

Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation

Decision on the extension of the operational life of the Doel 1 & 2 Nuclear Power Plants, located near the Port of Antwerp, Belgium

In accordance with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (the Espoo Convention) and Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention), the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage received notification from the Belgian Minister for Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development, of the intended extension of the operational life of the Doel 1 & 2 nuclear power plants (NPPs) and the associated nuclear safety-related improvement works, inviting Ireland to participate in transboundary public consultation.

Doel 1 & 2 are two of Belgium's seven nuclear power plants, and both have been in operation since 1975. In 2003, the Belgian Government passed a law stipulating that all nuclear power plants would be decommissioned 40 years after their industrial commissioning, meaning that Doel 1 & 2 were scheduled to cease operations in 2015. A subsequent law was passed in 2015 that extended the operational life of Doel 1 & 2 by 10 years, from 2015 to 2025. A ruling¹ in the Court of Justice of the European Union determined that the decision by Belgian authorities to extend the operational life of the NPPs constituted a 'project' within the meaning of the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU), thus requiring that an environmental impact assessment take place, along with the associated transboundary consultation.

For practical reasons, Belgian authorities decided to prepare two separate Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs), but have advised that they will need to be evaluated in conjunction. One report relates solely to the decision to extend the operational life of Doel 1 & 2. The second report concerns the nuclear safety-related improvement works which includes the construction of three new buildings on the site:

- Two buildings for hosting the Containment Filtered Venting System of the nuclear plant;
- One building housing the new fire extinguisher pump station.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as the appropriate body in Ireland with expertise on radiation policy, advised that Ireland should accept the invitation from Belgium to participate in the transboundary consultation because although Ireland is outside the 300km range set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its Ingestion and Commodities Planning Distance (ICPD) modelling, Ireland is within the 1,000km range set as Zone 1 for emergency response purposes by the IAEA. Zone 1 States are considered more likely to be affected and so direct liaison is established with these States by the IAEA in the event of an emergency.

A member of the public may make a written submission or observation in relation to the potential transboundary environmental effects of the project, by sending them to **their local planning authority**, to be received **by close of business on Wednesday 23 June 2021** at the latest. Submissions or observations should **not** be made to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Contact details for each planning authority are set out in the public consultation notice, which is available to view in the public consultation section of the website of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage at www.gov.ie/housing. The following information will also be available for viewing on the DHLGH consultation webpage; Notifications received from Belgian authorities, digital copies of the environmental documentation provided by Belgium to facilitate this public consultation, that includes ; report on the justified safe continued operation of Doel 1 & 2, Environmental Screening report by the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC), Environmental Impact Report and Extended Executive Summary concerning the nuclear safety-related improvement works, Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Impact Report concerning the decision to extend the operational life of Doel 1 & 2, EPA advice on the FANC screening report .

The public consultation notice together with a printed copy of the documents referenced above which will be available for inspection, or purchase at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy, during office hours at the office of each planning authority nationwide, **from today Wednesday 28 April 2021**.

Due to social distancing measures introduced in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, viewing may be by appointment only in local authority offices. It is strongly advised to contact your local authority to clarify the position in this regard before travelling to view the documentation.

In the interests of transparency, it should be noted that, following consultation with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, each planning authority will forward all submissions or observations it receives through this public consultation to the Belgian Minister for Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development and may also forward a summary of the submissions or observations to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Submissions or observations received, or a summary of same, may be published on the website of the Belgian Minister of Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage will not publish any submissions or observations or summary of same.

¹Case C-411/17



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage