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Geoscience Policy Division
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
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15th October 2021

Re: Minerals Policy Consultation

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the consultation on the Draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland and associated SEA Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Statement.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for Communities – Historic Environment Division (HED) has considered the documents with our opinions detailed below.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report Process Comments

The layout and content of the Environmental Report is well laid out and easy to follow.

DAERA SEA Team is content that the environmental report and the process of consultation follow the SEA Directive.

The Draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland and accompanying Environmental Reports have been made available to designated authorities, transboundary bodies and the public.

A description of the current state of the environment and how this relates to the proposed policy is included within the environmental report. Appropriate environmental objectives / targets / indicators for each of the likely environmental receptors is addressed including consideration of alternatives, an assessment of significant impact and complemented with mitigation measures and monitoring programme.



DAERA Natural Environment Division (NED) Comments:

NED welcome the acknowledgement of the consideration of Northern Ireland and transboundary environmental effects within the Mineral Exploration and Mining draft Policy Statement SEA and NIS. NED note the specific locations for environmental effects from the draft policy are unknown at this stage and as such detailed, specific environmental assessment is not possible.

Full assessment relating to the types of impacts and effects will have to be undertaken when specific project details and locations are known. Any projects which may have effects on Northern Ireland will also need further environmental assessment. We welcome that this is acknowledged within the report and that specific environmental effects will be addressed in detail at project stage which is likely to require further consultation with DAERA should projects/programmes be proposed that may have an effect on NI. NED are of the opinion that there should be a solid commitment within the SEA report and the Natura Impact Assessment to consult with the relevant authorities in NI at project level should transboundary effects be identified or likely. We understand that transboundary effects are the same as those outlined in the report and hence are content with the assessment of their likely impacts should a project have potential for effects on NI.

We welcome further consultation on future policies when available.

DAERA Marine Plan Team Comments:

The Marine Plan Team welcome the opportunity to comment on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Environmental Report Consultation for the Draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining.

We welcome reference to marine strategy descriptors for good environmental status and to the marine aspect within the Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna topic. The potential for transboundary effects with respect to designated sites in Carlingford Lough is noted, particularly in relation to its cumulative sensitivity.

It is observed that some of the issues raised at Scoping Report stage have not been addressed within the Environmental Report.

The lack of inclusion and consideration to marine policy documents (the UK Marine Policy Statement and the draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland) is odd given the reference made to Northern Ireland terrestrial planning documents, such as the Strategic Planning Policy Statement and the Regional Development Strategy.

Comments in relation to Scoping Question 2 on Air Quality and Geographical Scope; and Scoping Question 3, in relation to the SEA Objectives. In addition, the provision of clarity in relation to whether references to underwater and water also include the marine environment.

DAERA Inland Fisheries Comments:

DAERA Inland Fisheries, is a core branch within Marine and Fisheries Division of the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs. It has a statutory remit for the conservation, protection, development and improvement of salmon and inland fisheries under the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 (as amended). DAERA Inland Fisheries is the implementing authority under the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic. This treaty requires signatory states to develop programmes of work to conserve, rationally manage and improve Atlantic salmon populations and their habitats



within their jurisdiction. This work is scrutinised by the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO). DAERA Inland Fisheries welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Consultation on associated SEA Environmental Report and AA Natura Impact Statement for the Draft Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland

Inland Fisheries notes that some of the comments that were raised in the scoping exercise have been incorporated into the process in relation to migratory fish species and Biodiversity, flora and Fauna and appreciates that as no locations have been considered it is difficult to assess any particular potential impacts. Inland Fisheries notes the legislative context within which salmon etc. are protected as outlined in section - 5.3.2.2 Natural Habitats and Protected Species - Salmonid Rivers and Shellfish Areas. These principles must continue to be considered in relation to transboundary impacts. It should be noted that not all rivers which contain NI priority species and habitats are designated under the frameworks with which the SEA has been produced.

Inland Fisheries notes the high-level, over-arching nature of the document and will welcome the opportunity to consider any proposals which stem from this policy. Inland Fisheries will continue to provide advice when required and also as a statutory consultee will assess any proposed development received through the planning system and comment on any potential impacts.

It is noted that the transboundary regions have within them areas within the jurisdiction covered by the Loughs Agency, as the lead body for provision of advice regarding impacts to salmonid and inland fisheries interests within the catchment of Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough they should also be consulted in relation to this document and any subsequent proposals/plans.

DAERA Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) Comments:

We welcome the inclusion of drinking water considerations throughout the SEA Environmental Report and acknowledgement of Drinking water protected areas. Furthermore, the Drinking Water Directive and its recast are included as requested.

DWI are content that, for the majority, items highlighted under the draft policy statement consultation have been largely taken into account. Further considerations and detail are expected to be presented when transboundary areas are identified and relevant Regulations or Orders would be applicable.

We welcome further consultation on future policies.

DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) Comments:

DAERA the consultation body operate a service level agreement with DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) whereby HED provide authoritative comment and advice in relation to matters of Cultural Heritage including archaeological and architectural heritage, please see accompanying DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) response letter dated 13th October 2021.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of our response please do not hesitate to contact us.



Yours sincerely





Department for
Communities

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Date: 13/10/2021

DFC: HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DIVISION COMMENTS RE: DRAFT POLICY STATEMENT FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION AND MINING IN IRELAND, SEA ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) operate via a Service Level Agreement with colleagues in DAERA in relation to SEA, whereby we provide authoritative comment and advice in relation to matters of Cultural Heritage including archaeological and architectural heritage.

We make the following comments in respect of the documentation received by our office on 30/07/2021.

In the context of our response HED refer back to the content of our feedback at scoping stage, (dated 17/6/2021) which was submitted as part of DAERA feedback in relation to transboundary matters.

HED highlight our previous comment that given the intertwined nature of the historic environment with landscape and the natural environment, consideration of the potential for transboundary impacts in this topic area is likely to be relevant with regard to this assessment. The historic environment provides a central vein in the narrative of our landscape evolution, and through this influences aspects such as landscape character and biodiversity. A large number of heritage assets predate the border itself and correlate to other assets in either jurisdiction, or in some cases themselves traverse the border.

HED consider that recognition of transboundary qualities such as the inter-relationships of sites, buildings and places and the potential effects with regard to impacts on their settings and the understanding and experience of them would be desirable. We also advise that it would be appropriate for the report to consider relevant international obligations in relation to conservation of cultural heritage, which are implemented through national and local legislation and policies, (for example The Valletta Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage or the Granada Convention on the Protection of Architectural

Heritage).

Finally HED highlight that for completeness the content of page 58 could reflect that Navan Fort forms a part of the Royal Sites of Ireland WHS bid.

Should you wish to contact us to discuss any of the content of our response we can be reached via the email address above.

Yours sincerely

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