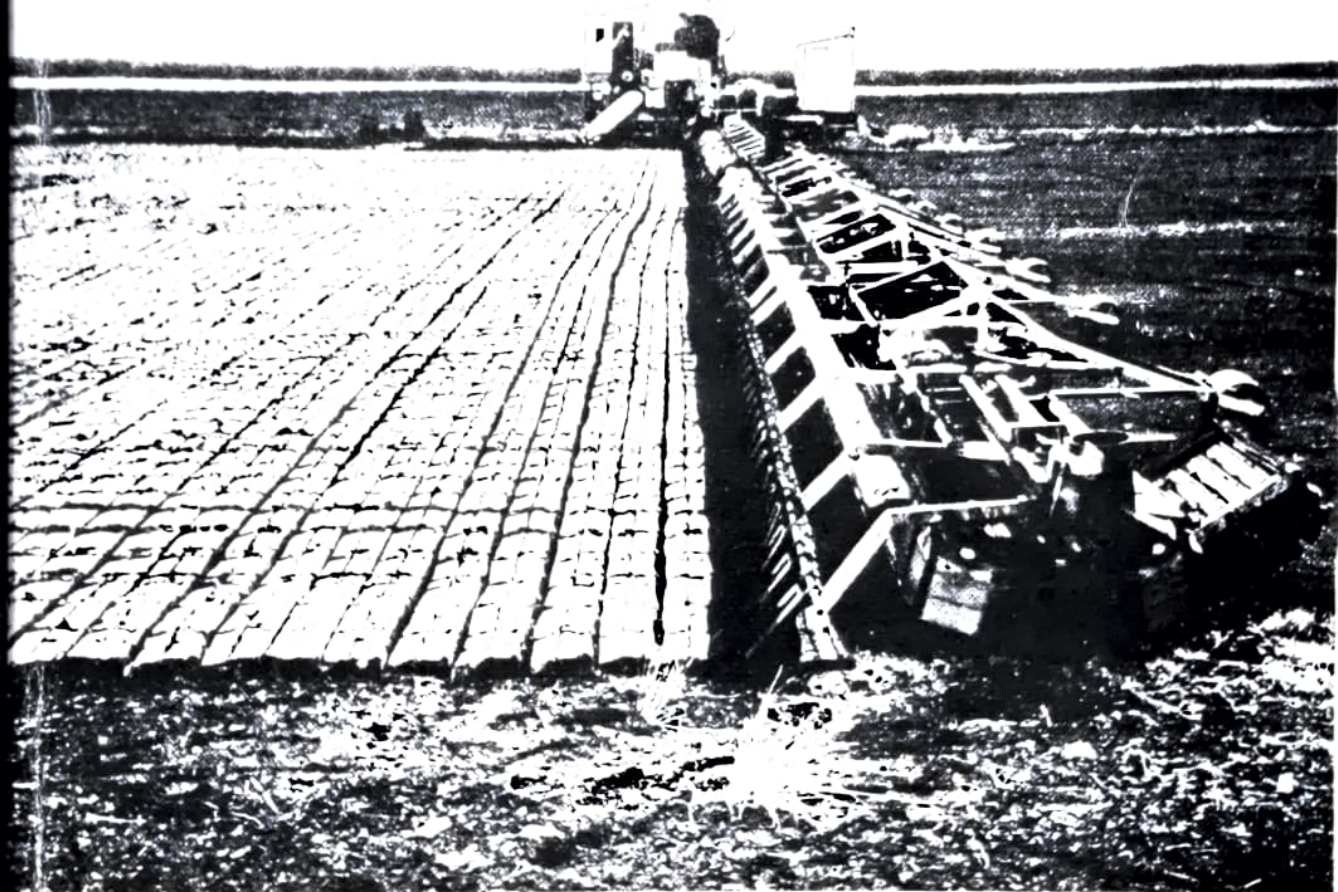


The Socio-Economic Impact of Bord na Móna on the East Midlands

**By
Marian Curry**



**Occasional Papers, No. 7,
Geography Department,
Maynooth College**

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

The introduction of a new industry into a rural area can have a very marked social, economic and environmental impact. On the economic level, the provision of additional employment increases spending power, boosts the commercial life of the region and, through multiplier effects, results in increased incomes over a wide spectrum. Improvements in economic security may lead to an increase in population, due to local people remaining in the locality and also, in some cases, to workers from outside being attracted into the region by the industry in question. Population increases may in turn lead to improvements in social services, such as better educational and recreational facilities. However, the availability of industrial employment can also have some negative effects. Movements of new people into the area may result in problems associated with social upheaval. Apart from socio-economic considerations, industrial activity may also have a very notable impact upon the environment, and many industrial operations have been accused of having an adverse environmental impact, mainly in the form of noxious effluent and waste.

Clout (1972), in his book *Rural Geography: An Introductory Survey*, discusses the advantages and disadvantages which can result from the installation of industry in the countryside, as identified by the Scott Committee (1942). The advantages include increased employment opportunities, improvements in the physical amenities and social standards of the countryside, and the resultant revival in country life. The disadvantages noted include possible harmful effects on agricultural production, a spoiling of scenery, shortages of farm labourers and social change which might be considered undesirable.

