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Date Recd: 1/5/07

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To properly address the surface water aluminium problem on the proposed refinery site you have to go back to the first excavations at Bellanaboy.

Trial holes were dug on site several years ago and the subsoil (doib) was uncovered. Assuming this was the first time Shell had any experience with doib samples would have been sent away for analysis, the results of which would have let them know of the aluminium present. Therefore, prior to removing peat offsite or drilling de-watering wells a treatment system for aluminium in water should have been put in place, but issues of health and the environment not being relevant to Shell, they began to remove the peat, exposing the doib.

100,000 tons of peat was removed, at which time Shell's bullying led to the jailing of 5 men. Local people got upset at this form of consultation and started a picket outside the site. It soon became apparent to local people that the issue of water runoff from the site was a cause for concern, and this concern was heightened by the words of Mayo County Council and Shell.

Protestors offered to facilitate Shell once the Council had sanctioned the environmental work. Initially this involved closing a few drains, then it involved two days work installing equipment; overnight it became two weeks work, then two months work, and now approaching two years later the problem is still unresolved.

Shell hired Axonics to pull them out of the mess using untried and untested technology. Phil Morgan of Axonics described the water treatment issue as "difficult" and "unique". Meanwhile polluted water continued to build up on site and overspill into the drains and the Bellanaboy River.

Shell invited national media onsite to show the country how concerned they were about people's drinking water. They somehow managed to produce a glass of clear water. Shell's treatment unit was not working properly at any time, it was constantly being re-designed and re-configured with little or no improvement. Most of the time it was switched off, but with approximately 10 million litres of water on site Shell's problems were getting worse.

Despite this John Egan of Shell praised their water treatment unit as "bespoke", but as is often the case BAT (Best Available Technique) to Shell is WAT (Worst Available Technique) to local people who are the ones who suffer.

Shell, getting desperate, used the media to suggest equipment on site was interfered with, a practice they use worldwide to try to cover up their own shortcomings.

Meanwhile the PMC, consisting of Mayo County Council, North Western Regional Fisheries Board, the EPA and two so-called local representatives decided to ignore what was happening. Mayo County Council, on 08/09/2005 warned Shell to take immediate action or they would be pursued under section 12 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act 1977, but pollution continued to flow into Carrowmore Lake, which is the drinking water supply for approximately 10,000 people.

In spite of the treatment plant not working, Shell announced they were expanding the Axonics system without formally notifying Mayo County Council. It was becoming obvious that the only thing Shell could deliver to locals was polluted water and more spin to cover up what was really going on.

The aluminium problem remains to this day.