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Forest Friends Ireland's proposals with regard to the Public consultation of SEA Scoping on the 1draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland.

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There is no doubting that the document which forms part of this consultation process is a very fine document but the danger is that it may open the door to compromising what our ancestors would have died to protect and preserve from Finn McCool to the Wild Geese to the poets of the Rising and the Shamans of today. The key questions that our decision makers need to answer honestly are firstly what are at issue as a result of this report. Secondly what are the consequences and results of relaxing the planning laws which for so long enforced the proper planning and development of the area of the planning authority. Thirdly what are the results of removing the controls and safeguards which existed in protecting the built environment and the possible dire consequences of applying the same criteria in terms of the natural environment? Fourthly, what are the safeguards which are now needed to protect the natural environment in the interests not of speculators but in the interest of future generations? The landscape is not ours or the decision makers to whittle away but is the property of the unborn to the seventh generation. A key question is what will they inherit?

- **Introduction:** I had the good fortune of living in Galway and Clifden for a number of years when I explored all the surrounding and then pristine landscapes of the region and the entire western mountain ranges. During that time I also steeped myself in the writings which expressed the ways of life of the people of the western seaboard and surrounding areas. In this submission I set out some of the important philosophies that underpinned the way of life of a unique people. When I saw this document and began to plough through the extensive 'verbiage' with it, it seemed to me a foregone conclusion that even our most sacred landscapes could now be 'up for grabs' and that greedy developers could possibly and consequentially have a field day and that this outcome could gather momentum and credibility and become in some ways inevitable, using flawed criteria like job creation. The unintended consequences resulting would not be sully thought out and the dire results unanticipated. As the

leader and chairman of Forest Friends Ireland who has travelled the length and breadth of Ireland from the 'Paps of Danu' to the Grinan of Aileach and beyond in all directions I have to say that this document and the underlying messages sent a shudder up my spine that I was afraid would reverberate to such an extent as to undermine much of what I and my organisation stand for. Was this the thin edge of the wedge? Do our leaders really understand what is at stake in possibly putting at risk the very soul of our mountains lakes and streams and valleys so sacred to our ancestors? My conclusion was 'yes it is all at risk and the caretakers of our sacred environment may be prepared to cut the umbilical cord that connected us to our land.

Wise men like our Irish shaman John Moriarty who has written large volumes like 'Turtle has gone a Long Time' (three volumes), 'Dreamtime' and many other works of wisdom culminating in his last work 'Nostos' a super volume.: John who I was glad to meet and be inspired by also composed several tapes including "In Eden One Evening" and "Seeking to Stand Beautifully on the Earth". There have been many other wise men who best understood what our landscape hides from those who will not see, but equally important in helping us to understand what lies hidden were William Bulfin who wrote several works including 'Rambles in Eirinn' (two volumes) An enthralling account of a bicycle journey through Ireland at the turn of the century which delved deeply into the spirit and sacredness of the land. A completely comprehensive analysis of Ireland's landscapes is contained in Robert Lloyd Praeger's "The Way that I Went" described as "The finest guide to the beauties of the Irish countryside" demonstrating " a deep love and knowledge of every facet of the landscape-its birds, flowers and animals and the beauties of bog and mountains"

Included in Forest Friends Ireland's wish list for our leaders and decision makers to read and try to understand before making decisions, decisions which could jeopardise what our heritage and what it stands for are the w works of John O'Donohue who wrote many volumes including 'Anam Cara', 'External Echoes'. 'Divine Beauty; the Invisible Embrace' Another wise shaman was Fr. Sean O'Duinn. I had the good fortune to attend some of his presentations explaining our connections with our landscape and the 'otherworld', available on tape with the title "Celtic Mythology and the Otherworld" 'Celtic Vision: Conference on Celtic Spirituality 30 October 1998 Ceile De. There is a vast library documenting the way of life of the west, including Maurice O'Sullivan's

“Twenty Years A-Growing”, Tomas O Crohan’s “The Islandman”, ‘An Old Woman’s Reflections: The Life of a Basket Island Storyteller’ by Peig Sayers. ‘The Western Island’ by Robin Flower. Some writers captured the ethos of the West and its islands including Edmund John Millington Synge although he was born in County Dublin. His important works include ‘Riders to the Sea’ and ‘The Shadow of the Glen’ ‘the Tinkers Wedding’ and ‘Deirdre of the Sorrows’. and ‘The Playboy of the Western World’ widely regarded as his masterpiece. It is my suggestion that before embarking on a journey which could end up seriously compromising our sacred landscapes leaving scars that cannot be cured resulting in our mountains rivers valleys falling victims to speculators inspired by greed leaving our future generations with a sorry and polluted landscape that decision makers should take the time and effort to be fully informed. One of the important novelists of the West was Walter Macken who was a prodigious writer and his works include ‘City of the Tribes’, ‘Rain on the Wind’ ‘Quench the Moon’, ‘Brown Lord of the Mountain’, ‘God Made Sunday’. ‘The Green Hills’, ‘The Grass of the People’, ‘I am Alone’, ‘the Silent People’, ‘The Scorching Wind’. ‘Seek the Fair Land’. ‘The Bogman’. ‘The Coll Doll’, ‘Sunset on the Window Panes’.