Keeping these factors in mind, the impact of an industrial installation on the economic and social life in an Irish rural region is examined in this paper using Bord na Móna, the Irish Peat Development Authority, as a case study. The Board, which has been developing Ireland's peat resources since 1946, provides a particularly appropriate case study because the vast majority of its extensive operations are located in rural regions.

The Turf Development Board, a forerunner to the present day Bord na Móna, was set up by the Government in 1934. It was constituted as a private limited company financed by means of grants-in-aid from the Department of Industry and Commerce. In 1935 the Board purchased the Turraun Peat Works in Co. Offaly from Sir John Purser Griffith. The importance of Sir John Purser Griffith as "a pioneer in turf development" cannot be over-rated (Andrews, 1982). At Turraun Sir John had established that it was possible to upgrade turf to the level of a commercial fuel and to use it for the production of electricity. His message to those involved in the Turf Development Board was that the future of the bogs rested in the production of macerated turf to be burned in power stations sited on the bog. The Board subsequently acquired a 4,000 acre bog at Clonsast, Co. Offaly, and a 1,600 acre bog at Lyrechrumpane, Co. Kerry in 1936. Before the end of the decade these bogs were cleared and drained.

Irish fuel imports were threatened during the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Board, in order to counteract the danger, set up the Kildare Hand-Won Turf Emergency Scheme in 1940. It also purchased the Lullymore Peat Briquette Factory in the same year from the Peat Fuel Company Ltd. The Hand-Won Turf Emergency Scheme was located on the Kildare-Offaly peatlands, but the Board was faced with a major problem. Apart from their use as fuel, the Irish bogs had been considered to be practically worthless; consequently the bog regions were characterised by a low population density. The Board was therefore faced with a severe shortage of labour in the Kildare-Offaly boglands. In order to combat this, hostels were built to accommodate workers who had to be 'imported' from all over Ireland and, in some

cases, from Britain.

In 1946 the Turf Development Board was replaced by Bord na Móna which was established by an Act of the Oireachtas. Bord na Móna is a statutory corporation whose purpose is to develop the country's peat resources and to provide peat for electricity generation. In 1981, the Act was expanded to include grant-aiding the development of private bogs. Bord na Móna operates on a commercial basis and receives no subsidy or tariff protection. To date, it has acquired 200,000 acres of bog and has established 22 works locations around the country (Fig. 1). It produces fuel for use in the E.S.B. peat-burning power stations, and machine turf and briquettes for general industrial and domestic use. It also produces horticultural moss peat and a variety of fertilised peat products for a world-wide market.

The impact of Bord na Móna in the East Midlands provides the focus for attention in this paper. This area was chosen because it is a vital centre of Bord na Móna and its ancillary industrial activities. Share (1971) notes that "it is on the flat midland plains that the Bord na Móna operation expands to its full potential". The East Midlands, being a section of this area, facilitates a study of the Board's "full potential".

In order to assess the Board's impact in the East Midlands, it is useful to distinguish two very relevant phases in Bord na Móna's development, namely the Turf Camp and Housing Scheme phases. During the Turf Camp stage of the 1940s and 1950s, hostels were built at almost all of the Board's twenty-three works which are in production today. The Housing Schemes were built for Bord na Móna's permanent labour force from 1950 to 1956. A total of 572 houses were built in separate units throughout the Midlands.

Following an overview of the socio-economic impact of the Board at the national level and on the East Midlands region in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 will deal with the early 'Turf Camp' stage of development, while Chapter 4 will focus on the Housing Schemes and their contribution to rural revitalisation in the East Midlands. Chapter 5 will assess the impact on a selected East Midland town (Edenderry) and its hinterland. Chapter 6 discusses the future implications for communities which are very dependent on Bord na Móna's operations, in light of the fact that peat production, as we know it, has a limited lifespan.

