

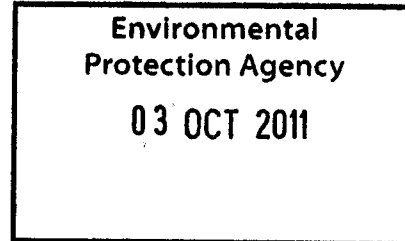
Sub No 1



**An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

3rd October 2011

Our Ref: E00113/2011
Your Ref: W0063-02



Joe Reilly,
Programme Officer,
Office of Climate, Licensing and Resource Use,
Environmental Protection Agency,
Johnstown Castle Estate,
Wexford

Re: Review application from Donegal County Council in relation to a facility / premises located at Drumabodan Landfill Site, Kilmacrennan, Co. Donegal

A Chara,

I refer to your recent notification with respect to the above review application from Donegal County Council in relation to a facility / premises located at Drumabodan Landfill Site, Kilmacrennan, Co. Donegal. Outlined below are the nature conservation observations and recommendations of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, for your consideration.

It is noted that the proposal is situated in a location likely to significantly impact on the Leannan River Special Area of Conservation Site No. SAC 002176. Please see the attached site synopsis for a description of the site.

The Department is of the view that this development:

- could significantly damage/destroy the habitat of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*), all of which are species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

The potential impacts would be caused by the deterioration of the water quality in the Leannan River resulting from pollution from the discharge of the treated leachate from the landfill site. The leachate emission limits and the assimilative capacity calculations have been noted. However, these limits have not been assessed in relation to the potential impacts to the species listed above within the Leannan River Special Area of Conservation. There has been no assessment of the potential ecological implications arising from this licence. Therefore, it is not possible to adequately assess the impacts of the licence to the Leannan River Special Area of Conservation Site No. SAC 002176. Accordingly, prior to making any decision, it is recommended that the applicant be requested to provide additional information to address the concerns outlined above.

As the project that has the potential to significantly impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, the further information should include an appropriate assessment as outlined in Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). The appropriate assessment should focus on the potential impacts in view of the site's conservation objectives (qualifying interests), and should include measures that will avoid,

reduce and mitigate for any such impacts. Potential impacts must be considered in combination with other plans or projects. The appropriate assessment must establish and conclude that the proposed development does not pose a significant threat to the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site, if the proposal/project is to proceed. Guidance on the preparation of an Appropriate Assessment is available at www.npws.ie (see Wildlife, Planning and the Law - Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government (2009): Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities).

Kindly forward any further information received or in the event of a decision being made a copy of same to the following address as soon as it issues:

**The Manager,
Development Applications Unit (DAU),
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht,
Newtown Road,
Wexford**

Alternatively, documentation associated with the above can be referred electronically to the DAU at the following e-mail address:

manager.dau@ahg.gov.ie

In addition, please acknowledge receipt of these observations by return.

Is mise le meas,



**Paul McMahon,
Development Applications Unit
t: (053) 911 7381
e: paul.mcmahon@ahg.gov.ie**

Enclosed: Site Synopsis – SAC 002176

Please note the changes to e-mail contact details, which take effect from Monday, 15th August 2011.

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SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LEANNAN RIVER

SITE CODE: 002176

Situated in north Donegal, this site comprises the River Leannan and its main tributaries and lakes including Loughs Fern, Gartan and Akibbon. The river from source to sea measures 46km and drains a catchment area of 282 km². The Bullaba River drains off the Glendowan Mountains and flows into Lough Gartan. The Leannan River flows from Lough Gartan in a north-easterly direction, passes through Lough Fern, and then onwards in an easterly direction through the town of Rathmelton and into Lough Swilly. The main tributaries within the site are the lower Glashagh and Lurgy.

The site is a candidate SAC selected for lowland oligotrophic lakes, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The site is also selected for the following species listed on Annex II of the same directive - Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Atlantic Salmon, Otter and the plant, Slender Naiad.

The river has good water quality and its banks are fringed more or less continuously by deciduous woodland. The adjacent habitat is mainly wet grassland which has been improved to varying degrees for grazing. There is also a good scattering of woodland, mostly deciduous, in the area.

Gartan Lough and Lough Akibbon are excellent examples of lowland oligotrophic lakes of sandy plains, a habitat listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Both are medium sized lakes and have vegetation that includes Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*), Water Lobelia (*Lobelia dortmanna*), Bulbous Rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), Bog Pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*) and the scarce Pillwort (*Pilularia globulifera*). Of particular note is the presence of Slender Naiad (*Najas flexilis*) in Akibbon, as this species is listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive. The other large lake in the site, Lough Fern, is a mesotrophic-eutrophic system.

A principal interest of this site lies in the presence of a population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive and also protected under the Wildlife Act 1976. A survey in 1995 estimated the population within the site at about 1,000 individuals, ranging in age from comparatively young (< 5 years) to elderly (80+ years).

The site is also selected Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), a species listed in Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The Leannan is a good spring and grilse salmon river with extensive spawning habitats and good water quality.

Lough Gartan has a population of Arctic Char (*Salvelinus alpinus*), a species listed in the Red Data Book. The site has a population of Leisler's Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) (67 individuals in July 1993), a further Red Data Book species.

A range of Red Data Book plant species occur within site, with Globeflower (*Trollius europaeus*), Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*), Heath Cudweed (*Omalothea sylvatica*), Small-white Orchid (*Pseudochis albida*) and Pillwort.

Red-throated Diver, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, uses the site.

The section of river within the site appears to have escaped recent pearl fishing but the area below the site has recently been fished out. Pearl fishing remains a threat to all sections of this river. A main threat to the quality of the site is intensification of agriculture in the surrounding areas which could lead to eutrophication of the lake and river waters. Lake acidification is also a potential threat. Reduction in water quality, lake acidification and introduction of alien fish species are all threats to

the population of *Salvelinus alpinus* in Lough Gartan. The population of breeding Red-throated Diver is vulnerable to disturbance from activities such as boating and angling.

This site is of high conservation importance, due to the presence of the Annex I habitat oligotrophic lakes of sandy plains, as well as the Habitats Directive Annex II species Freshwater Pearl Mussel, Atlantic Salmon and Slender Naiad. A range of Red Data Book plant and animal species also occur.

7.12.2007

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