

## **Conjoined Public Local Inquiries:**

### **Curraghinalt Mine Project:**

- Dalradian Gold Ltd LA10/2017/1249/F (PAC Ref: C005)

### **Curraghinalt 33Kv Project:**

- Dalradian Gold Ltd LA10/2019/1386/F- NIE Networks (PAC Ref:C006)
- Dalradian Gold Ltd LA11/2019/1000/F - NIE Networks (PAC Ref: C007)

### **Consent to discharge:**

- Dalradian Gold Ltd TrC 080/20\_1 - DAERA (PAC Ref: 2021/WHR01)
- Dalradian Gold Ltd TrC 081/20\_1 - DAERA (PAC Ref: 2021/WHR02)

### **Water Abstraction and Impoundment**

- Dalradian Gold Ltd AIL 2024/0008 - NIEA (PAC Ref: 2024/WHR01)
- Dalradian Gold Ltd AIL 2024/0009 - NIEA (PAC Ref: 2024/WHR02)

### **Dalradian Gold Ltd Road Abandonment Application (PAC Ref:DR001)**

## **Statement of Case - [REDACTED]**

### **Introduction**

This statement of case represents [REDACTED]

I wasn't sure when I lived elsewhere why the pull to go home was so strong for me but the more I learned about our area the more I believe that our unique culture and heritage has had a magnetic force on me. This deep connection to our land should be nurtured and maintained, not under threat from Dalradian's plans. In fact it is this connection to place or *Dinnseanchas* which is driving our resistance to Dalradian's plans, plans which have already had a detrimental affect on our community in terms of community wellbeing.<sup>1</sup>

### **Gaeltacht Mhuintir Luinigh**

If you tell the average person in the North of Ireland you're from Greencastle in Tyrone you'll be answered with a look of bewilderment, however, if you tell a *Gaeilgeoir* or an Irish speaker you're from Greencastle in Tyrone you will be met with questions about growing up in a place with such rich history, archaeology and important heritage. Being an Irish speaker has opened so many treasure troves of knowledge and information that I wouldn't have known otherwise. The cultural landscape reports are wildly inaccurate in that they don't take into consideration the vast information available in Irish, or that they don't even reference our linguistic history.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Inevitably, the process of colonisation, whereby indigenous peoples throughout the world have 'been consistently, often violently, dispossessed of their cultures, languages and lands, not to mention their very lives' (May 2002:17), resulted in a tradition of native resistance in Ireland' (Mac Ionnrachtaigh 2013:60)

The area of this application was the last native Irish speaking area in Tyrone and across Ulster apart from Donegal. Irish was the living breathing everyday community language in the heart of the Munterloney area around Greencastle and Gortin up until the early 1900's with scholars coming from around the world to record and write down this unique dialect before it was gone, in fact it wasn't until the 1970's that the last native speakers died, while this is extremely sad and it was the last remaining unbroken link with thousands of years of Irish from cradle to grave in this area, the spirit and traditions of these people lived on and continue to do so in our area while they have died out elsewhere with well known scholar [REDACTED] having described it as 'an almost forgotten Folk Kingdom as valid as the Ring of Kerry, more valid perhaps than the Kingdom of Mourne.'

Apart from language this area is significant for many other reasons also, it was O'Neill country and it's said that O'Neill trained his swordsmen in Coneyglen, the glen where I grew up in, with blackthorn sticks. It is overflowing with points of archaeological interest from Beaghmore Stone Circles to Dún Ruadh, Aghascrebagh Ogham Stone, Tomb stones, Lios'es Rathes and plenty else and all of this shows us that our area has been inhabited for thousands of years. Many of these sites were uncovered by accident and we know and it is acknowledged in the reports provided by Dalradian that it is highly likely further sites exist locally therefore on the basis of this being an area of significant archaeological interest we feel this application must be refused.

This area is fairly mountainy, in fact in Westminster in the 1800's there is records of it being described as 'ye wild barbarous mountains of Munterloney' and apparently when prospective planters were being shown around they were deliberately kept away from Munterloney in case they would be put off by it's lack of flat arable land. But in cultural terms this worked as a kind of incubator, the rural isolation kept the English language out, it kept traditions strong and it also kept the communities strong as they relied and worked together to keep community traditions alive from calling on your céilí, to the wake house to the poitín making – all important aspects of life in this area. Today the Irish language has remained in our Hiberno English and our place names.