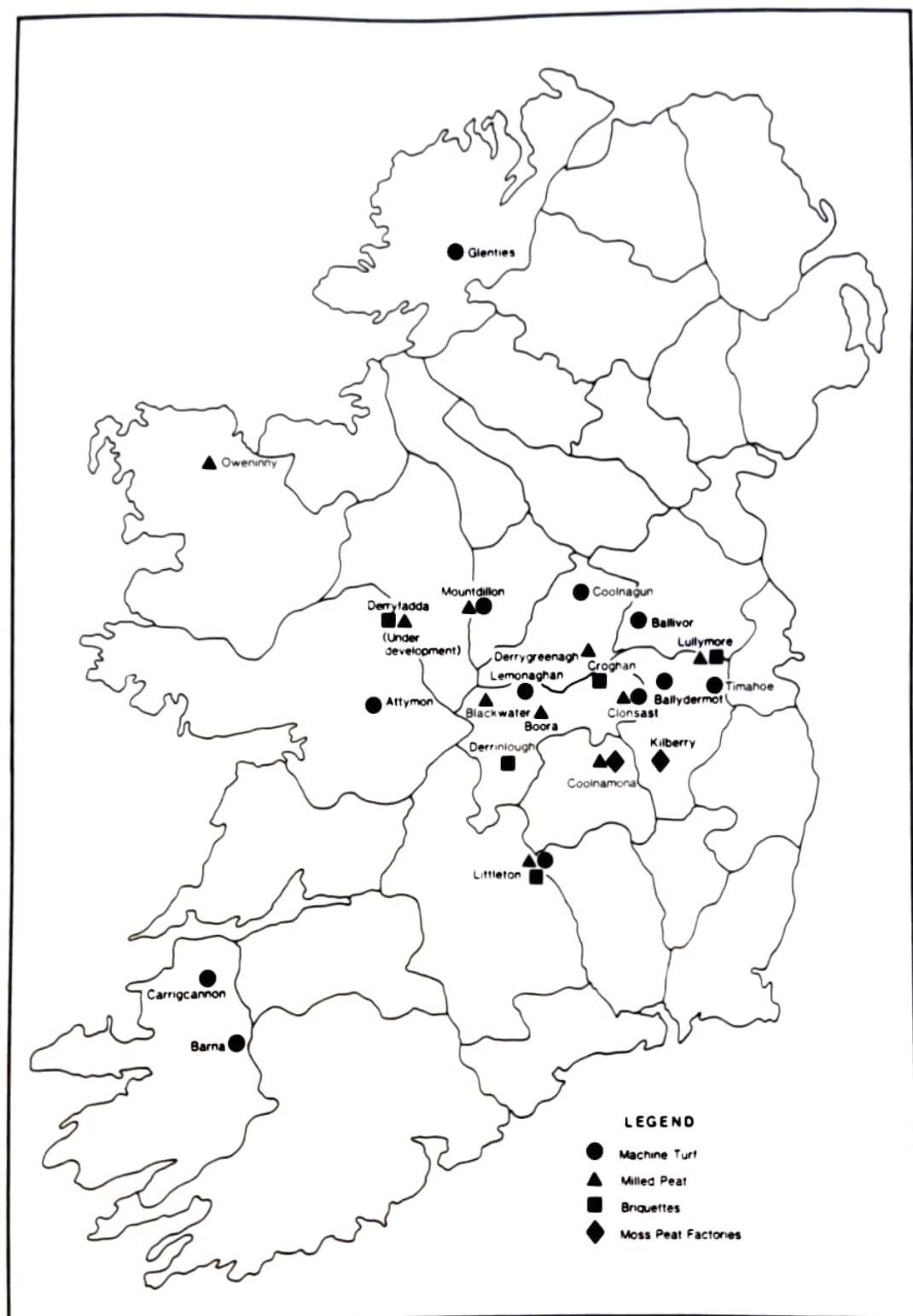


FIGURE 1. Location Of Bord Na Móna Works.
 (Source : Bord Na Móna Annual Report, 1981-82).

CHAPTER 2 : THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF BORD NA MÓNA

This chapter outlines the social and economic importance of Bord na Móna at both the national and regional level.

(1) BORD NA MÓNA'S NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

(a) Employment and Income

In the financial year 1983-4, the average number of employees with Bord na Móna was 5,937 which rose to 7,171 at the peak of the harvesting season (Bord na Móna Annual Report, 1983-4). In the same year a total of £54.68m was paid out in salaries and wages. Although these wages are paid in the regions where the Board operates, they do in fact benefit the whole economy due to the multiplier effect. By the time these wages have trickled down into various sectors of the economy, the amount of income created by Bord na Móna is much greater than the initial figure of £54.68m.

Bord na Móna's fuel output for the financial year 1983-4 involved the production of 471,007 tonnes of machine turf, 4.47m tonnes of milled peat and 442,564 tonnes of briquettes. In the same year the Board's total sales revenue was £102.9m.

(b) Contribution to the Balance of Payments

The contribution of Bord na Móna greatly improves Ireland's balance of payments situation. In 1976 it was estimated that the 56% of Bord na Móna's fuel output which was used to generate 25% of the nation's electricity represented a saving on imported energy of £60m (Healy, 1978). Peat fuels supplied by Bord na Móna in 1983-4 amounted to 893,410 tonnes oil equivalent (Bord na Móna Annual Report, 1983-4). This also represents a considerable saving on imports.

Added to this, the Board earns a substantial amount of income for the country through the export of moss peat and related garden products, and ornamental shrubs. In the year 1983-4, gross revenue from the Board's exports amounted to £16.2m.

(c) National Security

Peat fuels played an important part in the maintenance of national security when supplies of imported fuel were unobtainable during the Second World War. This, as noted by Fell (1972) is still an important consideration:

"As demand for an increasing volume and variety of imported fuels grows, the capacity to produce turf still gives some security from the effects of instability particularly in the oil producing countries".

(d) Impact on Rural Ireland

With the exception of the head office in Dublin, the majority of the Board's activities are situated in rural Ireland, in areas where little other employment is available. The result is that the number of people emigrating from these areas has been reduced and the areas in question have become more attractive places in which to live due to the following factors:

(i) *Improved Services* : In the areas where Bord na Móna began operations, an increase in population was recorded, along with an increase in spending power. This led to improved educational, commercial, and recreational facilities, which in turn were incentives for people to remain in these regions thereby further increasing population. In the course of developing bogs, Bord na Móna has improved many watercourses which, apart from aiding the drainage of bogs, has improved run-off conditions over wide areas of adjoining land. Farmers in these localities benefit accordingly.

(ii) *Housing Schemes* : The building of 574 houses in rural peatland areas by the Board has been described as "an almost unique experiment in the task of rural renewal in this country" (Bristow and Fell, 1971). Not only did these schemes aid the provision and improvement of such services as those mentioned above, but the running water and improved sewerage system accompanying the houses benefitted the whole locality.

