

# Statement of Case

On behalf of



## Curraghinalt Project (Dalradian)

This statement of case is being submitted in response to the Planning Appeals Commission decision to conduct a Public Inquiry into the Curraghinalt Project (Dalradian) which combines a number of conjoined applications as detailed below:-

### **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

- Issue 1 - Stress - First Doraville and now Dalradian
- Issue 2 - Well
- Issue 3 - Community issues
- Issue 4 - Health & Pollution

### Conclusion

### Introduction

This statement of case represents our family, [REDACTED]

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

We feel blessed to have been able to rear our family in such an **idyllic, tranquil, unspoilt area** with a close knit supportive community. All that changed however from 2014 onwards when outside threats of industrialisation of our area of outstanding natural beauty were introduced and which have since put massive pressure on our community, our way of life as we knew it and on the social cohesiveness we had been accustomed to.

We became aware in 2014 that SSE planned to construct the biggest wind farm the North had ever seen with over 30 massive wind turbines on blanket bog at Doraville which was less than 1km away from our home. This brought untold stress and worry from 2014 onwards about our AONB, an environmentally sensitive, culturally and archaeologically important area. We live in an unspoiled area, how could the North's biggest wind farm be on the table when local families have difficulty getting planning permission as the design doesn't fit with the landscape.

We had hopes from around 2017 after the Sperrins Future Search event that the positive sustainable development of the Sperrins was on the cards, but we were worried that this wind farm would **ruin our sustainable development opportunities for tourism and for locals** in our area. Our **Dark sky night reserve was under threat**, a massive recognition of what we locals had appreciated for so long - unspoilt skies and views day and night!

Thankfully the application was turned down. It was acknowledged that this attempt at industrialisation would have had too big an impact on the locality and the lives of people who live there. We had to wait until 26th October 2020 for this result - 6 years of stress, our children worried about whether they should build near home while under this threat<sup>1</sup> - Lives on hold in many ways and many hours/days/weeks lost trying to protect our area.

Unfortunately life in the Sperrins seems like groundhog day at times and here we are fighting to protect our AONB again. [REDACTED] local campaigner against Doraville wind farm had said, "You can't replace what's there. It took 5,000 years to roll the blanket bog, you can't replace that and you can't replicate it." Yet here we are again with Blanket Bog on the other side of the parish under threat, at a time when reducing our carbon footprint is of more importance than ever!

Prior to 2014, naively, we believed that our public bodies would protect this valuable asset - the Sperrins. We learned a valuable lesson then and again at the pre-inquiry meeting that unfortunately it doesn't matter how many documents, plans, designations there are that recognise the importance of this area - peatland, rivers, flora, fauna, community, dark sky reserve; it's all left to the local people of the Sperrins to protect our area and hold outside influences to account! We seem to be the only ones who fully respect the area, every last inch of what we are set to lose that our ancestors gave to us in pristine condition. More time lost, time from both inquiries and the long struggles that we will not get back, precious time we could have used enjoying and sustainably developing the area instead of fighting to protect it!

Since we first heard about Dalradian's plans back around 2016, and since the full truth came out thanks to local groups breaking down the jargon and the cartoon posters, and reading through the mountains of paperwork, our family have dealt with even more stress and worry about what we and our community may face if Dalradian's planning application is permitted. Just to make that clear to you, that is **stress and worry from 2014-2020 regarding Doraville wind farm, and then added stress from 2016 until present** regarding Dalradian - 10 years with the threat of this industrial destruction hanging over us, constantly in the back of our heads, in conversations locally, with Dalradian's plans especially slowly creating a split in the community, hopefully not irrevocable.