### **Cultural repossession**

Contrary to [REDACTED] laments about every new telephone and electricity pole damaging the folk kingdom he had found in Muintir Luinigh we as a strong and vibrant community are using all developments to build on our cultural, linguistic and archaeological strengths and develop this heritage so that we can share it with our own people through educational and public visits, with tourists through targeting the cultural tourism market and with the outdoors and active community. Tying in with the health and well being plans, we can offer the likes of hill walking that they have in the Mourne's but we have added element that nobody else has and that is our cultural, linguistic and archaeological uniqueness which we can tie in with the walks or as add on events and this work in our area is growing year on year with considerable interest in visiting the 'last Tyrone Gaeltacht'. We are looking forward to seeing positive sustainable developments with the Sperrins Partnership which has been a long time coming. We want to see development that is sensitive to the character of this area and AONB. We want to bring this forgotten folk kingdom into the homes and lives of many more people

while helping to improve the opportunities for those of us who want to live and work at home in Muintir Luinigh. Dalradian's plans are the opposite of what we need.

### **Tourism**

The plans have the potential to undermine plans to develop the Sperrins as a tourist amenity'. Research shows that landscapes and rich history are one of the key reasons why visitors choose to visit Ireland, we must focus on this by protecting our AONB from these plans.<sup>2</sup>

People come to the Sperrins because it isn't a high population or traffic area, for the rugged landscape, the peace, the quiet, the feeling of being in the wilderness. A look at local Airbnb feedback shows people appreciate the area as it is: Beautiful, peaceful surroundings. ; Surroundings of the cabin were gorgeous and the views were lovely; Perfect place for a peaceful recharge; Thoroughly enjoyed our stay in a scenic area.; Incredible surroundings; It is lovely, peaceful. Dalradian's plans are a threat to all this. It has been designated an AONB for over 50 years, more designation in the recent council community plan recognise it's importance and special character. These designations must be defended, Dalradian's plans do not align with the character and beauty of this area.

### **Legacy**

We have great respect for all the land has provided us and our neighbours down through the generations. We also have great respect for all those who went before us and who cared for and maintained the environment around us ensuring that our land and rivers maintained their good condition so species like the Fresh Pearl Water Mussel could continue to live here when it has lost its habitat elsewhere. Their respect for our area has left us with a great legacy which we can appreciate and enjoy and pass on as we got it. We want our children to be able to inherit our land and house, to continue to live in Greencastle and be actively part of a happy connected community here to continue through the generations as we have until now.

### **Stress**

This application and Dalradian's activity has brought untold stress to our area. A once tight knit community is now fragmented. On a personal level the stress of standing up for what I believe in has left me open to ridicule and bullying. Dalradian have been about since 2016.

[REDACTED] Evidence shows the negative impact stress can have on us. I will be much less impacted than others but

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<sup>2</sup> 'Highlighting the economic benefits of AONBs, the Minister said "Research from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board shows that landscapes are one of the key reasons why visitors choose to come to Northern Ireland.'" 'Of those planning to visit Ireland, beautiful landscapes and scenery are the main attractor across all markets (34% of those interested in visiting), comparatively of highest importance to Europeans (Germany 46%, France 44%, Italy 39%)... Great culture and rich history are further attractors, important particularly to visitors from the US, Canada and Spain,... Alice Mansergh, Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, said: "The sentiment tracker undertaken with RED C highlights strengths that the island of Ireland can play to in order to win visitors – our epic scenery, great culture, history and heritage, and the sense of exploration that we offer."...'  
<https://www.tourismireland.com/news-and-press-releases/press-releases/article/tourism-ireland-s-latest-research-reveals-what-compels-overseas-visitors-to-choose-the-island-of-ireland>



- As the effects may not show straight away. What measures will be put in place to deal with possible pollution, negative impacts etc further down the line after the mine closes and Dalradian gone? And when will these extend to?
- Another issue is what happens if long term health is affected in the locality? With 24 heavy metals being released into our rivers and the DSF standing like a monster spreading harmful toxins over the village we would like to know is there a plan if there are increased health issues locally over the next 25 - 50 years, will this be monitored and will these people be compensated?
- Are all these closure scenarios considered within the financial provision?

### **Landscape and Visual Impact**

The site is 997 hectares and surface infrastructure comprises 144 hectares. The project falls within the Sperrins AONB and the South Sperrin Local Landscape Character Area 24. The ES Addendum for the mine proposal recognises that landscape and visual impact remain significant.

Visual impact of the plans may disrupt our sense of place, the same view we've had our entire life changed forever. Viewpoints provide by dalradian show how imposing these plans are, we feel especially for people near the viewpoint 4 on Figure 9.4h, their view will constantly be changing, there is no reliability, no sense of comfort from the view, man made change is forced on you rather than the calming changes nature brings leading to emotional distress. I know when I am driving home to the Sperrins and reach viewpoints unchanged from my childhood the sense of calm that comes over me. We all need that in our busy lives. Moving home to Greencastle for us is a desire to leave the town and the constant noise and changing viewpoints. There is new development [REDACTED] in Omagh all the time and it leaves me feeling uneasy. Moving to Greencastle we will have longer commutes, less amenities close by but we hope to have unspoilt views, quiet surroundings, that sense of calm looking out our window with the same view and the only thing changing is nature - colours changing, the arrival of new lambs. That reconnection with nature will benefit us. Dalradian's plans go against all that anyone expects when choosing to live somewhere like Greencastle, it changes the place forever.

