



Determination on the Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening for Exploration Drilling

DECC Reference:	DON_2023_001
PL Area(s)	3820
County	Donegal
Licensee	Connemara Mining Co. Ltd

The Minister has assessed the drilling activity proposed by the company in accordance with the criteria set out in S.8A(4) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended (listed below).

	The proposed drilling activity has been assessed taking into account the criteria set out below
(a)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is less than one hectare
(b)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is more than 100 metres from- <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) land to which a notice under section 16 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 of an intention of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to make an order designating land as a natural heritage area under section 18 of that Act applies, or(ii) land designated a natural heritage area under section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000;
(c)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is not within a European site;
(d)	No equipment capable of waste spillage or process run-off shall be operated for the purpose of the proposed activity within 10 metres of a watercourse which is a river or lake entered on those parts of the register of protected areas established by the



	Environmental Protection Agency under Regulation 8 of the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003) called respectively "WFD Riverwater Bodies that are protected for drinking water" and "WFD Lakewater bodies that are protected for drinking water";
(e)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is more than 100 metres from water abstraction carried on for the purpose of human consumption on a non - commercial basis;
(f)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is more than 300 metres from water abstraction carried on for the purpose of supply of water to the public;
(g)	The equipment proposed to be operated for the purpose of the proposed activity has been tested and a report of the results of the test shows that noise caused by that equipment shall not, at the nearest noise sensitive receptor, exceed noise limits set out in guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency for the time being called NG4;
(h)	The site where the proposed activity will take place is not situated in any national park owned by and managed on behalf of the State.

The proposed activity did not meet criteria (a) or (g) and therefore will require a screening determination for EIA in accordance with S.8A(6) of that Act.

Environmental Information available on DECC website .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploration Drilling - Guidance on Discharge to Surface and Groundwater (2019)• Guidance for Good Environmental Practice in Mineral Exploration (2019)• Environmental Safeguards- The Irish Way (2006)• Expert Environmental Guidance R4 – Drilling (2017)
Authority	Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
Date of Notice	06 October 2023



Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Determination for Exploration Drilling

The Minister has assessed the drilling activity proposed by the company in accordance with S.8A of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended.

DECC Reference	DON_2023_001
PL Area(s)	3820
County	Co. Donegal
Licensee	Connemara Mining Co. Ltd
Date of EIA Screening Determination	20 October 2023

Determination

The Minister has determined in accordance with S.8A(9) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended that the proposed activity is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment and that Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

Further information on EIA Screening Determination

The GSRO considers that the proposed activity did not meet the criteria of S.8A (4)(a) or (g) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended, specifically:

S.8A (4)(a) The site where the proposed activity will take place is less than one hectare.

And;



S.8A (4)(g) The equipment proposed to be operated for the purpose of the proposed activity has been tested and a report of the results of the test shows that noise caused by that equipment shall not, at the nearest noise sensitive receptor, exceed noise limits set out in guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency for the time being called NG4.

The site of the proposed activity is likely to cumulatively exceed one hectare as there will be 23 holes drilled from 12 surface locations over six months (S.8A (4)(a)). As well as this, at 3 of the collar locations, the noise limits as set out in guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, at the nearest noise sensitive location, would be exceeded (S.8A (4)(g)), therefore, a Case-by-Case Determination is advised under Article 4(b) of the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Minerals Development Act 1940) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 384 of 2018). An independent Environmental Assessor examined the application and reviewed the Case-by-Case Environmental Impact Assessment Screening, considering the relevant selection criteria specified in Schedule 7 to the Planning and Development Regulations of 2001, as provided for in S.8A(6)(7)(8) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended. The main findings of the Environmental Assessor are presented in the table below.

The Proposed Activity

Connemara Mining Co. Ltd proposes to undertake the drilling of diamond drill holes by rotary core drilling to define subsurface geology. The project comprises a drilling programme of 23 boreholes from 12 surface locations within Prospecting Licence 3820. Drilling operations at the site will be over approximately six months. The planned operations will be sites set up for diamond core drilling, using a rotary coring rig, the water to be utilised in drilling will be either surface water that is filtered and UV treated on site and re-circulated or from a mains supply. No permanent infrastructure or changes to the land use is anticipated because of the project operations.



Case by Case EIA Screening Determination Checklist (Likely Significant Effects)

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Questions to be Considered	Yes / No /? Briefly Describe	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes / No? Why?
<p><i>Is Case by Case EIA Screening Required?</i></p> <p>Yes - Case by Case EIA Screening Determination is required given;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The likelihood that the site of the proposed activity will exceed one hectare . • The noise limits as set out in guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, at the nearest noise sensitive location, would be exceeded for 3 drilling locations. 		
<p>1. Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies, etc)?</p>	<p>Yes. Activity will leave minimal physical remnant boreholes only.</p>	<p>No – Given that the proposed footprint of each drill hole is extremely small, the activity would not have likely significant effect.</p>
<p>2. Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials, or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?</p>	<p>Minimal land take during drilling with only limited water use (10 m3 per day). Water required for drilling will be sourced from a nearby watercourse, no drilling fluids will be directly discharged into a watercourse. Residual water will be placed to</p>	<p>No – Use of resources is limited and would not have likely significant effect</p>



	allow natural percolation through soils at >25m from any watercourse.	
3. Will the Project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	The proposals include best practice measures for the control of potentially polluting materials (oil matting, spill kits). Drill additives will be non-toxic.	No – The incorporated measures mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	The process will produce a limited quantity of clay mud drill cuttings (500kg per hole) that will be collected on site into bags, and all water will be re-circulated during drilling operations.	No – limited quantity of drill cuttings that will be collected mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect. A registered waste carrier will be used for solid waste disposal.
5. Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Emissions will be negligible and limited to diesel exhaust from the drill rig engine and support vehicles. 2 tracked units (marooka) 2 pickup trucks	No – limited vehicle use and duration mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect.



