



AFBI Headquarters
Newforge Lane
Belfast
BT9 5PX



Mr Graham Bolton
Graham Bolton Planning Partnership
Onward Buildings
207 Deansgate
Manchester
M3 3NW

Tel: 028 90 255688
Fax: 028 90 255035
Email: george.mcilroy@afbini.gov.uk

2 February 2007

Dear Mr Bolton

Rose Energy Power Plant Project, Glenavy

Thank you for your letter of 2nd January setting out your role in progressing the planning aspects of the above project, including the Environmental Impact Assessment. I note your contact with the Special Studies Unit of the Planning Service, and the issue that they have raised about the policy context or support for this type of project.

As far as the background is concerned, I acted as Chairman of The Expert Group on Alternative Uses of Manures (EGAUM) which was established by the DARD Minister in March 2005 to examine alternatives to landspread of manures, in parallel with the discussions between Environment and Agriculture officials and the European Commission in relation to the Nitrates Directive Action Programme. Northern Ireland faces the problem of nutrient enrichment of its fresh waters, and these lead to water quality problems affecting both rivers and lakes. This is due to the enrichment in the form of excessive nitrogen, and in particular phosphorus (N and P). In Northern Ireland, agriculture is the largest producer of nutrients found in surface waters, and this agricultural component represents the combined effects of a range of sources, including run-off of fertiliser, organic manures, leaching from soils, and losses from farmyards.

Recommendations were made to the DARD Minister in March 2006 by EGAUM. The Group examined proven technologies currently being used in other countries and



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has concluded that there is an urgent need for business plans to be brought forward by industry or associated private sector Renewable Energy developers for the application of anaerobic digester/combined heat and power (AD/CHP) plants for the intensive dairy and pig industries, and a litter fired generator for the poultry sector.

The AD/CHP plants would be used in conjunction with on-farm separators which would de-water animal slurry and, therefore reduce transport costs to an AD/CHP plant. Such on-farm systems can produce a liquid fraction that in turn can be used, within the overall action programme regulations, for the production of a further renewable energy source, such as short rotation coppice (willow).

In respect of the poultry industry, the group reviewed and endorsed the technical approach being adopted by a consortium within the industry to develop a single poultry-litter fired generator, capable of handling 300,000 tonnes of input per annum and producing up to 25MW of power.

The Minister's response was that: " I congratulate the Expert Group (EGUAM) in identifying practical, relevant and timely alternatives to land spread. Implementation of these will be critical in allowing key agri-food industries and their associated farms to maintain their current levels of production and employment, whilst at the same time contributing to our commitments in reducing levels of nitrates and phosphates.

"These solutions are entirely consistent with the objectives of the Secretary of State's recently announced Environment and Renewable Energy Fund (EREF) to accelerate actions consistent with our sustainable development strategy for the protection of the environment, and promoting the development of renewable energy sources.

"The solutions will also have an important part to play in meeting the requirements of the Action Programme of the Nitrates Directive being agreed with the EC. The detailed deployment of the EREF package has just been announced by the Secretary of State and the £6m capital available to assist agri-food and other waste projects, and



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the £12m capital available to assist new renewable energy assets provide an excellent opportunity for potential funding assistance for the technical solutions identified in the report.

“I encourage the agri-food industries and renewable energy developers to come forward quickly with technical proposals and associated business plans.”

I understand that arrangements have been put in place for DARD (Central Policy Group) and DETI to respond to you separately on the specific policy context for Northern Ireland. I trust that the above background to the output from the EGUAM group is helpful to you, and if I can be of any further assistance in this regard, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. George McIlroy', is written over a faint, illegible printed name.

DR GEORGE McILROY
Chief Executive

cc Ms Jenny Pyper (DETI)
Mr Norman Fulton (DARD)