This has been an unwanted stress, people come to our area to escape their stressful lives, to walk the mountains at the weekend, to go for a cycle at Davagh, to walk the ways of our ancestors on the Green Road. We don't expect to have to deal with stressful events like Public Inquiries to defend the rights of nature lovers to visit our area or to defend our own homes from industrialisation. Stress only brings negative impacts and has even been shown to affect the babies in the womb whose generation ironically we are fighting for!<sup>2</sup>

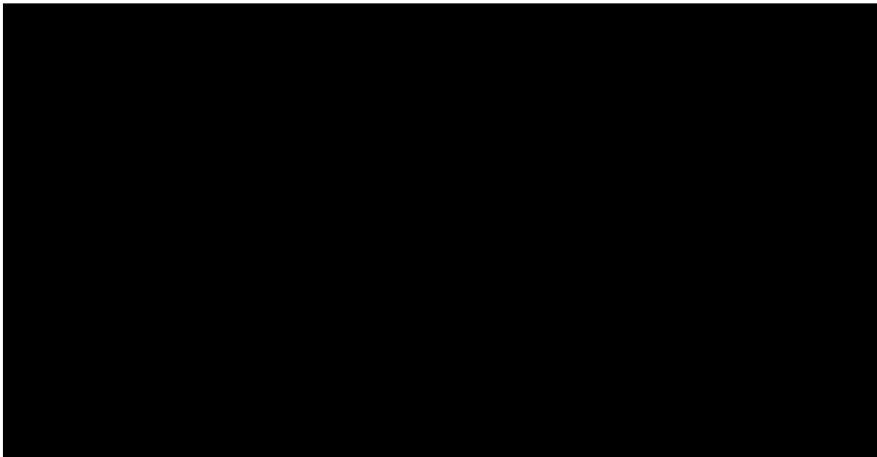
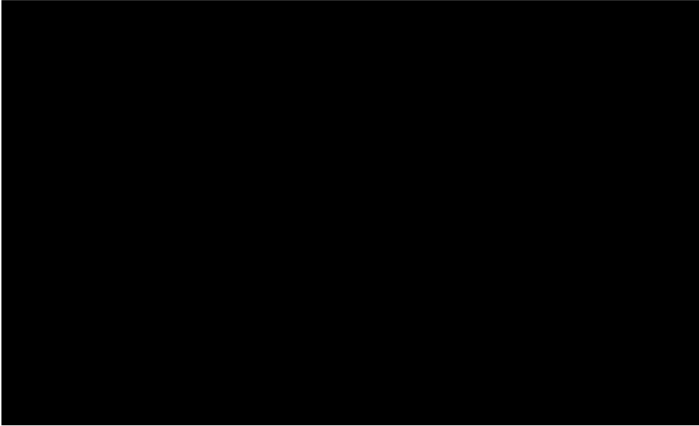
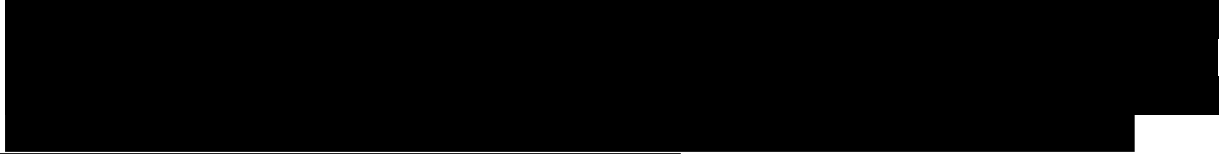
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<sup>1</sup> Stressed about noise pollution, impact on house and site valuations due to proximity to wind farm etc

<sup>2</sup> 'Climate change affects humans before they are born, Aldern discovered. Queens College CUNY psychology lecturer Yoka Nomura was investigating the effects of prenatal stress on the unborn. She was particularly interested in the impact of environmental stress on genes, a factor linked to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and schizophrenia. Then Hurricane Sandy - the largest Atlantic storm on record - struck New York in 2012.

