

Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Dalradain Gold Limited – Mineral Prospecting Licences Application References: *MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19*

NI Water Response sent 29.11.2021 – Protecting drinking water quality, quantity and NI Water assets

Protecting drinking water quality, quantity and NI Water assets

The area(s) under consideration for the Mineral Prospecting Licences Application References: MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19 is within the drinking water catchment areas for a number of NI Water's Water Treatment Works (WTWs) and drinking water abstraction points. Drinking water catchments feed NI Water abstractions which supply water to water treatment works for the public drinking water supply. These drinking water catchments have been designated as a Drinking Water Protected Area (DWPA) under Article 7 of the Water Framework Directive. The objective of the Water Framework Directive is to ensure that no activity results in the deterioration of waters within the DWPA. Any activity or development carried out within a DWPA must demonstrate measures to ensure water quality and quantity are protected.

The primary issues of concern for NI Water from the Mineral Prospecting Licences Application References: MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19 are the potential for adverse impact on drinking water quality and quantity to our customers within the areas supplied from water treatment works supplied with water abstracted within these drinking water catchments and DWPA's, as well as the potential for environmental damage.

NI Water is required to ensure that any activity within a drinking water catchment does not affect the ability of NI Water to meet its regulatory requirements. Water Treatment Works (WTWs) are designed to treat the specific parameters of the raw water source they receive (i.e. the specific chemical, biological and other characteristics of natural, untreated water). If the characteristics of the raw water change or deteriorate, it can affect the ability of the works to supply drinking water to customers at the required standards.

The activities and processes involved in mineral prospecting and any subsequent mining activities poses potential risks to the quality of the water environment and adversely affect the quality and quantity of raw water abstracted for the public drinking water supply. Sources of contamination to the water environment and watercourses include: the risk for release of water containing heavy metals and other pollutants from the operational activities; poor management of chemicals and oils etc. resulting in



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surface spillages of chemicals, diesel and other materials; sediment run-off through soil or peat erosion; poor site design and construction and therefore subsequent risk to the environment, surface water and groundwater. Any potential pollution risk which could affect water quality must be considered and mitigation measures implemented to prevent deterioration in water quality and pollution incidents. Any measures implemented must be regularly checked, maintained and improved if pollution occurs.

The quantities of water needed during the operational activities could potentially have an impact on local water resource availability. This water demand may be required to be met from the public water supply, in which case NI Water will have to assess the availability of the water supply and the ability of the existing infrastructure to provide a water supply, or it could be direct abstraction from surface water or an aquifer, which may have an impact on the volume of water available for our raw water abstraction requirements and water resource planning.

Therefore, it is essential that robust measures are put in place to ensure that the quality and quantity of the raw water that we abstract is protected at all times to ensure that there is no risk to either the quality or sufficiency of the public drinking water supply.

NI Water requires unequivocal assurance that there will be no impact on the water quality and quantity of the public drinking water supply from the mineral prospecting operations throughout the process from appraisal, development and construction and any subsequent mining operations carried out.

1. Protecting Drinking Water

The impacts of the proposed development to NI Water can be considered in four broad categories – water quality, water quantity, infrastructure and waste water treatment.

1.1 Impact on water quality

The primary risk of concern for NI Water is that associated with contamination of the raw water source(s) used for abstraction to our WTWs which could impact on the quality of the public drinking water supply. NI Water must be



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given unequivocal assurance and it must be robustly demonstrated that there will be no risk to the quality of the public drinking water supply.

Contamination of surface waters by chemicals used can be caused either via the operational activities associated with the mineral prospecting or through surface spillages of chemicals and other materials, sediment run-off, soil or peat erosion. Therefore, there is significant potential risk that the operations could cause deterioration in the quality or change the characteristics of raw water which could impact on the ability of the WTW to effectively and adequately treat the water to meet the requirements of the drinking water regulations.

When peat is present within the proposed area of activity an assessment must be carried out on the potential release of colour, dissolved organic carbon and total organic carbon to any receiving water course as a result of changes to hydrology and/or physical disturbance. Any risk identified must be mitigated against stringent pollution prevention control measures put in place to prevent sediment release to any receiving water course. This should cover the construction and post-construction phases.

An assessment of any forestry activity, including felling, planting or other activity, likely to affect the drinking water catchment must be carried out on the potential release of colour, dissolved organic carbon and total organic carbon as a result of changes to hydrology and/or physical disturbance. Any risk identified must be mitigated against stringent pollution prevention control measures put in place to prevent sediment release to any receiving water course. This should cover the construction and post-construction phases.

