A spokesperson for Dalradian said:

“In line with the Northern Ireland Executive’s response to COVID-19, Dalradian, whose only project is an exploration site in Co. Tyrone, has closed its offices and greatly reduced its activities.

“The regulations issued by Government (the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations (NI) 2020) permit fieldwork, such as essential environmental monitoring, to continue. This is being carried out as and when required by a handful of employees. Health and safety assessments are completed in advance addressing issues such as social distancing and the wearing of PPE. Access permissions are also sought and obtained from the relevant landowners. All testing is done as part of our environmental responsibilities.

“We were notified by the Northern Ireland Health & Safety Executive and Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) that this environmental monitoring had prompted a complaint. We clarified the nature of the work and no action is being taken by either body. We have also made a complaint to the PSNI about staff being harassed while completing this fieldwork.

“Dalradian is proposing a safe project designed to meet the highest regulatory and environmental standards. As part of the planning application, detailed Health Impact and Environmental Impact Assessments have been completed. The proposals are being independently assessed by the relevant authorities and in its response Northern Ireland’s Public Health Authority has made no objection to the project on public health grounds, including in relation to radon. As part of its radon assessment the Health Impact Assessment found that any radon discharged by mining activity would be within regulatory limits.

“Dalradian’s project will also be the first carbon neutral mine in Europe and the deposit’s minerals, particularly silver and copper, are essential for emerging technologies which will help tackle climate change.

“As part of their response to the coronavirus pandemic, staff from Dalradian have been volunteering to support their local community since March. Working through our community relations team our colleagues have already covered 10,000 miles, helping make deliveries and collections for vulnerable groups and frontline workers, including reconfiguring our staff minibus to support home visits by doctors. So far we’ve supported dozens of organisations including charities and a range of health providers.

“This builds on our long-standing approach to supporting the community through our Tyrone Fund which has already provided £680,000 to 320 local groups. We are also working with organisations such as the Owenkillew Community Development Association to provide match-funding for environmental projects to enhance local rivers and habitats for rare species such as the Pearl Mussel.

“Should the project receive planning permission it will provide major community and economic benefits whist meeting strict environmental standards. These benefits include the creation of 1,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs with an average salary twice the Northern Ireland average. This aligns with the Northern Ireland Executive’s new economic recovery strategy to deal with COVID-19 (‘Rebuilding a Stronger Economy’) which highlights the need to address regional imbalances in areas such as Tyrone by supporting the creation of high skilled, higher paying jobs.

So far the planning authority has received an unprecedented 4,000 positive letters regarding the project and a local pro-development community group is also supportive. Over 2,000 expressions of interest in future job opportunities have been received to date.”

**ENDS**