A subset of her patients were pregnant women. A decade later, Nomura found that girls who were exposed to Sandy in the womb experienced 20-fold increase in anxiety and 30-fold increase in

## Well



***Image 2: Our 2nd well (yellow circle) in relation to Dalradian's plans, 1.5km approx***

██████████ 1% of water in the North which comes from private water supplies, we are lucky to have such a clean and reliable source of drinking water.<sup>3</sup> Growing up in these glens not everyone was as fortunate and many homes had to rely on spouts that came from a spring ██████████

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depression later in life. Boys had 6-fold and 20-fold increased risks of ADHD and conduct disorder respectively.' Page L. *The Weight of Nature: How a Changing Climate Changes Our Minds, Brains and Bodies* By Clayton Page Aldern. Allen Lane. 2024. £25.00 (hb). 336 pp. ISBN 978-0241597378. The British Journal of Psychiatry. 2024;225(1):297-297. doi:10.1192/bjp.2024.103 - <https://www.iema.net/engage/transform/features/hot-heads-the-new-health-crisis/>

<sup>3</sup> 'Private water supplies are any supplies of water not provided by the public water supplier. In Northern Ireland less than one per cent of water comes from private water supplies.'<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/private-water-supplies>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] supply at risk of contamination, of it stopping its entire course or of the Water being altered in such a way that it is not sufficient [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

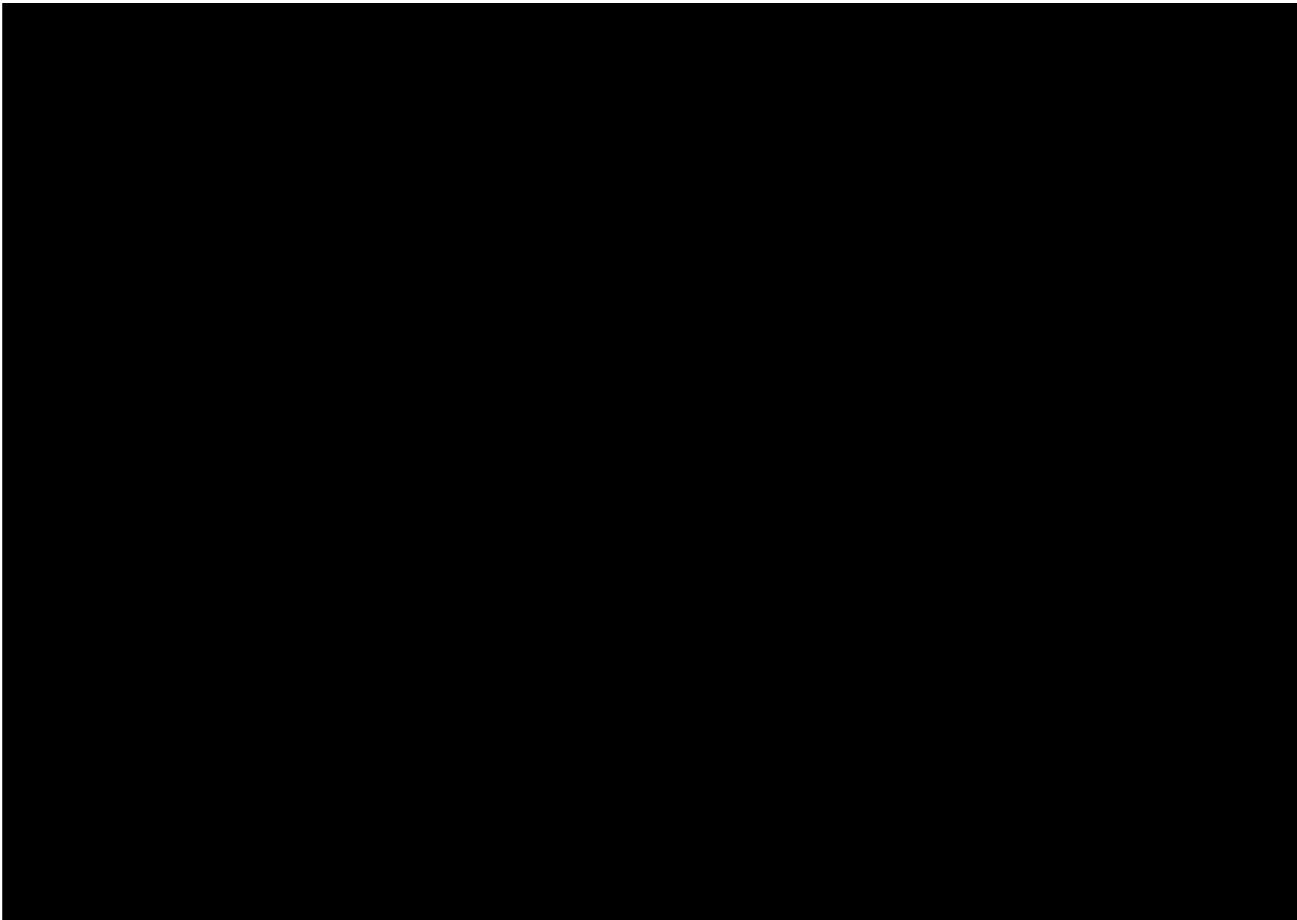
Dalradian have not included our wells in their map of *Recorded Groundwater Abstraction Usage*, see Image 3 below where we have added our abstractions. They say they have included private abstractions which are,

