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DFE MINERALS AND PETROLEUM AND GEOLOGICAL SURVEY NI RESPONSE TO ANTRIM AND NEWTOWNABBAY BOROUGH COUNCIL DRAFT PLAN STRATEGY

The Department for the Economy is responsible for a number of key Programme for Government objectives including ensuring that we build a strong and competitive, regionally balanced economy where we have more people in better jobs whilst ensuring that we live and work sustainably. It is within this context that the Department's Minerals and Petroleum Branch and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (MAPB and GSNI) make the following response.

MAPB/GSNI welcomes the opportunity to engage with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council in the preparation of its Local Development Plan (LDP) 2030.

The issue of mineral development requires a carefully balanced approach to maximise the potential economic benefits while ensuring adequate protection for the environment and local community. The Council's preferred options in relation to mineral development indicate a flexible approach to this subject which is welcomed given the complexity of the area. Set out below are specific comments on the LDP Draft Plan Strategy and Minerals Evidence Paper and general comments regarding the opportunity for geothermal energy.

MAPB/GSNI colleagues would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Council to discuss any issues that may arise from our response or offer any help that you may require. To arrange, please contact Lorraine Fleming Lorraine.Fleming@economy-ni.gov.uk.

Strategic Policy 1: Sustainable Development

DfE welcomes the Council's objectives in terms of sustainable development.

The council may wish to consider in Local Plan policies that support for growth in homes and infrastructure could be managed sustainably by seeking an appropriate balance of the use of both new construction minerals and recycled materials where possible.

Strategic Policy 2: Employment

In terms of decisions on the siting of industrial sites the Council should be aware that the sustainability of proposals could be increased if consideration is given to the potential for geothermal energy. We recommend that this is considered in your Local Plan Policies and DfE/GSNI would be able to advise on this matter and the favourability of the geology at proposed sites. The use of geothermal energy could also contribute to sustainable development goals.

Strategic Policy 4: Homes

With a proposal to build at least 9,750 new homes in the timescale of the plan consideration should be given to the sourcing of the raw materials and improving understanding of the local supply and demand position through engagement with the local industry to ensure Local Plan Policies are sound. Again sustainability will be improved by the use of both new and recycled materials. In terms of decisions on the siting of large housing developments within Local Plan policies, the Council will also wish to consider that the sustainability of proposals could be increased if consideration is given to the potential for geothermal energy within housing schemes.

Strategic Policy 7: Historic Environment

The Council has identified a number of historic monuments for protection. It would be useful to discuss the level of protection envisaged and whether, given the geographic spread of the monuments, there may be potential difficulty for future development to meet local need for minerals. .

Strategic Policy 9: Natural Resources

Minerals

The Draft Plan addresses the requirements to manage minerals and ensure that there is adequate supply of minerals to support development in the Council area. The Plan's proposals are supported by a comprehensive Minerals Position Paper which has taken on board comment and input from DfE and GSNI.

The Draft Plan acknowledges the need for the management of natural resources in order to balance the needs of current and future generations and the requirement for raw materials that are needed to supply the infrastructure that will support sustainable development and meet the Council's strategic objectives.

SP9.1: Natural Resources - The Department recognises the challenges around sustainable mineral development/management and the delicate balance between economic need for our natural resources and environmental impact. SP9.1 refers to support for development where it is demonstrated that the proposal will not have an adverse impact. Given that any mineral extraction by its very nature will have some adverse impact I would suggest that adverse impact should be qualified as 'significant' adverse impact.

SP9.2: Minerals – The Department welcomes the recognition of the economic importance of minerals at (a) and regional need at (c) as key aspects for consideration while seeking to ensure adverse impacts are mitigated. The identification and protection of important deposits is welcomed.

SP9.3: Mineral Reserves Continued safeguarding of the Crumlin Lignite is welcomed.

DM43: Minerals Development. The proposed flexible and balanced approach for mineral development is welcomed. The Department welcomes DM 43.6 on site restoration and the addition of DM43.3 covering mine waste plans and the requirement for land instability reports when appropriate.

DM44: Mineral Reserve Policy Areas. The protection of identified mineral reserves is welcomed. Whilst it is unlikely to be developed at this time, the continued protection of the lignite reserve at Crumlin is noted and DfE/GSNI will continue to work with Council to identify the boundaries in the Local Policies Plan.

Renewable Energy

DM 45: Renewable Energy Development

The policy deals primarily with wind power and the issues associated with the siting and operation of wind turbines.

However, the largest sector of the energy market is heat and decarbonisation of heat is a difficult challenge. The potential for geothermal energy should therefore be considered in discussions around future development of homes and industrial sites in the Council Area.

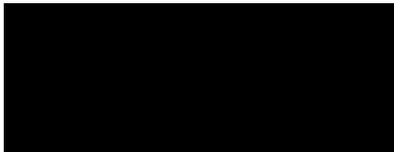
The Antrim and Newtownabbey Council area is fortunate in that it includes areas which are geologically suitable for the use of geothermal energy– shallow geothermal energy may be used for both heating and cooling via open or closed loop Ground Source Heat Pump systems using the highly productive Sherwood Sandstone aquifer which occurs below the superficial sediments or at shallow depths below the surface in the Newtownabbey area. Heat pump systems can be integrated into new developments or retrofitted to existing developments, particularly when these are being renovated or extended. Going west from Newtownabbey, the Sherwood Sandstone and lower Permian and Carboniferous sandstone aquifers occur at increasingly greater depths–

beneath Antrim itself these sandstones could provide large scale heat supplies for direct heating in district heat networks. Besides being a source of sustainable low carbon energy, one special characteristic of geothermal energy is its availability and deliverability, 24/7 and 365 days a year, making it a reliable source of baseload heat energy supply. Geothermal energy is also distinguished by its low operating costs, making it an ideal mechanism to help tackle fuel poverty and contribute to business competitiveness.

Minerals Evidence Paper

For the sake of completeness in the Minerals Evidence paper, you will wish to record that there is a current Petroleum Licence PL1/10 ([PL1/10 licence documents](#)) conventional oil and gas which covers part of the Council Area – a map of the licence area and detail can be found on the DfE website.

I hope these additional comments are useful, if you have any queries or wish to meet to discuss please contact me.



LORRAINE FLEMING
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