NI Water must be provided with unequivocal assurance that:-

- Chemicals used are subject to approval by environmental regulators and should be classified as non-hazardous



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- On-site storage of chemicals is managed by proper site practices and appropriate regulation to minimise the risks to the environment and public health.
- Stringent pollution prevention control measures are in place to protect the drinking water sources from spillages of any potential pollutants, surface runoff and the potential release of colour, dissolved organic carbon and total organic carbon.
- Discharge consent conditions set by NIEA are appropriate for a DWPA, to protect the safety of the public drinking water supply and drinking water quality, and that the consent conditions are complied with.

The developer must provide details to NI water on the proposed water quality sampling programme and analysis in the vicinity of the site and in any downstream and potentially impacted water courses within the DWPA. This water quality analysis must be made available to NI Water as requested on an ongoing basis.

Any spillages of oils, chemicals or any other potential pollutants used or stored on the site or sediment run-off which reach a watercourse could very quickly travel to the drinking water abstraction point. Stringent pollution prevention control measures will need to be specifically developed to protect the drinking water source from spillages of any potential pollutants. Any spillages to a watercourse must be reported immediately to NIEA and to NI Water.

1.2 Impact on water quantity

NI Water requires unequivocal assurance that there will be no long term risk of damaging the hydrology of the area which could potentially impact on the water quantity available at the NI Water WTW abstraction point(s) and therefore the sufficiency and security of supply to our customers.



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It must also be robustly demonstrated and unequivocal assurance provided that there will be no risk for loss of the raw water source for abstraction due to contamination of the surface water supply. Loss of the raw water source would result in the loss of supply to our customers in the WTW supply area.

The quantities of water needed, if required to be supplied by NI Water, could have a significant impact on local water resource availability. The developer is therefore encouraged to engage with NI Water as early as possible to establish their needs can be met without impacting the security of supply to existing customers.

1.3 Impact on NI Water infrastructure

If the water required in the process is requested to be supplied by NI Water there may be constraints on the ability of existing infrastructure to provide the volume of water required for operational processes. Whether or not this would be an option would be determined by the ability of the existing water assets and infrastructure to supply the additional water required. There may be significant capital investment required to enable the water supply demand to be met.

An assessment would also be required to be undertaken regarding the risk to our underground assets and infrastructure from any potential seismic activity induced by the mining processes.

1.4 Impact on waste water treatment

NI Water may be asked to accept discharge of contaminated effluents recovered from the operational processes involved in the operational activities.

Whether or not this would be an option would be determined by the size of the



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receiving works and extent to which waste waters contain NORM (naturally occurring radioactive materials). It is unlikely that the wastewater treatment works will be able to manage waste water from hydraulic fracturing process.

Information in relation to the expected volumes and chemical and biological composition of waste water as well as preferred disposal routes must be provided to NI Water.

2. Regulatory requirements

- 2.1 The regulations relating to the quality of drinking water supplied by NI Water are The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017. These regulations are derived from the European Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC.
- 2.2 WTWs are designed to treat the specific parameters of the raw water source they receive (i.e. the specific chemical, biological and other characteristics of natural, untreated water). If the characteristics of the raw water change or deteriorate, it can affect the ability of the works to supply drinking water to customers at the required standards.
- 2.3 NI Water is required to ensure that any activity within a drinking water catchment does not affect the ability of NI Water to meet its regulatory requirements. The proposed development and mining activities poses a potential emerging hazard for drinking water and therefore NI Water is required under the drinking water regulations to consider the impact in our regulatory risk assessments. The risk assessment must demonstrate that impacts on drinking water and drinking water sources are fully taken into



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account and that there are robust measures in place to ensure that the water supplied to our customers is a safe, clean and wholesome supply.

- 2.4 Drinking water catchments feed NI Water abstractions which supply water to WTWs. Under Article 7 of the Water Framework Directive, waters used for the abstraction of drinking water are designated as Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPAs). The objective of the Water Framework Directive is to ensure that no activity results in the deterioration of waters within the DWPA. If an activity falls within a DWPA or drinking water catchment, it is essential that water quality and quantity are protected.