'located within a conservative potential piezometric drawdown distance from the mine extraction boundary, based on the most impacted deeper bedrock unit.'

We are extremely worried by the use of the words 'conservative' and 'most impacted' as this would imply that Dalradian are manipulating the information to show the minimal impact of their plans. Our wells may well be affected, and in fact our well at home may be of more importance as many of these other sources are located in areas which also have access to mains water, therefore the impact on our family could be far from minimal.

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<sup>4</sup> Other families elsewhere have highlighted how expensive it can be to get a new connection in a very rural area:  
<https://www.farminglife.com/country-and-farming/tyrone-farming-family-quoted-up-to-ps300000-for-water-supply-connection-3436122>



**IMAGE 3: Taken from Page 26 GROUNDWATER IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE CURRAGHINALT PROJECT, COUNTY TYRONE, NORTHERN IRELAND (GIACP), we have added in pin symbols [REDACTED]**

The fact that Dalradian have not even included these wells, especially the one within 'Phase 2 Area of Interest for Private Abstractions' raises questions about how much research they have done into the impact on private abstractions locally and how well we can rely on the research they have provided in their application. This was also raised by other statutory bodies in their feedback to Dalradian where they noted that not all information about private abstractions was complete, eg, depths unknown.

On 'Table 5-3: Potential receptors and protection measures from key legislation or guidance' in GIACP it states that, '...there is a requirement for local authorities to adopt a risk-based drinking water safety planning approach to private water supplies.' As a family we do not feel confident that the risks have been identified, assessed or prioritised appropriately.

As our groundwater bodies are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas we want to know how our Drinking Water will be protected and our right to water that we depend on will be ensured.<sup>5</sup> This leaves us with many questions:

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<sup>5</sup> NIEA water management unit, consultation response dated 24 February 2016 states that there are currently no groundwater protection zones delineated in NI, as groundwater is not utilized for public

- Dalradian's mitigation measures include, 'Monitoring of used abstraction wells in terms of usage (pumping rate) and water quality'<sup>6</sup> - Who will monitor the wells to see if they are being affected? **We as a family would not accept Dalradian doing it, we would want a separate independent body to ensure reliability and not manipulation of results.**
- Another mitigation measure, 'For impacted private abstractions should the dynamic water level fall sufficiently such that use is impaired, a new water supply will be offered by DGL.'
  - Who decides what is sufficient change?
  - Who decides that that change means use is impaired, is there a scale?
  - Will it be a well that's offered? How long will it take to have the well done and connected? What guarantees will be given along with the new well?
  - As far as we are aware our supply is protected on a first come first served basis in that our supply takes precedence over any abstraction that starts after ours began and they should not negatively affect ours in any way.
- If Water supply is contaminated, how will Dalradian compensate us for the impact in the short and long term?
- If Dalradian were to sell up, will there be any guarantees that agreed mitigation / compensation measures will be attached to the sale?

