

**Michael McGibbon**

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**From:** Aidan Collins [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 10 April 2019 14:32  
**To:** DevelopmentPlan@midulstercouncil.org  
**Subject:** Lightsource BP - response to Draft Development Plan 10th April 2019  
**Attachments:** Lightsource BP - response to Draft Plan 10th April 2019 (ID 1432735).pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

Hi - please find attached the response from Lightsource BP to the Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030 Draft Plan Strategy.

Please include us in correspondence about this Local Development Plan progression going forward.

Regards,

Aidan Collins Principal Environmental Planner [REDACTED] [REDACTED]



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BT2 8LA

10<sup>th</sup> April 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Comments by Lightsource BP to the Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030 Draft Plan Strategy.**

**1.0 Introductory Background**

Lightsource BP are Europe's leading solar energy generator. We are primarily focused on utility scale ground and roof mounted photovoltaic installations, which we maintain and operate, selling the electricity generated either for use on the national grid network, or directly to a specific high energy user. Lightsource BP are committed to promoting the use of solar energy in N. Ireland and beyond as an economically viable and environmentally sound alternative to fossil fuels or nuclear generation.

Lightsource BP would refer the Planning Authority of their commitments to the EU Directive 2009/28/EC on the Promotion of Renewable Energy Sources established a mandatory target of 20% of overall EU energy consumption coming from renewable sources by 2020. Whilst the UK may ultimately leave the EU, it has been established that this commitment will still transfer into UK legislation.

**2.0 Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030 Draft Plan Strategy - Comments**

We would like to thank the Council for this opportunity to make a submission to the Mid Ulster District Council Local Development Plan 2030 Draft Plan Strategy.

There is an opportunity within Council's adopted Development Plan to promote the council area as a place that prides itself on its renewable energy credentials. Closely linked with this is the perception of the authority as an excellent place for enterprise and employment development.

The Local Development Plan presents an opportunity for the Council to focus the future Local Development Plan's vision for the development of the local authority area over the coming years. The vision for the Plan should therefore be forward thinking and foster sustainable economic and employment growth, promoting the talents of its diverse communities, whilst protecting its unique cultural & natural heritage in a manner that responds to the challenges which climate change presents.

### 3.0 Solar Energy Development

The Draft Plan does make reference within Paragraph 22.37 to the development of solar energy across the Council area in the coming years. Solar farms are relatively quick to deploy, in comparison with other energy generation technologies, and we believe well sited solar farms can help meet renewable energy targets, without impacting negatively on local communities or the environment. In particular, the Local Development Plan should consider the innovative approach known as *co-location*, where both solar and wind farms symbiotically co-exist. This is a highly sustainable use of existing infrastructure, with the solar farm and a nearby wind farm sharing the infrastructure (that may already be in place with the wind project). We believe the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph within **POLICY RNW 1 – RENEWABLE ENERGY** should be reworded to read:

*“Favourable consideration will be given to the re-use, shared use (co-location), refurbishment, repair and repowering of existing renewable energy developments in order to prolong the life span of developments such as wind farms and solar farms providing that these do not result in unacceptable impacts on the environment or residential / visual amenity.”*

Combining renewable resources and increasing the productivity of the existing infrastructure is a logical progression for the solar industry. With reduced development costs and construction timeframes, coupled with shared use of existing infrastructure and operating costs, renewable co-location could act as a catalyst for the future development of solar renewables now that subsidy system has expired.

### 4.0 Enterprise and Investment

The Local Development Plan should consider how to promote the Mid -Ulster Council area to attracting inward investment in employment and enterprise. It is our view that renewable energy and solar in particular, is a key incentive in this process. Increasingly foreign direct investment (FDI) companies wish to locate near to a secure supply of clean renewable electricity. This can be seen in the Republic of Ireland with Facebook in Meath, Amazon in Cork and Microsoft in Dublin.

The Local Development Plan therefore should contain clear, targeted and focused policies and objectives, which demonstrate how renewable forms of energy are to be encouraged and in what areas of the local economy they can particularly assist. The use of renewable energy like solar, can stimulate jobs and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Indeed outside Co. Antrim, Mid Ulster has the only other functioning utility scale solar farm, which serves a local food manufacturer. This is an excellent example of solar energy supporting local manufacturing, protecting jobs and meeting renewable energy targets. The Council should be aspiring to become a supporting platform for local business development and companies that embrace renewables.

As well as local companies, many large FDI multinationals in deciding where to locate operations, are increasingly emphasising a desire for secure, clean renewable energy. An example of this is the recent Facebook data centre in Clonee, which sources 100% of its energy from renewable sources. Peter Freed, Data Centre Renewable Energy Manager in Facebook encapsulates this:

*“Our goal is simple: power our data centres with clean and renewable energy and, where possible, help green the grid by adding new renewable resources.”*

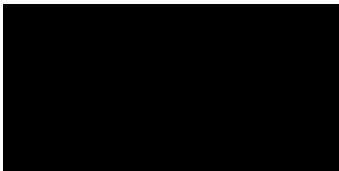
## **5.0 Climate Change**

The development of renewable energy generation sources should be a priority of policy makers, not just for the economic reasons outlined above, but equally due to the challenges that climate change will present. Tackling climate change has increasingly become a key national government priority for the planning system in Ireland. The Development Plan should focus minds on ways to promote and attract high quality economic development that minimises the impact on climate change. This can be achieved through promoting policies for implementing renewable energy technologies such as solar PV.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

Lightsource BP would be willing to meet with Planning Officers from the Council to discuss these suggestions for the Local Development Plan at any stage. Please contact Aidan Collins on any of the numbers below.

Kind regards,



**Aidan Collins – Principal Environmental Planner,  
Lightsource BP**

