

Title of Report:	Consultation on Minerals Prospecting Licence Application- Dalradian Gold Limited
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	22 January 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership Improvement and Innovation
Outcome	Note position on commencement of development
Lead Officer	Head of Planning

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Planning Budget
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES
Capital/Revenue	As per budget
Code	5301
Staffing Costs	As per budget

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This Report is to advise Members of a consultation from the Department for the Economy (DfE) on a Minerals Prospecting Licence from Dalradian Gold Limited.

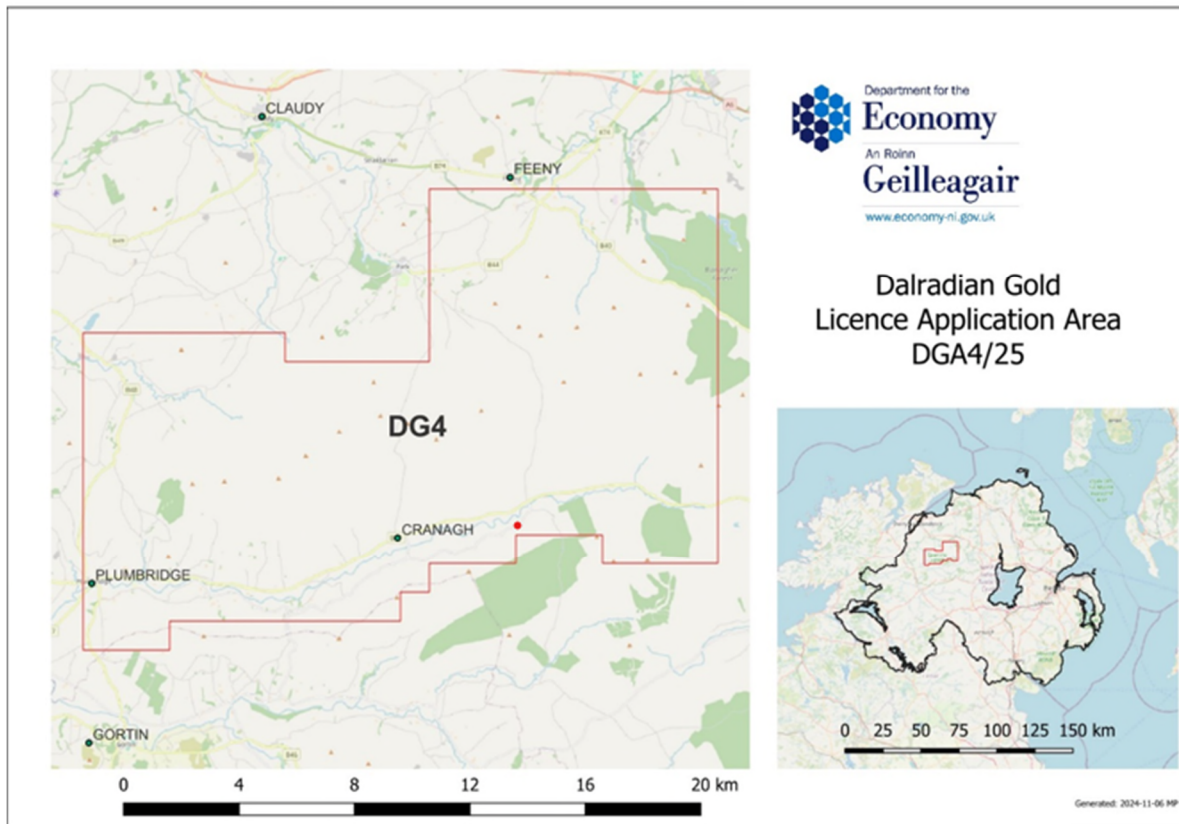
2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 08 January 2025 DfE contacted the Council to advise that they have received an application for a Minerals Prospecting Licence (MPL) which extends to land within the Borough. The correspondence advises: *“Before reaching a final decision on the award of the Licence, the Department is required to serve notice on your organisation of its intention to grant the Licence and to consider any representations made.”* The consultation period began on 13 January 2025 and closes on 04 April 2025.
- 2.2 Minerals prospecting is an early stage of the mining process which occurs before minerals exploration. Minerals prospecting involves the use of various technologies and techniques to identify potential minerals deposits.
- 2.3 Legislation, specifically the Minerals Development Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, requires an applicant to apply to DfE to obtain a licence to carry out minerals prospecting. Such licences, where granted, are valid for a specified period before expiring. DfE advises the current application is for an area previously licenced to the Applicant and that the Applicant holds other MPLs in Northern Ireland.
- 2.4 DfE advises the objective of the consultation is to ensure that the Department publishes its intention to grant the MPL and provide stakeholders and the general public an opportunity to submit comments. This is to enable the Department to receive a range of views and make an informed decision on the granting or not of the MPL and/ or any additional terms and conditions that should be included in the licence.
- 2.5 Other consultees include other councils within the MPL application area, the NI Executive Departments and other organisations.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The portion of the MPL located in the Borough is located to the immediate south of Feeny. Outside the Borough, the MPL extends to the south and west

to land north of Gortin. The Proposed Licence area, is shown in the map below.



Map showing Extent of Dalradian Gold Licence Application Area

- 3.2 The application includes identification of environmentally designated sites and assessment of surface elevation.
- 3.3 The application specifies the minerals to be explored for as “all minerals with a focus on copper, lead, zinc, antimony, bismuth, tellurium, cobalt nickel and manganese. In addition, it is stated there is an intention to explore for precious metals.
- 3.4 The application provides a Scheme of Prospecting for Year 1 and Year 2 of the proposed licence term. It indicates that the application is to specifically target base metal occurrences that have been identified in earlier exploration of the licence area. Three target locations for field-based activities are identified. One of these is located at Cushcapple, within the Borough. Through an Environmental Assessment, DfE has considered the possible impacts of exploration activity on natural heritage sites. This concludes that the desk based studies will have no impact on designated sites within the proposed licence area. It further concludes that field based activities are not likely to have a significant impact on designated areas by virtue of the

locations and exploration activities to be deployed. It is a condition of each mineral prospecting licence that any proposed exploration activity that the licensee wishes to carry out must be notified to the Department and express approval for the Department must be obtained before the activity begins.

- 3.5 The application identifies one of the locations of where the exploration activity is expected to take place at Cushcapple. The application states that the exploration activity is to provide a follow-up on elevated zinc and lead values identified through the baseline stream sediment survey.
- 3.6 Regarding the planning regime, legislation allows mineral exploration to take place as permitted development without the need to obtain planning permission. This is set out at Part 16 of the Schedule to The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. The specific development permitted, not exceeding 4 months, includes the drilling of boreholes, the carrying out of seismic surveys or the making of other excavations for the purpose of minerals exploration and the provision or assembly on that land or adjoining land of any structure required in connection with any of those operations. This is subject to conditions. These conditions are that:
- the developer shall notify the council in writing giving details of the location of the proposed development, target minerals, details of plant and operations and anticipated timescale;
 - any operation is not within an area of special scientific interest or site of archaeological interest;
 - any explosive charge of more than 1 kilogram is not used and;
 - any structure assembled or provided does not exceed 3 metres in height where such a structure would be within 3 kilometres of an airport.
- 3.7 To date, Dalradian Gold Limited has not contacted the Council regarding exercising their permitted development rights.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the Head of Planning responding to the DfE consultation to advise of permitted development rights for minerals exploration and the requirement for Dalradian Gold Limited to notify the Council before undertaking any development.