3. Specific precautions for drinking water protection during mineral prospecting operations

- 3.1 A detailed, site specific Construction Method Statement including e.g. Construction Environmental Management Plan, Risk Assessment, Pollution Prevention and Contingency Plan must be completed and made available to NI Water prior to the commencement of any works.
- 3.2 Where possible, infrastructure and activities associated with the development should be located outside of the drinking water catchment area. If this can be demonstrated to be impracticable then all infrastructure and activities should be located at least 100m from any watercourse where possible and a minimum of 50m distant where 100m can be demonstrated to be undeliverable.
- 3.3 Any potential effect on the hydrology of the area resulting from the construction and operation of the proposed development must be assessed.



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This must include an assessment of effects on natural drainage patterns, base flows/volume, retention/run off rates and potential changes to water quantity. Any required mitigation measures and proposed monitoring must also be detailed and included in any required Environmental Impact Statement or Environmental Appraisal.

- 3.4 When constructing roads, drainage ditches and trenches, drainage should not be directed into adjacent catchments but retained within the existing catchment. Measures must be put in place to prevent the risk for runoff and sediments to reach watercourses during road and site access construction.
- 3.5 Any potential pollution risk which could affect water quality must be considered and mitigation measures implemented to prevent deterioration in water quality and pollution incidents. This includes sediment run-off, soil or peat erosion, management of chemicals and oils, etc. This must be considered for operations at all stages of development including pre- and post- construction.
- 3.6 Mitigation measures to prevent pollution to watercourses must be outlined and adopted in the Construction Method Statement/Construction Environmental Management Plan prior to work starting onsite. Any measures implemented must be regularly checked, maintained and improved, if pollution occurs.
- 3.7 Watercourses that feed into any watercourses or reservoirs that NI Water abstracts from must be considered when developing new road or access infrastructure. Any crossing of these watercourses should be kept to a minimum. Pollution prevention measures should be put in place at each crossing point and silt traps, or equivalent, should be installed at regular



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intervals to minimise the risk from pollution. Once constructed, site roads and access routes should be regularly maintained to ensure minimal erosion, and hence run-off and pollution, from the road surface.

- 3.8 No refuelling or storage of fuel or hazardous materials should take place within the drinking water catchment area. [If this can be demonstrated to be impracticable, then the appropriate Pollution Prevention Guidelines must be followed. There must be dedicated oil storage areas created. Spill kits must be located within all vehicles, plant and high risk areas. Waste storage, concrete preparation and all washout areas should not be within the drinking water catchment area. If this can be demonstrated to be impracticable then these should be in dedicated areas 50m from a watercourse and designed to be contained and to prevent escape of materials / runoff to the environment.
- 3.9 The proposed method of managing welfare and waste-water facilities should be detailed.
- 3.10 Construction and Environmental Management Plans, Pollution Prevention and Contingency Plan and associated documents should include the NI Water Waterline Number **03457 440088** and the local NI Water contact details.

NI Water is the responsible for providing all public water in Northern Ireland. The safety of drinking water is a paramount public health concern for NI Water.

We acknowledge that there are inherent risks associated with any activity of this type and scale which need to be fully understood, regulated and if possible mitigated. It is therefore essential that NI Water is kept informed throughout the process and that we are provided opportunities and time to engage with regulators and other statutory



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agencies to ensure that development plans are fully understood, the associated risks are addressed and that the protection of drinking water quality, water resources and the environment are considered as the primary priority.

NI Water must be informed of all measures being put in place to mitigate any risks identified that may either directly or indirectly contaminate surface waters or provide pathways for contaminants that already exist in the environment.

It is essential that NI Water is provided with unequivocal assurance that the quality and quantity of the public drinking water supply in this area will not be impacted from any mineral prospecting development within the DWPAs.



Department for the Economy
Minerals and Petroleum Branch
Room 9
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB

04 December 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Mineral Prospecting Licences MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19 for Dalradian Gold Limited

Loughs Agency is the statutory body charged with the conservation, protection and development of inland fisheries within the Foyle and Carlingford systems, the promotion of development of Loughs Foyle and Carlingford, and catchments for commercial and recreational purposes in respect of marine, fisheries and aquaculture issues and the development of marine tourism.

Loughs Agency would like to make the following comments with respect to the work programme included in Annex B mineral prospecting overview. There is limited information pertaining to the methodology of works. Loughs Agency recommend methodology is provided to relevant statutory bodies

prior to any operational activities, carried out under the licences, commencing.