<p>6. Will the Project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?</p>	<p>Noise report information provided with predicted noise levels showing reduction in noise to 50 dBA within 100m of drilling rig with sound blankets. Works only during daytime so no lighting required</p>	<p>Three of the hole collars (P3, P4, P12) proposed are within 25m-68m of a noise sensitive receptor (residential dwelling). Noise levels at this receptor will be over the NG4 Guidance Document recommended levels at this location for the temporary period of drilling of these holes.</p> <p>The NG4 Guidance Document provides acoustic guidelines to the operators of activities which are listed in the First Schedule of the Environmental Protection Agency Act and the Third and Fourth Schedules of the Waste Management Act. Exploration drilling is temporary and, not a listed activity, and the applicant has confirmed that in this instance the resident of the noise sensitive receptor has given permission to drill within 100m of the dwelling.</p> <p>Noise problems may arise when drilling in proximity to residential or noise sensitive areas.</p> <p>Where drilling and pumping must take place in such locations, standard operating procedures, including noise barriers, should be taken to reduce noise emissions, at source, to acceptable levels and activity should not be permitted during unsocial hours. Alternatively, the relevant drill collars should be moved to a distance from the NSRs to meet</p>
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		guidance for noise levels.
7. Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Pollution of the water source is a potential impact (low risk) and one which will be highly monitored throughout the works. Chemicals will be stored on site in a lockable, double bunded container and usage monitored daily	No – The incorporated measures mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
8. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?	Minimised with sufficient health and safety protocols and procedures. Rigs are fitted with guards at the highest risk point being the turning rods. Harnesses are provided for the drillers when scaling the mast which is also a higher risk activity.	No – The incorporated measures mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
9. Will the project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	Small scale proposals with short duration works	No – small scale proposals with short duration mean that the proposals would not have likely significant effect
10. Are there any other factors which should be considered such as the consequential development which	The EIA Portal was checked for any significant projects	No likely significant effect given scale of works proposed and location of other potential cumulative EIA development



could have environmental effects or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	requiring EIA that occur within 10km of the proposed drill site. None within 10km	
11. Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international, national, or local legislation, for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	No	No, the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
12. Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water bodies, the coastal zone, mountains or forests, which could be affected by the Project?	No	No, the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
13. Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	Yes	No, the proposals would not have likely significant effect.
14. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	No hydrogeological link between the proposed site pump site and watercourses. No water will be allowed to directly enter	No Likely Significant Effect: No hydrogeological link between the proposed site pump site and watercourses. No water will be allowed to directly enter watercourses.



	watercourses.	
15. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	Small scale and short duration, temporary nature mean significant landscape effect not predicted	No – Small scale and short duration, temporary nature means significant landscape effects are not predicted.
16. Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	Very limited vehicle numbers (4 total), with no additional access works required	No – Limited vehicle numbers mean significant effect not predicted.
17. Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion, or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project?	Very limited vehicle numbers (4 total), with no additional access works required	No – Limited vehicle numbers mean significant effect not predicted.
18. Is the Project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Proposals are remotely located on the northern side of the access road leading only to the farm. Will be seen against backdrop of existing vegetation. Small scale and short duration.	No – Small scale and short duration, temporary nature mean significant visual effect not predicted



19. Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	No	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
20. Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be a loss of greenfield land?	No – Agricultural greenfield site.	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
21. Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g., homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the Project?	Site used for agriculture – no impact once drilling equipment removed.	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
22. Are there any plans for future uses on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	No	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
23. Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built up which could be affected by the Project?	No – Rural area with site in agricultural field.	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
24. Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	No – Rural area with site in agricultural field.	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.



25. Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high-quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the Project?	No – Site located in an agricultural field with small footprint for drilling activity.	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
26. Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the Project?	No	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
27. Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the Project to present environmental problems?	No	No – Significant effects are not likely to occur.
STAGE 3 CASE BY CASE EIA SCREENING DETERMINATION Summary of features of project and its location indicating the need for EIA		
Given the limited scale and temporary (6 months) duration of the proposed works, it is considered that significant environmental effects are not likely to occur and so the proposed activity is not considered to fall within the remit of the EIA Regulations.		

The independent Environmental Assessor has noted the provisions and planning that has been undertaken to control those issues that have the potential to have a significant environmental impact.



The European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Minerals Development Act 1940) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 requires an EIA to be carried out if there is a significant risk to the environment.

Conclusion

Based on all the information submitted by the applicant and the case-by-case screening determination, it is assessed that the application meets the criteria whereby an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not required. The independent assessor has concluded that significant environmental effects are not likely to occur due to the proposed drilling activity. Accordingly, having regard to S.8A(9) of the Minerals Development Act 1940, as amended, the Minister has determined that there is no requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed activity.

Environmental Information available on DECC website	<u>Exploration Drilling Guidance on Discharge to Groundwater</u> <u>Guidelines for Good Environmental Practice in Mineral Exploration</u> <u>Environmental Safeguards – The Irish Way</u> <u>Expert Environmental Guidance R4 – Drilling (2017)</u>
Authority	Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications
Date of Notice	20 October 2023