(iii) *Employment of Seasonal Labour* : In the year 1983-4, 1,234 seasonal jobs were provided by the board during the peat harvesting season. Many of these jobs are held by farmers and it has been suggested that, had Bord na Móna not existed, it is possible that some of these small farmers would have been forced to emigrate or would have become unemployed (Bristow and Fell, 1971). It is also said that the income farmers receive through working with the Board enables them to make improvements on their land. However, the situation is viewed by some in a more negative light. It has been suggested that by providing farmers with a part-time job, many become more negligent of their land and may become inefficient farmers.

(2) THE IMPORTANCE OF BORD NA MÓNA IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

The importance of the Board in the East Midland area is discussed in more detail in the following chapters, but a brief overview may be useful at this point.

(a) Direct Employment

Five major groups of bogs are exploited by Bord na Móna in the East Midlands - Timahoe, Ballydermot, Lullymore, Clonsast and Derrygreenagh (Fig. 2). The Lullymore and Croghan briquette factories are also located in this region (Fig. 2). Of the 5,937 full-time Board employees in 1983-4, 1,379 (23.2% of the total Board workforce) were located at these works (cf. Table 1).

| Works | Number Employed |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Timahoe | 245 |
| Ballydermot | 224 |
| Lullymore (Bog and Factory) | 269 |
| Croghan (Briquette Factory) | 124 |
| Derrygreenagh | 500 |
| Clonsast | 300 |

TABLE 1 : PER WEEK AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT, 1981
(Source : Bord na Móna Head Office)

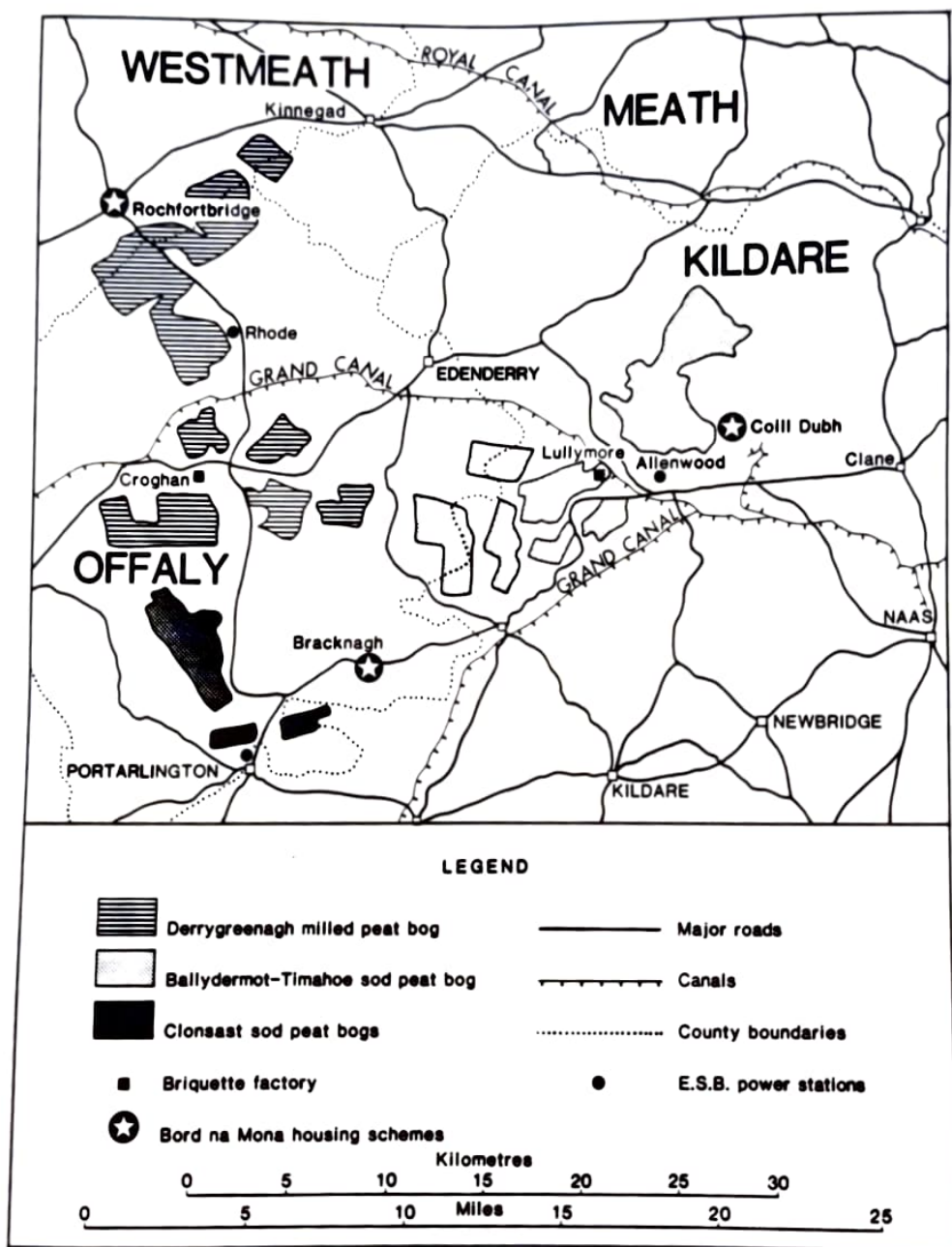


FIGURE 2. Bord Na Móna Operations In The East Midlands.