We would like to take this opportunity to advise on the potential impact that works of this scale and nature can have on water courses, water quality and migratory and other fish species. Such impacts could include:

- Obstruction to upstream and downstream migration both during and after extraction activities
- Disturbance of spawning beds during extraction – timing of works is critical
- Increases in silt and sediment loads
- Point source pollution incidents
- Drainage issues
- Erosion issues
- Loss of baseflow in surface water environment as a result of abstraction, especially during high temperatures
- Degradation of aesthetic landscape quality and subsequent effects on tourism

The Foyle catchment supports populations of resident and migratory salmonid fish species as well as lamprey and eel and other fish species. The Owenkillew River and its tributaries is designated an SAC with regard to its populations of Atlantic Salmon and Freshwater Pearl Mussel. The Foyle and Tributaries SAC is designated for Atlantic Salmon. Loughs Agency would urge the Department for the Economy to take full

consideration of the fisheries importance before issuing any approvals under its legislation. Any operational phase of this activity must not result in ecological damage to the fisheries ecology to any river within the Foyle catchment. Loughs Agency would expect a Habitats Regulations Assessment is required prior to any operational works under the licence commencing, to ensure the conservation and protection of fisheries interests and designated features is considered.

It is an offence to remove or disturb any material, including sand or gravel from the bed of any freshwater river within the Foyle and Carlingford Areas without the consent of the Loughs Agency contrary to Section 46 of the Foyle Fisheries Act (NI) 1952, as amended by Article 18(3) of the Foyle and Carlingford Fisheries (NI) Order 2007.

Loughs Agency would also like to take this opportunity to ask for best environmental practice to be implemented when working close to watercourses. The applicant should also be aware that it is an offence under section 41 of the Foyle Fisheries Act (1952) to cause pollution which is detrimental to fisheries interests.

Environmental Officer

On behalf of the Loughs Agency

Your Reference MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19
Our reference WMU/PC/ 33456-1

Minerals and Petroleum Branch
Department for the Economy (DfE)

MPLconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk

6th October 2021

To DfE Minerals & Petroleum Branch,

THE MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 1969. NOTICE OF INTENTION TO AWARD MINERAL PROSPECTING LICENCES TO DALRADIAN GOLD LIMITED. APPLICATION REFERENCES: MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Water Management Unit note the above named consultation and would make the following comments.

It is noted that these licence applications permit exploration activities which involve relatively non-intrusive geophysical or geochemical surveys and that more intrusive works, such as drilling a borehole, will be subject to planning legislation. NIEA will be a consultee for any development works considered to be either 'Permitted Development' or subject to a full planning application. Regardless of the exploration activity to be undertaken all works must be carried out in line with the Departments published Pollution Prevention Guidance

Given the limited information currently available, NIEA Water Management Unit can only make a generic consultation response at this stage. If, or when, more detailed information becomes available on specific activities and locations NIEA Water Management Unit will be in a position to make a more detailed response.

Key Environmental Considerations

Any exploration activities that may involve the abstraction of surface or ground water; or the discharge of potentially polluting effluent, including stormwater with a high level of suspended

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solids, should be properly planned and risk assessed with the necessary statutory authorisations put in place; namely:

- An authorisation or licence to abstract groundwater or surface water, under the Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, may be required.
- A discharge of a potentially polluting liquid to groundwater or surface water will require a Consent to Discharge, issued under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.
- Other permissions and assessments may be required from NIEA depending upon the specific activities and working practices proposed and their exact location in relation to sensitive environmental receptors.

Prior to drilling or other intrusive field work, the applicant should contact NIEA Water Management Unit to discuss the location and proposals and to determine the required assessments and environmental permissions. Environmental permissions take a minimum of 4 months to process, therefore early engagement with Water Management Unit is essential.

Water Management Unit should be contacted at:

17 Antrim Road
Tonagh
Lisburn
Co Antrim
BT28 3AL

Email: wmuplanningconsultations@daera-ni.gov.uk

It is a requirement of The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 that effective mitigation measures must be in place to protect the water environment and surrounding water bodies from any discharge into them that may damage ecological status and to ensure that the environmental objectives for water bodies are not compromised nor the environmental objectives in other downstream water bodies in the same and other catchments.

It is an offence under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 to discharge or deposit, whether knowingly or otherwise, any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter so that it enters a waterway or water in any underground strata. Conviction of such an offence may incur a fine of up to £20,000 and / or three months imprisonment.

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and Rural Affairs**
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The applicant should ensure that measures are in place to prevent pollution of surface or groundwater as a result of any exploration activities both during those works and thereafter.

