

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council: Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy - Consultation on Proposed Changes

Murray, Celine <Celine.Murray@economy-ni.gov.uk>

Thu 03/12/2020 15:51

To: Development Plan <developmentplan@fermanaghomagh.com>

Cc: DfE Permanent Secretary Support <Permanent.SecretarySupport@economy-ni.gov.uk>; DfE CLU Mailbox <clumailbox@economy-ni.gov.uk>

📎 2 attachments (446 KB)

FW: Notification Letter - Fermanagh and Omagh Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy - Consultation on Proposed Changes; Fermanagh and Omagh Local Development Plan - DfE Response.PDF;

CAUTION: This message originates from outside our organisation. Consider carefully whether you should click on any links, open any attachments or reply. If in doubt, forward to helpdesk@fermanaghomagh.com

Good afternoon,

Please see comments from the Department for the Economy on the Council's consultation of its LDP Draft Plan Strategy.

Regards,

Central Management Branch
Department for the Economy
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast, BT4 2JP

Department for the Economy's Response: Fermanagh and Omagh Local Development Plan (LDP) Draft Plan Strategy - Consultation on Proposed Changes – (these comments provide updates to the previous comments in the 2016 consultation)

ENERGY (updates to previous response)

Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI):

The Northern Ireland non-domestic and domestic RHI schemes were introduced following the introduction of parallel schemes for the rest of the UK led by DECC. They were central to the action to meet an Executive target (PFG) of having 4% of Northern Ireland's heating needs met from renewable sources by 2015, and a further target in the Strategic Energy Framework of achieving 10% renewable heat consumption by 2020.

The issues with the Non-Domestic RHI Scheme have been well publicised and were the subject of an independent Public Inquiry, the findings of the Inquiry were published in March 2020. Both RHI schemes have been closed to new applications since 29 February 2016.

The New Decade, New Approach deal included a commitment to close the RHI scheme and replace it with a scheme that effectively cuts carbon emissions. Closure of the Non-Domestic RHI Scheme is being considered in line with this commitment.

Going forward, there is a substantial economic recovery opportunity in decarbonising energy as part of growing the green economy across Northern Ireland. Growing this sector is also a vital part of responding to climate change and building a better environment for the people of NI. Any new scheme will be introduced in line with the new Northern Ireland Energy strategy, as part of an overall framework to support the pathway to net zero carbon.

Energy Strategy:

The context for energy has changed substantially since the 2010 Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) was published. In June 2019 the UK became the first major economy to commit to a 100 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This 'net zero' target represents a significant step-change in the commitment to addressing the climate crisis. The Department for the Economy has begun the process of developing a new energy strategy to decarbonise the Northern Ireland energy sector by 2050 at least cost to the consumer.

Any new strategic direction for energy in Northern Ireland must consider the existing energy mix and how it will be reshaped, as well as considering energy demand reduction.

A new energy strategy will be published by the end of 2021. The Energy Strategy timeline can be accessed [here](#):

Natural Gas:

Natural gas infrastructure was completed to 8 towns in the West in 2019, and included to Enniskillen, Derrylin, and Omagh, as part of the Gas to the West project. Local gas distribution networks and gas connections to domestic and business customers in the respective towns will be provided over a number of years.

Flood Risk:

Para 6.3 notes how the Council manages flood risks and para 6.4 notes engagement with the Rivers Agency and the use of Strategic Flood maps.

Para 6.6 notes PPS 15 and the presumption against development within flood plains, and includes reference to utilities infrastructure.

DfE accepts the importance of such considerations in respect of energy infrastructure to ensure its continued resilience to deliver security of supply.

MINERALS (updates to previous response)

MIN01 – additional comments (valuable minerals).

The proposed change includes a presumption against the exploitation of valuable minerals within designated Special Countryside Areas (SCAs).

The Department would point out that the presumption against the exploitation of valuable minerals within designated SCAs is inconsistent with para 6.157 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) which indicates that there should not be a presumption against the exploitation of valuable minerals in any area. Para 6.157 SPPS states:

“From time to time minerals may be discovered which are particularly valuable to the economy. Their exploitation may create environmental effects which are particular to the methods of extraction or treatment of that mineral. There will not be a presumption against their exploitation in any area, however in considering a proposal where the site is within a statutory policy area, due weight will be given to the reason for the statutory zoning. However, in relation to unconventional hydrocarbon extraction there should be a presumption against their exploitation until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.”

In addition, the presumption against the exploitation of valuable minerals in SCA is also inconsistent with the FODC Plan policy LO2 which allows for planning permission to be granted for development in SCAs where the development is of such national or regional importance, as to outweigh any potential detrimental impact on the unique qualities of the upland, outstanding vistas, or island environment. Such an exception should also be applied to valuable minerals.

We therefore consider the proposed change to MIN01, to include a presumption against the exploitation of valuable minerals within SCA, to be unsound.

ECONOMIC STRATEGY (GENERAL) (updates to previous response)

Economic Strategy:

The Executive's current economic focus is supporting the businesses, people and places most heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and creating a foundation on which to promote economic recovery and deliver a greener, competitive and inclusive economy.

A new Economic Strategy for Northern Ireland will be developed which sets out a long-term ambition for the Northern Ireland economy, outlines the Executive's economic priorities and aligns with a new Programme for Government.

The Strategy will be based upon the principles of developing a strong, competitive, regionally balanced and green economy that works for everyone. It will provide an opportunity to clearly define new and emerging areas where NI has real strengths and can compete on the world stage like cyber security, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing, materials and engineering.

The Department will work with key partners including our Local Councils, private sector, business representative organisations, Voluntary & Community sectors and academia as we work to develop a new Economic Strategy as the foundation on which to promote economic recovery and deliver a greener, competitive and inclusive economy.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

No further comments or updates to previous response.

TOURISM

No further comments to previous response.

INVEST NI

No further comments to previous response.

FURTHER EDUCATION (GENERAL)

No further comments to previous response except to update that Michael McAlister is the Chief Executive / Director of South West College.