This figure of 23.2% could also be roughly applied to the percentage of the Board's wages and salaries which are earned in the area. In 1983-4 Bord na Móna spent a total of £54.68m on wages and salaries. If workers in the East Midlands received 23.2% of the total wages, the contribution to the region would have been £12.7m. Research into multiplier income effects of wages and salaries suggests that about two-thirds of the primary income generated by Bord na Móna in the Midlands would be spent locally (Fell, 1972). Thus, about £8.46m would have been spent locally and when multiplier effects are taken into consideration the total amount of income generated by the Board in the East Midlands is very substantial. Added to this, 768 people throughout the country are in receipt of pensions from Bord na Móna's superannuation schemes.

(b) Ancillary Industries

Bord na Móna is indirectly responsible for employment created by related ancillary industries and spin-off industries. Perhaps the most important of the Board's ancillary industries are the peat-fired electricity generating stations. Three such stations exist in the East Midlands at Allenwood, Co. Kildare, Rhode, Co. Offaly and Portarlinton, Co. Offaly (Fig. 2). The first of these, a 40mw. capacity station, is supplied by sod peat from the Ballydermot-Timahoe group of bogs. The 37.5mw. station at Portarlinton is also fired by sod peat from Clonsast, while the 80mw. capacity station at Rhode is fired by milled peat from the Derrygreenagh group of bogs. The three stations together employ 363 people. The E.S.B. purchases about 70% of Bord na Móna's total output and Government policy dictates that it give priority to indigenous peat over imported fuels even when it is uneconomic to do so (Kearns, 1978). Table 2 gives the breakdown of sales of peat to the three East Midland power stations and the numbers employed at each.

| Station | Machine Turf (Tonnes) | Milled Peat (Tonnes) | Numbers Employed |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Portarlinton | 76,332 | - | 113 |
| Allenwood | 110,917 | - | 140 |
| Rhode | - | 632,215 | 150 |

TABLE 2 : NUMBERS EMPLOYED AND PEAT BOUGHT BY POWER STATIONS
(Source : ESB Power Stations and Bord na Móna Report, 1981-82)

Other industries have located in the area due to the availability of buildings originally provided by Bord na Móna. When the hostels, which had been built to accommodate seasonal workers in the early days, were vacated in the late 1950s and early 1960s, private enterprises purchased the buildings and set up various industries. For example, in 1962 the Drummond Hostel in Co. Kildare was purchased and converted into a mushroom factory. Another incentive to locate in this area was the relative proximity to the moss peat factories at Coolnamona, Co. Laois and Kilberry, Co. Kildare. Three articulated trailers of moss peat arrive at the mushroom factory weekly. At the time of writing, although its future is uncertain, this factory employs about 400 people, over 50% of whom are female. This is a very desirable aspect of the factory because the vast majority of employees at the nearby Bord na Móna works and briquette factory at Lullymore are male. Most of the other former hostels have been converted to some economic use including the camps at Ballydermot, Co. Kildare and Shean, Co. Offaly which were developed as hen hatcheries, with the former having been recently converted into riding stables.

(c) Community Revitalisation

Secure employment and income, which have been provided by Bord na Móna and its spin-off industries, have been the basis for revitalisation of community life in the East Midlands. The resultant growth in population and increased spending power has led, as previously mentioned, to increased demand for social and commercial services. Table 3 shows the increase in population which occurred from 1936 to

1981 in the Edenderry No. 1 Rural District, an area very much affected by Bord na Móna's development. It also shows the population trends for the whole of County Offaly (in which the town of Edenderry is located) and, for comparison, the demographic trends of Roscrea No. 2 Rural District, an area in South Offaly which has not been greatly affected by Bord na Móna activity.

As can be seen from Table 3, population growth in Edenderry No. 1 Rural District has been more constant than that in Roscrea No. 2 Rural District and in County Offaly as a whole. With the location of several turf camps in the Edenderry No. 1 Rural District during the early 1940s, the population of the area grew very rapidly from 6,563 in 1936 to 8,186 in 1946. This dropped to 7,308 in 1951, but from this year on each Census recorded an increase in population. By 1981 the population of the area was 8,777. In sharp contrast to this, the population of Roscrea No. 2 Rural District fell steadily from 5,207 in 1936 to 4,214 in 1971, and only in 1981 did it show any increase, reaching 4,797 in that year. The population figures for Co. Offaly as a whole show a decrease in population in 1951, 1956, and 1961, but the county's population subsequently rose steadily from 1966 and reached 58,312 in 1981.

| Year | Edenderry No.1 Rural District | Roscrea No.2 Rural District | County Offaly |
|------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 1936 | 6,563 | 5,207 | 51,308 |
| 1946 | 8,186 | 5,130 | 53,686 |
| 1951 | 7,308 | 4,953 | 52,544 |
| 1956 | 7,404 | 4,538 | 51,970 |
| 1961 | 7,436 | 4,524 | 51,533 |
| 1966 | 7,509 | 4,443 | 51,717 |
| 1971 | 7,676 | 4,214 | 51,829 |
| 1981 | 8,777 | 4,797 | 58,312 |

TABLE 3 : POPULATION TRENDS IN SELECTED AREAS

The expansion of Bord na Móna operations had a large part to play in population growth in the Edenderry No. 1 Rural District, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s. The recorded increase in population has led to revitalisation both in the District itself and in neighbouring towns. However, it must be stated that while population increased steadily in the Edenderry No. 1 Rural District during the 1960s and 1970s, reaching 8,777 in 1981, employment opportunities with Bord na Móna were beginning to become relatively less important as various other factors began to influence the upward demographic trend. These factors include the opening of two factories in Edenderry during the early 1970s, and the proximity of Edenderry to Dublin which, when combined with increased car ownership, enables people to travel daily to work in Dublin.