**Issued on behalf of
NIEA Water Management Unit**

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CONSULTATION REQUEST

Licence Application Numbers: MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Further detail: Two Mineral Prospecting Licence Applications (MPLA 1/19 and MPLA 2/19) submitted to the Department for the Economy (DfE) on 31st August 2021

Location: Areas within Counties Londonderry & Tyrone (parts of Derry City & Strabane District Council; Fermanagh & Omagh District Council; and Mid Ulster District Council)

Date: 2 December 2021

1. Introduction

Thank you for your consultation request dated 13 September 2021.

Tourism NI is a non-departmental public body of the Department for the Economy (DfE) and is responsible for the development of tourism and the marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination to domestic tourists from within Northern Ireland, and to visitors from the Republic of Ireland.

While it is not a statutory consultee on planning applications, Tourism NI recognises that planning policy and planning guidance refers to the specialist advisory contribution that tourism bodies can possibly make to planning applications for major projects.

It is understood that the objective of the current consultation is to ensure that DfE takes into account a range of opinions to inform whether or not a Mineral Prospecting Licence (MPL) should be granted to the applicant or whether any particular terms and conditions should be attached to a licence.

Tourism Northern Ireland, Linum Chambers, Bedford Square, Bedford St, Belfast BT2 7ES
Telephone: +44 (0)28 9023 1221

Corporate website: tourismni.com
Consumer website: discovernorthernireland.com

Tourism Northern Ireland is an Equal Opportunities Employer.
Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI) is the trading name of The Northern Ireland Tourist Board.
Chairman: **Terence Brannigan** Chief Executive: **John McGrillen**

2. Purpose and Scope of Response

Tourism NI welcomes the consultation process being undertaken by DfE. It is noted that the two MPLAs are Licence Applications related to exploration and not, at this stage, site-specific planning applications. The present input by Tourism NI is intended to inform the decision-making process by providing updated strategic and contextual information that may be considered pertinent to the determination of the application.

Having regard to the above, the following information by Tourism NI is submitted and structured under the following headings.

- **Tourism Strategic Overview**
- **Accommodation in the Areas (Derry City & Strabane; Fermanagh & Omagh; Mid Ulster)**
- **Sperrins AONB & Wider Destination**

3. Tourism Strategic Overview

- The global Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating blow on world economies, including the tourism and hospitality sector. Pre Covid-19, there was huge growth potential in our tourism and hospitality industry, and it was recognised as a key economic driver for Northern Ireland. As one of Northern Ireland's key service sectors and economic pillars, the tourism and hospitality industry offers one of the best opportunities for Northern Ireland to deliver sub-regional economic growth and it is hoped that the industry will recover to fulfil the growth plans in the years to come.
- In response to Covid-19, a Tourism Recovery Steering Group was established by the Department for the Economy to lead the planning and preparations for the recovery of the Northern Ireland tourism industry and to prepare for re-growth of the sector. Phase two Tourism Recovery Action Plan sets out the key challenges facing the Northern Ireland tourism industry as it recovers from the pandemic and the actions required to support the tourism industry in the most targeted and effective way.
- The following contextual information highlights the important role that tourism has played in the Northern Ireland economy before the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Northern Ireland welcomed 5.3 million visitors in 2019 generating a total revenue of £1 billion for the local economy, meeting its 2020 target of £1 billion one year early. Of this revenue, £731 million was generated from out of state tourism, meaning that tourism is effectively an export sector in that it attracts visitors from external markets but revenue is spent here.

- Tourism is worth 5.2% of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product and sustains 70,800 employee jobs (9% of employee jobs in NI) in tourism and across related industries.
- While these figures are positive, Northern Ireland is still a relatively emerging destination. It has yet to catch up with other destinations in the UK in terms of tourism's contribution to GDP, tourism jobs and overseas visitor spend per night.
- The original Programme for Government (2016-2021) reflects this new confidence in tourism and a new appreciation of its potential for contributing to growing the Northern Ireland economy and in delivering on jobs and investment.

4. Accommodation

- The most recent available Northern Ireland hotel occupancy rates, for September 2021, indicate significant improvement in room occupancy (+27 percentage points) and sales (+68%) compared to September 2020. While September 2021 room occupancy fell short of pre-COVID levels, bed-space occupancy was four percentage points higher than the figure recorded for September 2019.
- Average daily rate for hotels was up 29.3% compared to September 2020 and continues to exceed 2019 levels.
- Official statistics show there were over 450,000 bed-spaces sold in NI hotels, guest houses, guest accommodation and B&Bs (GH/GA/BBs) during September 2021, a significant increase on September 2020 and up by 5.9% compared to September 2019.
- The following subsection contains hotel and GH/GA/BB occupancy and sales figures for the relevant local government district areas before the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as up to data stock data.