George William Russell, who wrote with the pseudonym *Æ*, was an Irish writer, editor, critic, poet, painter and Irish nationalist. He was also a writer on mysticism, and a central figure in the group of devotees of theosophy which met in Dublin for many years.

IRELAND’S PREVIOUS MINING EXPERIENCES:

The history of Ireland’s previous mining experiences does not make for pleasant reading. It was a dire experience as in the case of the ‘Silvermines’ in County Tipperary

<https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/Publications/IAG%20Report.pdf>

and in the case of County Wicklow The **Wicklow** Mountains have an extensive **mining history**. Copper was **mined** in Avoca, and lead was **mined** in Glenmalure, Glendasan and Glendalough. Within the National Park, spoil heaps and ruined **mining** villages can be seen at Glendasan (on the **Wicklow** Gap road) and at the **Miners’** Village in Glendalough. **The main areas of mining in County Wicklow were** the Avoca Valley, Glendalough and Glendasan Valleys and in Glenmalure. The environmental effects of the mining experiences in Tipperary and County Wicklow are well documented. Friends of the Irish environment have reported on the dire consequences of the Wicklow experience in their report <https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/eu/38-papers->

today/pollution/9738- and both Tipperary and Wicklow mining experiences are well documented and have had extremely serious impact on the environment <https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/eu/38-papers-today/pollution/9738-> Suffice it to say that the life in rivers have been killed off indefinitely with the life therein non-existent or too damaged to be consumed. There have been efforts made by local communities to resolve outstanding environmental issues resulting from the mining with little positivity to show. Surely we do not need to embark on a new exploration and mining chapter in our history given the previous experiences. <https://www.friendsoftheirishenvironment.org/eu/38-papers-today/pollution/13011->

LEAD AND ZINC MINING IN IRELAND:

Ireland has been one of the largest producers of lead and zinc in the world. It is also the home of Europe largest lead and zinc mine, the Boliden Tara Mine, located in Navan, County Meath. Lead and zinc production was concentrated in three mines, Lisheen in County Tipperary, Galmoy in County Kilkenny and Tara in County Meath. The Lisheen and Galmoy mines closed, while Tara mine has been active for over forty years. , An application to re-open the Galmoy mine has been made .

IRELAND'S UNIQUE LANDSCAPES:

Ireland's unique offering is a landscape that is not only unique but to date well protected. Yet we feel that it is now at risk by the very fact that so called consultants in volumes of discourse may be hinting that it is time to mine and compromise. At first sight it seems incongruous that our elected representatives would contemplate even the possibility of mining in the mountains of Connemara or the mountain ranges from Cork/Kerry to Donegal, in fact the entire western regions. Should these not be out of bounds and not on the agenda for speculators or developers to exploit? Whether it is the Maam Turks, the Twelve Bens, Killary and its surrounding mountains, Achill Island mountain areas, the Slieve Leagues, the sky road and Clifden's walkways leading to Ballyconeeley and Roundstone, Maam Cross and so many other landscapes equally unique and unsurpassed elsewhere, yes a treasure trove for future generations to be kept intact and for which our children's children will thank us if we protect it for them. A treasure trove not to be explored for financial gain for some would be speculators who crave the 30 pieces of silver for themselves. Forest Friends Ireland feel that we have an obligation to inform decision makers of the quality landscapes which to this day remain largely intact in spite of some bad forestry plantations of non native conifer plantations. This submission

includes references to works which help to define the very essence of Ireland's landscapes in order to assist the reader in the understanding of what may be at stake if mining and other intrusions in the landscape are contemplated and implemented.

THE LAKES OF CONNEMARA:

How was it you might ask that a French writer and song composer wrote a wonderful description of the lakes and landscapes of Connemara? Every young French student can sing this song. They have identified with our wonderland lakes, mountains and landscapes of the West of Ireland. Each year French third level students attend Forest Friends Summer School. When I ask them about the song 'The Lakes of Connemara' their eyes light up and they tell me that all the French students sing the song at important gigs. It is part of French student lore and all students can sing **it**. Michel Sardou - Les lacs du Connemara (Official lyric video).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpEmjxobvY>. 32M views on YouTube Music by Jacques Revaux Lyrics by Michel Sardou & Pierre Delanoë Published By: ART Music France Audio Producer: Bernard ...Seventy million young people can't be wrong in their views on our environment.