While there is no doubt that Bord na Móna had a major role to play in the revitalisation of areas such as the Edenderry District, particularly in its early years, this revitalisation is most obvious in areas which were chosen for the construction of a Bord na Móna housing estate. In the East Midlands region there are three such estates - at Rochfortbridge, Bracknagh and Coill Dubh (Fig. 2). These estates contain a total of 306 houses. Coill Dubh is the only estate which was not attached to an existing nucleated settlement, but in all three schemes the impact on community life has been considerable (see Chapter 4).

CHAPTER 3 : THE BORD NA MÓNA HOSTELS

The restriction on fuel imports during the Second World War served as a major impetus for large-scale exploitation of the Irish peatlands. During the Kildare Hand-Won Turf Emergency Scheme (1942-1947) thousands of acres of bog were purchased by the Turf Development Board in order to supplement existing operations at Turraun and Clonsast (both in Co. Offaly). By 1945 machine turf was produced at both these centres, and bogs under preliminary development included those at Kilberry (Co. Kildare), Attymon (Co. Galway), Littleton (Co. Tipperary) and Mountdillon (Co. Roscommon). In 1946 the Turf Development Board was dissolved and Bord na Móna took its place. The Board was entrusted by Statute to exploit 750,000 acres of deep peat. The large-scale exploitation of the 'Emergency' period was to continue.

During this phase of exploitation the Board was faced with a major problem - that of inadequate labour supply in areas where it was to operate. The solution lay in attracting workers from all over Ireland and accommodating them in several hostels or 'camps'. These hostels, for the most part, had the appearance of a military barracks and catered for several hundred men housed in a number of long buildings. The earlier camps of the Kildare Emergency Scheme were mostly located in Kildare and Offaly. By 1945, 14 camps (Fig. 3) were being maintained and money for their upkeep, and for the development of roads and bogs, was provided by the Government. 4,177 workers, out of a peak total of 5,138, were resident in the camps in the period 1944-1945. It is estimated that the hostels at Shean, Edenderry and Glashabaun (Fig. 3) between them held about 700 men and the camp at Clonsast accommodated 350.

The Bord na Móna Annual Report in 1947 marks the end of the Kildare Emergency Scheme. Due to the ending of the 'Emergency' conditions, only 2,800 were resident in the hostels at peak in the period 1946-1947. However, Bord na Móna was making plans for an extension of its operations and sites for further hostels were acquired at Mountdillon (Co. Roscommon), Derryaroge (Co. Longford) and Hill of Down (Co. Meath). In the same year Clonsast hostel was extended to provide accommodation for 150 additional men and work began on the hostels at Boora (Co. Offaly), Attymon (Co. Galway) and Littleton (Co. Tipperary). By 1948, 3,218 were employed by the Board and the need for a more permanent labour force was obvious. For this purpose, serious consideration was given to the construction of houses for workers. An Act of 1950 provided the authorisation for these houses and two years later the Board's housing schemes at Bracknagh (near Clonsast), Coill Dubh (near Timahoe), Cluain Tuaiscirt (near Mountdillon) and Beal Atha Liag (near Derryaroge), which together totalled 340 houses, were occupied. However, hostels continued to be built in newly developed bogland areas. By 1955, 6,184 men were employed at peak and produced a total of 628,596 tonnes of machine turf from the following works: Clonsast, Baile Dhiath, Attymon, Mountdillon, Ballivor and Cuil na gCon. 99,596 tonnes of milled peat was produced at Lullymore and used in the Briquette factory there. In the 1940s and 1950s all of the Board's major works had to have hostel accommodation for the influx of workers which they attracted and needed. Figure 3 shows the distribution of hostels in the East Offaly and Kildare area.

Those interested in the seasonal employment offered by Bord na Móna answered leaflet advertisements which were distributed throughout the country, displayed in shop windows and printed in the national newspapers. Employment was open to all above the age of 16 and the minimum length of stay was two weeks. In 1951 wages were paid on both a piece and a time rate with the majority of operations being carried out on piece rate. The time rate was 1s. 8d. per hour for a 48 hour week, while the piece rate enabled an average worker to earn 2s. 1d. per hour. A 'wet-time' daily rate of 10s. 5d. was paid for time