Derry City & Strabane District Council Area

- In the period January-December 2019, hotels in the Derry City & Strabane District Council area recorded a room occupancy of 65% – the fifth highest room occupancy in Northern Ireland.
- GH/GA/BBs in the Derry City & Strabane area recorded average room occupancy of 32% for January-December 2019 – the fifth lowest in Northern Ireland.

Stock data as at end of September 2021 shows the Derry City & Strabane area had:

- 92 serviced accommodation providers (hotels and GH/GA/BBs) providing 1,149 rooms and 2,626 bed-spaces.
- The second highest number of hotel rooms of all the Local Government Districts (807 rooms).
- The fifth highest number of GH/GA/BB rooms of all the Local Government Districts (342 rooms).
- The fifth lowest number of self-catering rooms of all the Local Government Districts (433 rooms).

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Area

- In the period January-December 2019, hotels in the Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area recorded a room occupancy of 67% – the third highest room occupancy in Northern Ireland (jointly with Causeway Coast & Glens) after Belfast City (71%) and Mid & East Antrim (70%).
- GH/GA/BBs in the Fermanagh & Omagh area recorded average room occupancy of 34% during January-December 2019 – the fourth highest in Northern Ireland (jointly with Mid & East Antrim) after Belfast City (51%), Mid Ulster (44%) and Antrim & Newtownabbey (36%).

Stock data as at end of September 2021 shows Fermanagh & Omagh District Council had:

- 90 serviced accommodation providers (hotels and GH/GA/BBs) providing 926 rooms and 2,134 bed-spaces.
- The fifth lowest number of hotel rooms of all the Local Government Districts (464 rooms).
- The fourth highest number of GH/GA/BB rooms (462 rooms) and self-catering rooms (1,206 rooms) of all the Local Government Districts.

Mid Ulster District Council Area

- In the period January-December 2019, hotels in the Mid Ulster District Council area recorded a room occupancy of 47% – the lowest recorded room occupancy in Northern Ireland.
- GH/GA/BBs in the Mid Ulster area recorded average room occupancy of 44% during January-December 2019 – the second highest in Northern Ireland (after Belfast City).

Stock data as at end of September 2021 shows the Mid Ulster area had:

- 62 serviced accommodation providers (Hotels and GH/GA/BB) providing 437 rooms and 1,041 bed-spaces.
- The second lowest number of hotel rooms of all the Local Government Districts (237 rooms).
- The fourth lowest number of GH/GA/BB rooms (200 rooms) and self-catering rooms (349 rooms) of all the Local Government Districts.

5. Sperrins AONB & Wider Destination

- Since April 2015 and as part of the full implementation of local government reform, the Sperrins area and the Sperrins area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) fell under the auspices of four Local Councils (Mid Ulster, Fermanagh & Omagh, Derry City & Strabane District and Causeway Coast & Glens Borough).
- At a strategic level DfE, with Tourism NI and key stakeholders, including Local Councils, are taking forward the process to develop a new Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland. It will set the future direction for tourism within the context of a refocused Economic Strategy, setting challenging targets. There is a new appreciation of the potential for tourism to contribute to the growth of the Northern Ireland economy and to deliver jobs and investment. The Tourism Strategy will help tourism partners to work together and understand their role in the achievement of common goals and in the realisation of important synergies.
- As a statutory partner in the Community Planning process, Tourism NI is working with the various Local Councils to identify tourism development priorities for their areas over the next 5–10 years. In doing so, it will be important to ensure alignment with key priorities and actions identified through the Northern Ireland Tourism Strategy document, including the adoption of a

more collaborative approach to tourism by all those involved in the sector. These priorities will be reflected in the Local Councils' Tourism Strategy and Community Plan, as well as the Local Development Plan (LDP).

