

021/DR001 Statement of Case against proposed road abandonment order for part of the Crockanboy Road for application (IN1-21-5706) on behalf of Dalradian Gold Ltd.

I would ask that my previous objection is included as part of my Statement of Case, and re-iterate my objection to the proposed abandonment on several grounds, outlined below:

I object to the proposal to abandon a section of the Crockanboy Road in Greencastle, Co. Tyrone and to hand the roadway and surrounding lands to Dalradian Gold, a Canadian company whose plans to construct a gold mine, toxic waste dump and processing plant on the site do not have the benefit of any planning permission and have been rejected by an unprecedented number of objections from the community and the wider public.

Can the Department please explain to the public its seemingly irrational and vindictive proposal to abandon, remove as a public amenity and ruin a scenic, inviting, healthy roadway in return for a pathway that is much narrower and the construction of which would do major damage to the environment? Such action is in direct opposition to the public interest and well-being.

Can the Department please explain to the public why we the public, and the people of Greencastle and surrounding districts, who by right are entitled to pass and repass by this public roadway should be condemned to abandon our rights to such an important 'access to the countryside' in return for a random line on a map that fails to identify or explain that this entire area would, if Dalradian got its planning permission, be a one kilometre long dangerous, noisy construction site of a multi-storey waste dump containing mine tailings, toxic waste and crushed rock ground to dust being constructed continually for the next 15 to 20 years? Further, the proposed alternate path would be intersected by a large roadway and an industrial scale access road to a new tunnel into the hillside with continual heavy lorries usage – with all the amenity loss, dust, noise, disruption, health and safety risk, etc? Yet none of this is material in the considered view of DfI? How is this not noted in the Rural Needs Impact Assessment?

The irrational proposal for a monstrous Toxic Waste Tailings Dump on top of Crockanboy underpinning the Department's current draft order was one of a number of options and suggested locations proposed by none other than Golder consultants, at that time working for Dalradian and subsequently engaged by DfI to assess the Dalradian Planning Application. Apart from the many environmental and stability issues that DfI cannot evidence as having been sufficiently addressed, there would appear to be a question of a potential conflict of interest here? There is certainly some backcloth including comment by the judiciary that just might cause the Department to take seriously the lack of confidence in the public about this being a level playing field.

The Department for Infrastructure do not own this road as barter or trade and it is not theirs to give away to anyone, let alone to a Canadian mining company. They have never shown any interest in the local road prior to Dalradian's request, whilst local people have contributed to the upkeep of this particular stretch of untarred road by filling in potholes over many years. Farmers use the roadway continually. This stretch of road is used on a daily basis by the public for walking, jogging, running, cycling, horse riding, etc. Indeed during my time playing football with Greencastle St. Patrick's, whose pitch is located near the roadway proposed for abandonment, this was a popular route for training/running sessions. It provides safe access to the countryside to locals and to visitors alike, something which was never more valued and appreciated than during the Coronavirus pandemic. It is also used by pilgrims to the Mass Rock and those who meet to pray the Rosary every May.

The historic Green Road Public Right of Way cuts across this stretch of untarred road in one place and the alternate path proposed by Dalradian would cut across & destroy the Green Road, which was used during the Flight of the Earls, and is something which we cannot allow to happen. Questions need to be asked why the Public Authority took no steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the abandonment of this roadway. Similarly, and mindful of this information, the Human Rights Impact Assessment seems flawed – what consultation was there with the local community, historians, academics, before this was simply written off by DfI Roads Officials as “an unclassified land” for Dalradian to do with as they so wish?

The public rejection of the Dalradian proposal and in opposition to this roadway being taken out of public ownership and given to the mining company must be considered seriously. People are adamant that their historical sites & sacred places must not be discarded and destroyed. People here are very aware of what was allowed to happen in May 2020 in Australia when another gold mining company, Rio Tinto, in spite of the best efforts of indigenous protectors, the Puutu Kunti Kurrama & the Pinikura people, destroyed the sacred site at Juukan Gorge.¹ It would be reckless by the company and DfI to proceed on a course that could provoke serious conflict in this community that is still emerging from the troubles.

This alternate road proposed by Dalradian would also have huge negative impacts on the bog land, the aquifers and ecosystems as it would mean removing stretches of bog to build a road.

There is also the question of finance – who is to pay for all this? Currently our roads are in awful shape, with issues in recent times surrounding staffing, procurement problems and continuous on-going difficulties with surface issues and potholes – if DfI Roads cannot keep on top of what is presently on its plate, how can it afford to spare the resources and workforce to in essence provide a service for a foreign corporate entity, literally at the expense of the local population, rate and tax payers?

We, as local people have asserted our Right to pass and re-pass along this stretch of road, just as our forefathers did for generations before us and which our descendants will do for generations after us. We are the custodians of the road for as long as we live here. The proposal to abandon this roadway and give it to Dalradian must be rejected.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/may/26/rio-tinto-blasts-46000-year-old-aboriginal-site-to-expand-iron-ore-mine>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Creggan
Co. Tyrone

[REDACTED]

(1,055 words in total, excluding title and Name/Address)

I submit this Statement of Case on my behalf and on behalf of my young children,
[REDACTED] (aged 4) and [REDACTED] (aged 11 months).