Figure 6.3b showing the view from Oaghmonicroy Hill is one that doesn't seem to be as significant but for our family it is probably the most significant. The top of this hill has been unchanged for my entire life but the dry stack facility will be visible from year 5 according to the Landscape and visual impact assessment and visualisations. I grew up on Oaghmonicroy hill and have walked it and the surrounding areas all my life and now walk it with my children. We love exploring where we live as I did growing up with my own siblings, parents and grandparents. The first photo below is a photo taken in 2023 looking over from Oaghmonicroy hill at the view which the DSF will disrupt.<sup>4</sup> This planning application is full of disruption for local

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<sup>4</sup> "Solastalgia" (Albrecht, 2006) has been used to explain the emotional distress caused by environmental change. - Albrecht, G. (2006). Solastalgia. *Alternatives Journal* 32(4/5), pp.34-36

people and visitors to the area from the smaller impacts felt by those further away to the massive life changing impacts felt by those right beside the planned site.



Figure 9.1a, viewpoint 1 is possibly the one that really highlights the scale of Dalradians plans with their DSF. This DSF does not fit in any way to the character of the area with no field patterns, no variation in colour, it is very clearly a manmade structure. It is such an imposing, threatening structure and would be a constant reminder of the destruction of our area, meaning that people cannot escape from the impact of these plans. There is a management plan for building in the countryside, local people have difficulty getting houses passed that fit in visually with the character of the area, two storey houses sometimes changed to bungalows, how could this DSF pass this same scrutiny that local people face for building a home - it wouldn't! These rural area protections and further protections within an AONB need to be followed, otherwise if Dalradian's plans are passed how could local authority rule any smaller development out. It will make a mockery of these important designations.

Electric line, baseline photos vs what it looks like when eclectic line added - negatively impacts view of an untouched area, no longer an unspoilt nature of the area.

The proposal is simply unacceptable in terms of visual impact within the AONB and in particular in this part of the AONB.

### **Resistance**

Research that has been carried out around the world on place-based resistance to extractivism, in particular mining (Martines-Alier, 2001; Temper 2019) have highlighted that you cannot put an economic label on place based relationships. Just as in the Sperrins our relationship involves emotions, memories and stories, no desktop survey or single visit to assess the cultural heritage

can explain the importance of our area to us. We resist Dalradian's plans, we want to protect our place, to protect our health and well-being.<sup>5</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The evidence strongly supports rejecting Dalradian's application due to the damage these plans would have on the sense of place, belonging and relationships people living here have with the landscape and each other in the Sperrins.

This area is a cultural landscape that has an integrity and while the mine is not going to be built on top of the Ogham Stone or Dún Ruadh it will have a negative impact on the integrity of our area as an area of Significant Archaeological Interest as designated by FODC.

WWF the leading global environmental charity say 'Spending time connecting with nature is brilliant for our mental wellbeing. It can reduce stress and anxiety, lift our mood and help our minds rest.'<sup>6</sup> We are witnessing a mental health crisis in the UK, now is the time to preserve our unspoilt areas of nature, not destroy them and take the chance of environmental damage which will lead to even more mental health issues dealt with mostly by those directly affected by the mine, those living locally and not those set to make a profit from this operation who know nothing about or do not care about this area. Our right to live and grow up in a healthy environment with clean air and water, without conflict, must be considered above the rights of a company whose primary responsibility is to create value for its shareholders and investors. The precautionary principle is necessary to ensure our environment is not damaged irrevocably.

Throughout this process it has become apparent that our planning system is flawed and we have serious concerns about the capacity of our statutory bodies to make a decision on this case and then to monitor Dalradian, they have failed before and they will again, unfortunately the next time may be detrimental given the vast scale of this application and toxins involved.

In conclusion we as a family urge you to refuse permission for the application as it is clearly not an appropriate location for many reasons, health, environmental, cultural and other.

In summary this Application must be refused.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Inevitably, the process of colonisation, whereby indigenous peoples throughout the world have 'been consistently, often violently, dispossessed of their cultures, languages and lands, not to mention their very lives' (May 2002:17), resulted in a tradition of native resistance in Ireland' (Mac Ionnrachtaigh 2013:60)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wwf.org.uk/our-reports/pfn-evidence>

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