- In 2018, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC), Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and Mid Ulster District Council initiated a Sperrins Future Search Programme, an initiative to develop a management structure and action plan for the Sperrins AONB. The Councils have now allocated some budget to pay for a dedicated programme manager, who will be employed by DCSDC but available to progress the wider programme. Tourism NI will work closely with the partners on this programme.
- Tourism NI works closely with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council across many tourism-related initiatives and to ensure alignment of local and regional tourism strategies. Tourism NI has agreed to provide support and co-fund a new Visitor Experience Development Plan with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for the wider visitor destination in 2021-22. This is due for completion by March 2022.
- Under the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS), the policy provisions of PPS16 and other Planning Policy Statements set out planning policies for tourism development, and also for the safeguarding of tourism assets, as appropriate and specifically in regard to the production of the LDP for each Council area.
- These policy provisions seek to manage the provision of sustainable and high quality tourism developments in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment. In addition, within the SPPS planning policy on Natural Heritage; Open Space and Outdoor Recreation; and Transportation will also be of relevance to the LDP with respect to tourism development.
- In relation to marketing, Tourism NI undertakes marketing activity throughout the year showcasing the many varied experiences available here in Northern Ireland. Exploring our natural landscapes, forest parks, and related activities such as mountain biking, walking and outdoor pursuits are popular activities all promoted through Tourism NI's marketing channels including its consumer website www.discovernorthernireland.com, its Facebook and Twitter channels and through PR/Media activity.
- Locally, the tourism offer is based on the scenery and opportunities for outdoor recreation whilst accommodating a niche interest in archaeological and natural history. The area is home to numerous forests, lakes, rivers, valleys and trails that support a substantial outdoor recreational resource offering orienteering, pony trekking, hill trekking, water-based activities and a growing cycling/mountain biking market.
- The proposed development is located within the **Sperrins AONB**, an area that stretches along the border of counties Tyrone and Derry~Londonderry and can best be described as wild, untouched and beautiful. Spanning 40

miles, the Sperrins are the largest mountain range in Ireland with 10 summits above 500m. Walkers can expect undulating hills covered in heather, quiet valleys, boggy uplands and a land teeming with wildlife. Add in over 90 sets of stone circles and numerous other intriguing, megalithic structures, and the Sperrins are most definitely a walking wonder.

- The Sperrins can be explored on four **scenic driving routes** (North, South, East and Central), which were included in National Geographic's prestigious list of the world's 101 scenic drives for 2012. The Glenelly Valley and the Barnes Gap provides the picture postcard backdrop to some of Northern Ireland's most scenic landscapes. The route made it to 88th on the prestigious list and was praised for its 'wild beauty, ideal trails and dreamy villages'. These routes take in a wealth of natural countryside, spectacular scenery and ancient monuments, including the following:
 - **Barnes Gap**: situated on the Central Sperrins Driving Route, this striking glacial feature comprises a deep incision in the ridge of hills lying to the south of the beautiful **Glenelly Valley**, with great views of the main Sperrins chain.
 - **Pigeon Top**: located on the South Sperrins Driving Route to the west of Omagh, this prominent viewpoint and picnic area offers some fantastic views of surrounding hills such as **Bessy Bell**, and further afield.
 - **Slieve Gallion**: situated off the East Sperrins Driving Route near Moneymore, this mountain lies at the eastern edge of the Sperrins with a road leading much of the way to the top. Take in the excellent views over **Lough Neagh, the Sperrins, Antrim Hills and Mourne Mountains**.
- Tourism NI promotes a number of **cycle tours** around Northern Ireland, including the Sperrins, on its consumer website which highlights a winning combination of cycling, scenery and food across Northern Ireland. Routes through the Sperrins trace the ancient routes of settlers back to the Bronze Age in Ireland, through the idyllic countryside of the Sperrins in counties Derry~Londonderry and Tyrone visiting fascinating archaeological sites and local food producers of historic Ulster.
- There are a number of **walking trails** throughout the Sperrins, including The Ulster Way, Vinegar Hill and Craignamaddy. Walking opportunities are also available at Goles Forest, and informally on the main peaks of the Sperrins, including the highest peak Sawel. Guided walks, events and festivals are increasingly a feature of this landscape.
- The National Trail Centre at **Davagh Forest National Centre** has enhanced the growing international Mountain Bike offer in the region. Davagh Forest Park is again promoted on Tourism NI's consumer website as offering 'fabulous views and exhilarating descents'. ([Discover Northern Ireland – Davagh Forest Trails](#))
- A new Dark Sky Observatory, Visitor Centre and Solar Walk, to be known as '**OM**', has recently opened at Davagh Forest, near Cookstown. This £1.7m project was joint-funded by Mid Ulster District Council and the Department for

Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs (DAERA) and is another signature visitor experience under the Northern Ireland Embrace a Giant Spirit brand. ([Discover Northern Ireland – OM Dark Sky Park & Observatory](#))

- Tourism NI is also currently working closely with the £252m Mid-South West (MSW) Growth Deal council partners (Derry City & Strabane District Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council) on the development of their proposed tourism projects including in the areas of Gortin Glen, Cuilcagh Lakelands UNSECO Geopark and Slieve Gallion.