Dalradian has stated, 'When dewatering activities cease at the end of operations, the groundwater impacts will reverse and groundwater levels will return to near natural conditions around 15 years post-closure.' The words 'near natural conditions' don't give any specific measurement, what is near natural according to Dalradian? Also this statement leads to questions about longer term impacts as the return to 'near natural conditions' isn't predicted to happen until 'around' 15 years post-closure. This vague language seems like an intentional effort to hide the true impact, does around 15 extend to 20?<sup>7</sup>

- As the effects may not show straight away. What measures will be put in place to deal with possible water pollution, negative impacts on wells etc further down the line after the mine closes and Dalradian gone? And when will these extend to?
- Are all these closure scenarios considered within the financial provision?

Another issue we have questions around is the accuracy of the information given that the information included is hypothetical and 'based on models', eg:

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supply (apart from Rathlin Island). However, all groundwater bodies (except Neagh groundwater body) are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas under Article 7 of the WFD (2000/60/EC).

<sup>6</sup> Also mentioned elsewhere, 'Monitoring of groundwater abstractions will be offered to private land wondrous once planning permission is granted. Access permitting, samples and well depths will be tested at least quarterly during the two year construction period.'

<sup>7</sup> Other examples of vague language we feel does not guarantee our water source will be protected. Unlikely does not mean zero chance: 'The nearest operational abstraction is some ~ 900m distance from the portal and decline. Due to distance, drawdown impacts to nearby abstractions or watercourses are highly **unlikely**.' pg40 GIACP

'Only abstractions that are located inside the cone of piezometric depression of layer 5 of the groundwater **model** are assessed directly using the model, as there is **no risk** of drawdown to those located beyond this area.' Pg63 GIACP

We feel that Dalradian is misleading us and cannot guarantee that there is 'no risk' of drawdown to those located beyond the area, models cannot accurately reflect reality, there are too many unknown variables.

Secondly there is mention throughout the application of mine design variation and how models such as the groundwater impact model is based on a different design to the application mineral extraction area.<sup>8</sup> Again the assessment is described as 'conservative'. We must accept that the information cannot be accurately predicted and is no more than guesswork.

### Community Issues

Population and housing are issues that are extremely important in a small community like Greencastle. We are worried that Dalradian's plans will affect the value of properties, availability of house insurance and in the long run our children's chance to make a home for themselves locally. Living beside a 24 hour gold mining operation is not what will attract people to stay in our AONB. Being able to build a life and home here helps ensure we continue to have a strong and thriving community.

Houses = people = families = thriving community (*Youthclub, church, sports clubs, schools*)

People with a connection to the area want to give back to the community. In our house alone the majority of us are very active in the community, especially the GAA club which lies at the heart of community activity.

**[REDACTED]** Irish youth club **[REDACTED]** Volunteerism is the lifeblood of most activities in Greencastle, contributing to a healthy community ensuring the wellbeing of all from young and old. With volunteering on the decrease across Ireland and the UK it is more important than ever to keep volunteers like these living locally.<sup>9</sup>

Community spirit is nurtured and maintained by good community connection, unfortunately since Dalradian arrived there has been a split in the community which has led to families and friendships having deep division, a division that wouldn't be here if Dalradian weren't here. No wellbeing plan can combat deep hurtful divisions and in many cases these divisions can never be healed and will leave a lasting impact on these friends and family. If Dalradian's plans are

<sup>8</sup> 'The application area for mineral extraction covers a wider extent than the indicated resource estimate to allow for changes in mine design, as the understanding of the mineralisation will improve during mining (as shown in Figure 6-8). This means the application mineral extraction area extends further than the initial mine design used for the groundwater impact modelling described here. For the most part, due to the location of the receptors, the initial mine design incorporated into the groundwater model presents a conservative assessment...' Pg67/8 GIACP

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.civilsociety.co.uk/news/small-charities-hit-hardest-by-volunteering-falling-to-record-low-say-researchers.html>

<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2024/06/Exploring-Post-Pandemic-Trends-in-Volunteer-Participation-and-Wellbeing-2024.pdf>

passed we fear more division will lead to less activities taking place and our community worse off as a result with the more vulnerable groups in our society paying for Dalradian's greed.