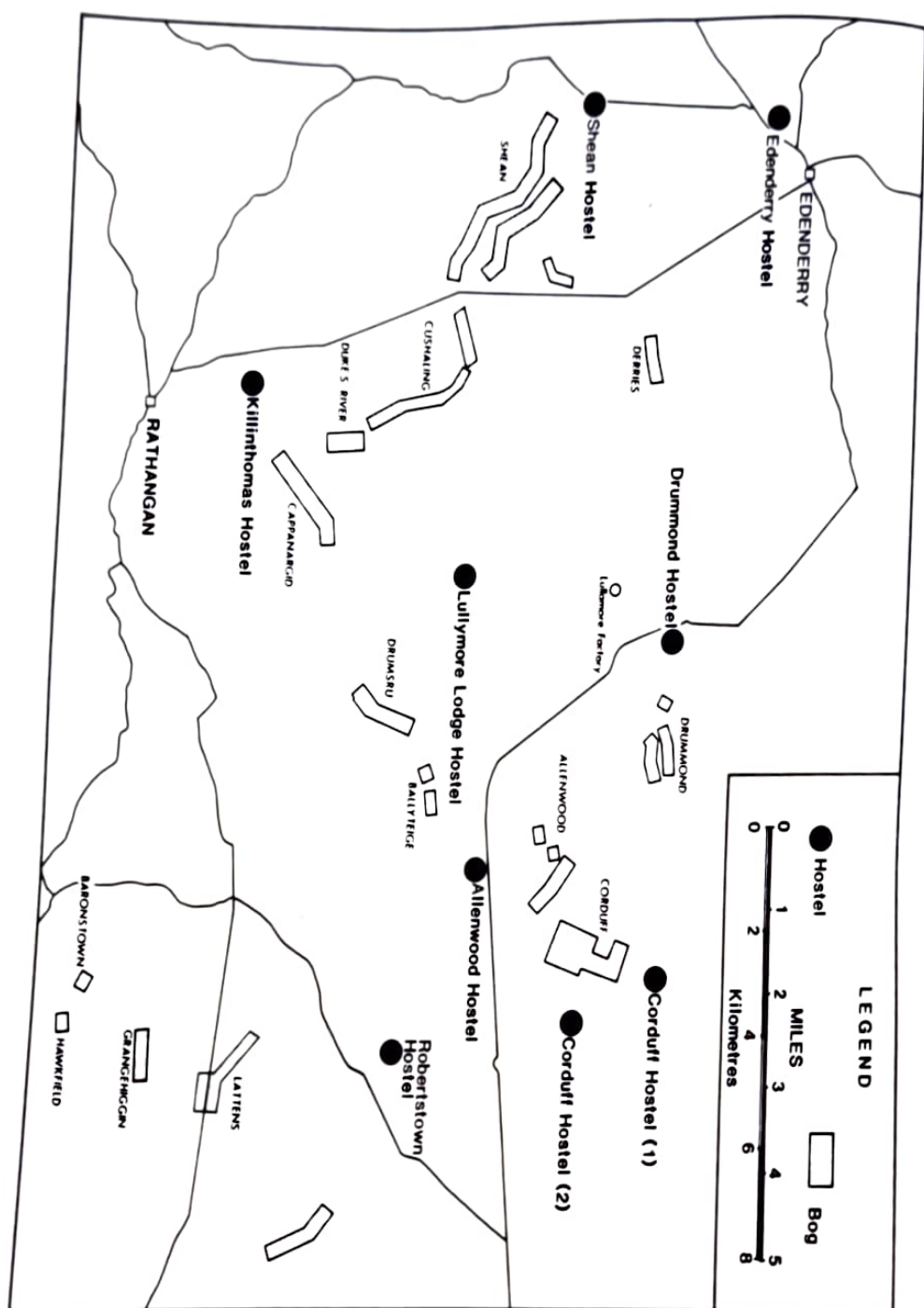


FIGURE 3. Bord Na Móna Hostels In Offaly And Kildare.

lost due to bad weather. Work on the bogs involved a 48 hour week from Monday to Saturday. The hours of work from Monday to Friday were from 7.30 a.m. to 5.45 p.m. with breaks for meals, and on Saturday work commenced at 7.30 a.m. and finished at 1.45 p.m.

The work consisted of 'footing' turf, feeding sod collectors and the loading and unloading of wagons. The men worked in teams of at least three people comprising a 'cutter', a 'catcher' and a 'wheeler'. The 'cutter' used a special type of spade called a 'sleán' which had a wing set at right angles to the blade proper. This allowed him to cut out a complete sod each time he dug, which he would then throw to the 'catcher'. The 'catcher' stacked the wet sods on a 'bog barrow' which was then wheeled by the 'wheeler' to a nearby dry spreadground.

The full weekly charge for board and lodgings at the hostels was 20 shillings in 1951. A medical orderly was present at each hostel and regular visits were made by the Board's doctor. Before being admitted to the hostel all recruits had to undergo a medical examination. Recreational facilities at the hostels included football, hurling, table tennis, darts, and each hostel also had its own library.

The Turf Harvesting Scheme for the most part attracted single unemployed men, students, members of youth organisations and, occasionally, boy scouts who were allocated separate sites enabling them to set up their own encampments. The workers were organised by the Federation of Rural Workers and the services of the Labour Court were availed of on a number of occasions.

The hostels located in the East Midlands were those of Edenderry, Shean, Glashabaun, Ballydermot, Drummond, Timahoe (North, Middle and South), Allenwood, Lullymore Lodge, Derrygreenagh and Clonsast (Fig. 3). A random sample of 210 hostel residents was selected from the Board's personnel files kept at head office in Dublin, in order to get some indication of where the turf workers came from, their age structure, marital status, length of stay and reasons for leaving. The sample was resident in the Board hostels of the East Midlands between 1944-1956. Due to inconsistencies in filing and the fact that hostels other than those in the East Midlands are included in the files, it was impossible to determine what percentage of the total number of registration cards is included in the sample.