6. Conclusion

As explained above, the purpose of this response by Tourism NI is to outline strategic and contextual information that may help inform the assessment of this application.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John McGrillen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John McGrillen
Chief Executive

DFE MPL Consultation dfe-mpla

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 01 October 2021 11:08
To: DFE MPL Consultation dfe-mpla
Subject: FOR ACTION - Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19 [UNSCANNED]
Attachments: Annex D MAP.PDF

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

[REDACTED]

This is a NIL return from Department of Education.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Departmental Business Services Team | Department of Education

Rathgael House | 43 Balloo Road | Bangor | BT19 7PR

[REDACTED]

From: DfE Minerals Branch
Sent: 13 September 2021 07:14
Subject: Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Dear Sir/Madam

THE MINERAL DEVELOPMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 1969
NOTICE OF INTENTION TO AWARD MINERAL PROSPECTING LICENCES TO DALRADIAN GOLD LIMITED

APPLICATION REFERENCES: MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19

The Department for the Economy has received applications from Dalradian Gold Limited for two Mineral Prospecting Licences under Section 11 of the above Act. The applications include lands situated in Counties Tyrone and Londonderry outlined as MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19 on the attached map.

In accordance with sub-sections 11(4) and 11(5) of the Act, before reaching a decision on the matter, the Department is required to serve on your organisation notice of its intention to grant the licences and to take into account any representations which are made to it. Please note that the representations should be with the Department on or before **05 December 2021**.

Information relating to the consultation for both applications can be found on our website at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/consultations> by following the link to Mineral Prospecting Licences MPLA1/19 and MPLA2/19.

All representations should be submitted to the following email address: MPLconsultation@economy-ni.gov.uk and I would be grateful if you could inform us of any nil return.

Please note that, within the parameters outlined in the Confidentiality and Data Protection section below, your representation may be shared with the applicant.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Your response may be made public by the Department and placed on the Department’s website as part of the consultation process.

In addition information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR); Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR)). If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA and EIR , there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

If you do not want your name or all or part of your response to be made public, please state this clearly in the response and mark your response as ‘CONFIDENTIAL.’ Any confidentiality disclaimer that may be generated by your organisation’s IT system or included as a general statement will be taken to apply only to information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

For information regarding the Minerals and Petroleum Branch Privacy (MAPB) Notice following the introduction of GDPR please go to the following link: <http://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/privacy-notice-minerals-and-petroleum-branch>

Kind regards



Minerals and Petroleum Policy
Department for the Economy
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 3SB



Please consider the environment - do you really need to print this e-mail?

DFE MPL Consultation dfe-mpla

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 29 September 2021 09:48
To: DFE MPL Consultation dfe-mpla
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: CM: Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

[REDACTED]

I can advise that Invest NI has no comment to make in respect of these applications.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Client Facing Executive
Property Solutions Unit
Invest Northern Ireland, Bedford Square , Bedford Street , . BELFAST. BT2 7ES.

[REDACTED]

www.investni.com www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk

[REDACTED]

For details on how we use your personal data, including your rights, please visit: investni.com/privacy

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail.

From: DfE Minerals Branch
Sent: 13 September 2021 07:14
Subject: CM: Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Dear Sir/Madam

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Kind regards

[Redacted]

Minerals and Petroleum Policy
Department for the Economy
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 3SB

[Redacted]

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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 September 2021 14:35
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: SGM-0378-2021 : Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

[REDACTED] getting a bounce-back from the Minerals Branch email.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 September 2021 14:34
To: 'DfE Minerals Branch' <minerals@economy-ni.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

[REDACTED]

Nil return from DoH.

Regards,

[REDACTED]
Procurement Policy
Infrastructure Investment Directorate
Department of Health
working from home

From: DfE Minerals Branch
Sent: 13 September 2021 07:14
Subject: SGM-0378-2021 : Notification of Consultation MPLA1/19 & MPLA2/19

Dear Sir/Madam

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Kind regards

[Redacted]

Minerals and Petroleum Policy
Department for the Economy
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast, BT4 3SB

[Redacted]

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