took place in Dublin on Thursday night, DeSmog UK can reveal.

The organisers described the meeting as a “strictly private event” and barred access to “politicians, media and NGOs”, according to organiser, Jim O’Brien, an energy consultant. There were roughly 50-60 guests in attendance.

Guest speaker for the meeting was noted US climate science denier, Richard Lindzen, retired MIT professor, whose lecture was entitled “The Science and Politics of Climate Change”. Lindzen is also an academic adviser to the UK climate denial group the Global Warming Policy Foundation and works at the Koch-founded U.S. conservative think tank the Cato Institute.

The ICSF describes itself as “a voluntary group of Irish scientists, engineers and other professionals, currently in a formative stage”. It plans to carry out what it says is “neutral, independent analysis of the latest climate research with the purpose of better informing climate and energy policies in Ireland”.

Funding for ICSF

The ICSF claims to be only funded by “modest personal donations from its members and has no vested interests other than seeking the most sustainable future for Ireland and its citizens.”

There was no entry fee to the evening meeting on 4 May, nor were attendees asked to make any donations, so it is unclear what the source was for the significant funding required to fly in a high-profile climate science denier and host a meeting in an upmarket hotel.

In chairing the meeting, O’Brien, an engineer, stated that: “People think our organisation is funded by fossil fuel interests, but we have no donations from fossil fuel sources, only from private sources”.

Speaking to DeSmog UK, O'Brien said Lindzen didn't charge to give the talk and that they only paid for his expenses (he didn't clarify who the "they" were). O'Brien repeated his line that ICSF is all self-funded and told DeSmog UK that their total funds are "only around €5,000".

Lindzen opened his talk on Thursday night by condemning the "narrative of hysteria" that he claims surrounds the science of climate change. Carbon dioxide, he told the audience, is a plant fertilizer, and the Earth was lush 600 million years ago when atmospheric CO₂ levels were far higher than today. He described any climate change that has occurred to date as "miniscule", calling it all for the good.

Lindzen insisted that the warming experienced in the last two decades fell within the range of "natural variability", and repeated the long-debunked argument that climate sensitivity to a doubling of pre-industrial CO₂ levels was limited to just 1°C. To hedge his bets, Lindzen added that, in any event, "warming would actually benefit the Earth".

Among those attending the event, which mostly consisted of engineers and meteorologists, were a number of senior Met Éireann staff, as well as Dr Rory O'Donnell, director of Ireland's National Social & Economic Council, and Matt Dempsey, CEO of the Irish Farmers Journal, a newspaper owned by the powerful lobby group, the Irish Farmers Association.

Lindzen reacted angrily to a question from an audience member asking about his prior involvement as a tobacco lobbyist, stating any such suggestion was "libellous".

That was the only brief note of discord from an otherwise hand-picked audience, almost exclusively male and with an estimated average age of 65–70. A "vote of thanks" for Lindzen was led by engineer and former Siemens and Science Foundation Ireland chairman Brian Sweeney.

Who Is Behind the New Group?

Retired UCD meteorologist Dr Ray Bates is understood to be a key mover behind the development of the ICSF. In recent years he has become an active lobbyist for climate inaction in defence of Ireland's greenhouse gas-intensive beef and dairy sectors.

Speaking with DeSmog UK, O'Brien refused to name any other members of the ICSF. When asked whether Bates was behind the project, O'Brien replied "you may make that assumption".

Why a meteorologist with no expertise in agriculture chooses to publicly lobby in this area has never been fully explained. And, like Lindzen, Bates has been an enthusiastic promoter of the debunked "global warming hiatus" theory.

Last night's meeting concluded without any direction from the organisers as to the next steps. However, the web domain ICSF.ie has been registered on its behalf by O'Brien, so it is expected that the secretive group will, at some point, launch a website to support its stated aim of "better informing climate and energy policies in Ireland".

Judging by the choice of speaker for last night's inaugural meeting, the ICSF appears intent on attacking and discrediting mainstream science and providing cover for further inaction.