Dalradian requires huge supplies of water and electricity (equivalent electricity as 14,000 houses annually). In a letter dated 4 February 2016 NI Water stated, 'This proposed development will not have a significant impact on existing NI Water Infrastructure.' We would like clarity as to how much exactly a 'significant impact' equates to and is this physical infrastructure or supply to houses that is being referenced. Can Dalradian, NI Water and NIE give us a guarantee that this will not lead to shortages in our own supply and that of the wider community, especially our community hall which already has issues with water supply and pressure.

### **Health & Pollution**

Another major worry is pollution to our air, land and water which local people have kept clean for generations and which we depend on for our lives and livelihoods.

Salmonoids have been detected in Pollanroe and Curraghinalt Burn by NIEA and yet Dalradian has described these waterways as being low ecological value and hasn't undertaken a specific survey as part of their EIA. Dalradian talk about their economic value but the economic loss of polluting our rivers is also significant and perhaps irreversible!<sup>10</sup> Even without polluting the rivers, the removal of peat may negatively impact the hydrological environment and affect resident fish species.<sup>11</sup> Can Dalradian guarantee that there our rivers and the flora and fauna within them and along them won't be negatively affected?

Dalradian themselves have acknowledged that human error may lead to pollution and with 3.3 millions of litres of diesel to be used on the mine site annually, this would be a major pollution incident for an area like ours.<sup>12</sup> Again we want to highlight that guarantees cannot be given and the application uses vague language where pollution is only limited if another variable is ensured, in this case **if** it's cleaned up efficiently and **if** spill control plans are followed.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> '...a failure of the MWF resulting in tailings and waste rock entering the surface water environment could potentially result in irreversible damage to not only the Owenreagh River but an unknown extent of the Foyle system if material was to travel downstream. A 1993 Public Enquiry (Extraction of Gold at Cavanacaw, Omagh) fishing stock was given a value of £18million which was not challenged.'

PAO718616\_Foyle Carlingford Irish Lights Commiss\_Consultation Response\_53202111211.pdf

<sup>11</sup> 'There is some concern in relation to the volumes of peat proposed to be removed and the subsequent impact on the hydrological environment, peat bogs absorb and retain large volumes of water flow, the removal of such may increase the velocity of surface water runoff in times of flood and affect resident fish species.'

' PAO718616\_Foyle Carlingford Irish Lights Commiss\_Consultation Response\_53202111211.pdf

<sup>12</sup> 'Potential risks to groundwater during the construction phase are mainly limited to groundwater drawdown around the portal or accidental spills from fuels related construction plant...

...During the operational phase the main potential risks to groundwater from infrastructure area development relate to risks of seepages and pollution from the DSF and related storage ponds or chemical or fuel storage areas.' pg34/35 GIACP

<sup>13</sup> 'Fuel spills outside designated bunded fuel filling areas. These are likely to be small in volume and unlikely to cause widespread groundwater pollution if responded to efficiently. The site should form a spill control plans in accordance with guidelines PPG21: Spill Incident Response Planning (NIEA & SEPA, 2009) and PPG 22: Dealing with spills (NIEA & SEPA , 2011); 'pg.93 GIACP

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?

## **Conclusion**

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.

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.

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, and for us the main reason is the very important commodity of water which is extremely important to our very survival and ability to live and farm on the land on which our ancestors have lived, cared for and maintained for generations - **Water is life!**