CHANGING PLANNING LEGISLATION-CONSEQUENCES

In recent years planning legislation has been changed not to protect the environment but largely to facilitate development, resulting in a new age, the age of the developer/speculator. I mention Santry as one of many examples of the dire consequences to the built environment. Historically the criterion for assessing development proposals was "The Proper Planning and Development of the Area" the area in question being the area of the planning authority the Local Authority. This was a safeguard built in to the system. However with the new legislation the local planning authority can be bypassed with virtually no safeguards. For large development proposals the developer can go straight into the appeal system managed by 'An Bord Pleanála' In addition the city manager can bypass the elected representatives, the best example being the incinerator in Dublin City which was opposed by the elected representatives of all the local authorities in the Dublin area. The result that an important assessment stage in the decision-making process can be bypassed. Surely this is bad planning and new legislation is now needed to safeguard our natural environment whether in Connemara or Leitrim or any other part of our country. Otherwise we could end

up in 'Ecocide Ireland' and without the necessary safeguards to protect our largely unspoiled natural landscapes. The report "The draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland" unfortunately could be the start of the developers dream to begin the destruction of what we have always held dearly, including our remarkable, pristine and sublime landscapes This report could be viewed as the start of building a process and a case for mining and the eventual death knell of our unspoiled landscapes.

PROTECT CONNEMARA GROUP

: see facebook postings

"This group is SOLELY to share information and post questions about mining in Connemara - in the Roundstone/Ballyconneely Bog area. WE are now allied to other groups that are opposed to mining on the island of Ireland. Reaching out to each other keeps us up to date with Irish legislation and what is happening elsewhere and gives us strength in numbers. Other environmental issues, important as they are, are for discussion elsewhere

We are a community of people who are opposed to licences being granted for prospecting and mining in Connemara because we are concerned about the environmental damage to the land, air and water; to our health, our livestock and the marine.

The mining licence for the Roundstone /Ballyconneely area has been revoked, it has NOT been RETIRED which is what we need to happen if we need it to go away completely. There has been a vote in the Galway council unanimously banning mining in Connemara, however the government can overturn that. Which is why we need it to be retired completely and the ban to be made into law?

Please please be proactive, we have got this far by being a community group and talking to our representatives. This needs to continue until we have an outright ban. THANK YOU each and everyone for your support".

CONCLUSIONS: I have lived for a number of years in Connemara and studied the sublime landscapes of the Western seaboard north to south, ad infinitum, and the literature that gives them unique, otherworldly and often hidden meanings. Samples of the relevant literature that gives these areas their special character are included in this report so that the reader whether decision makers of the public can understand what is really at stake. It would be a great mistake and patently wrong that at this juncture or at any time that mining in our unique landscapes should be up for discussion whether it be by our elected representatives or handed over in some way to be determined by' consultants

who may or may not have connections with mining enterprises. *Our mountains rivers valleys bogs and lakes are not ours to whittle away.* They are ours to hold in trust for future generations not yet born to the seventh generation. We are living in a very materialistic value system where reductionism tries to bring everything down to monetary values. It is also true to a great extent that mankind has in a very large way cut the umbilical cord that tied us to our landscape and the value systems that underpinned it. But arguably it is not too late to call a halt before the horse has bolted. Forest Friends Ireland's suggestion is that the works referred to above should form essential reading so that decision makers are well informed and have some deep understanding of what is at stake in any contemplation of damaging our sacred and to date protected and unique landscapes, a microcosm of the macrocosm of the world. The school curriculum at all levels should be filled with the explanation of our landscapes. The works referred to in this Forest Friends report have demonstrated extensively in the lives of the authors the deepest knowledge and understanding of what can be seen and what is hidden in our landscapes. The landscape of the west of Ireland should be viewed in a unitary way including the mountain chains and individual mountains, river valleys lakes forests, bogs and the offshore islands. Mining this great landscape would be nothing less than anathema. Brendan Behan in one of his poems has expressed the importance of the Baskets: Poem 'the Jackeen's Lament for the Blaskets'

THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS:

It appears that while this consultative process is taking place that agencies of the Irish Government are already in discussions with prospective developers and mining representatives who wish to pre-empt the consultative processes. These discussions are premature and should not have been engaged in until the stakeholders had had an opportunity to make their case. Forest Friends Ireland are of the opinion that prospecting and mining should be a no/no in our landscapes starting with the entire western mountain areas and including the landscapes associated with them, rivers, bogs, valleys, cliffs, hills lakes. These all form a coherent whole and should be preserved in situ and not compromised in any way. The damage which has been done by planting non-native conifer plantation should be reversed and replaced by planting our native hardwoods.

Over the years through bad planning we have lost a lot of our built environment in towns and villages. It is important that our natural and particularly sublime (but not exclusively sublime) landscapes are not now compromised. I mention

one important example in the case of Dublin's landscape and villages. There was a complete Swiss village and woods in Santry Dublin. There was tree preservation on Santry Woods which included home to long eared owls and was a unique landscape in the context of the Dublin area. There is nothing to show now but a concrete jungle replacing most of the woods and high rise apartment blocks that would churn your stomach if one had to pass it by. Unfortunately this is only one example of bad planning in terms of conserving the built environment. It is important that the new planning codes which bypass the local planning authority would not be used to shortcut the way to environmental destruction the like of which was not anticipated before and which could trumpet in the death knell of our pristine landscapes. These young people should not be disillusioned and the circle forged by our ancestors should remain intact. It's all in the song not composed by us but by a French man who saw the wonder of our landscapes. Hopefully the wonder will live on eternally and our treasured landscape will not be sold or bargained away to the highest bidders as in some kind of auction .

The lakes of Connemara (Kids United cover)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayab7J9vZNs>

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