Of the East Midland hostels, Derrygreenagh, Lullymore Lodge and Allenwood are the only ones not represented in the sample. As can be seen from Table 4, each county in the Republic of Ireland was well represented in the turf camps, while Down, Derry and Armagh are the only three Northern Irish counties not to be represented in the sample. Dublin sent the greatest number of harvesters in the sample, with 12.38% giving Dublin addresses; Tipperary followed with 9.52%; followed by Cork with 8.57% of the sample. The counties sending the fewest residents were Kilkenny and Laois (both sending 0.47% of the sample). Of the sample of 210, 98 (46.6%) were from urban centres (i.e. towns with over 1,500 inhabitants in 1951). This reflects the difficulties involved in gaining either rural or urban employment in Ireland at that time. While the registration cards are useful indicators of where many of the Board's employees came from, their usefulness is limited as the majority of employees from Laois, Kildare and Offaly would not have been resident in the hostels.

As can be seen from Table 4, several counties are over-represented in the sample when one takes into account the percentage of the total national population resident in that county. Of these, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Mayo and Leitrim are substantially over-represented, with Tipperary being the most over-represented county sending 9.52% of the sample but yet containing only 3.1% of the total national population. This information may indicate that the economic difficulties of the 1950s were felt most severely by the counties mentioned; but in the case of Tipperary, nearness to the peat operations in Offaly and Kildare would no doubt also have contributed to the apparent dominance of Tipperary residents in the Bord na Móna hostels. There are also many counties whose representation in the camps was similar to the figure for the percentage of total national population resident in that county. However, counties Sligo, Kilkenny, Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Donegal, and Dublin were under-represented - i.e. the percentages of the sample permanently resident in these counties is less than their percentages of the total national population in 1951.

The average age of the workers in the sample is 27-28 years, but this hides the large variations in age among the workers with the youngest hostel resident being 16 and the oldest being 57 years of age. Of the 210 residents, only 14 were married. The average length of a resident's stay was 44 days but again

this hides the variations which occurred, with one staying for 302 days while the shortest stays were only a matter of hours. A number of men in the latter category were either rejected on medical grounds or left because they disliked the hostels. Of the total sample, 68 had previously been to a hostel with some returning for a third season.

| County | Percentage Of Turf Workers | Percentage Total Population |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dublin | 12.38 | 16.0 |
| Tipperary | 9.52 | 3.1 |
| Cork | 8.57 | 8.0 |
| Limerick | 7.14 | 3.3 |
| Mayo | 7.14 | 3.3 |
| Galway | 6.66 | 3.7 |
| Kerry | 6.66 | 3.0 |
| Wexford | 4.28 | 2.1 |
| Meath | 3.80 | 1.5 |
| Cavan | 3.33 | 1.5 |
| Roscommon | 3.33 | 1.6 |
| Clare | 2.85 | 2.0 |
| Leitrim | 2.85 | 1.0 |
| Donegal | 2.38 | 3.0 |
| Tyrone | 2.38 | 3.0 |
| Waterford | 2.38 | 1.7 |
| Kildare | 1.90 | 1.5 |
| Offaly | 1.90 | 1.2 |
| Antrim | 1.42 | 15.6 |
| Fermanagh | 1.42 | 1.2 |
| Louth | 1.42 | 1.6 |
| Wicklow | 1.42 | 1.4 |
| Carlow | 0.95 | 0.8 |
| Longford | 0.95 | 0.8 |
| Sligo | 0.95 | 1.4 |
| Westmeath | 0.95 | 1.2 |
| Kilkenny | 0.47 | 1.5 |
| Laois | 0.47 | 1.1 |

TABLE 4 : ORIGINS OF TURF WORKERS LIVING IN HOSTELS

Table 5 (page 15) lists the reason residents gave for leaving the hostels.

The view held by many supervisors and workers to the effect that work on the bogs was used by many as a 'stop-over' until more desirable employment became available is supported by the fact that 32 left for other work, 7 went to England and 1 left for Canada. Work with the sugar-beet harvest in England attracted many of those who left the hostels to emigrate. It is hard to find out precisely how many workers were dissatisfied with work on the bogs or with hostel accommodation as 24 simply stated they were 'going home', and 26 left of their 'own accord'. Dissatisfaction with work was expressed directly by only 17, but 10 other workers claimed that pay was not high enough. 15 refused to work and strikes and absenteeism are included in this category. Only five had their employment terminated expressly because of management dissatisfaction, while one was taken into Garda custody!

A magazine entitled *An Sleán* was published by the Camp Recreation Fund by authority of the Turf Development Board. It was a fortnightly magazine which recorded "matters of interest, recreation and the general welfare of the turf workers on the Offaly-Kildare scheme". The first edition of the magazine appeared in 1944. Reading through different issues of the magazine one gets an insight into life at the

camps and the interaction between the various camps and local towns. Inter-camp races and tug-o'-wars were quite common, as were hurling and football matches with local teams, while a turf-cutting competition was also held annually. The "Logs" from the various camps which appear in the magazine give much information about the other forms of recreation available in the camps. These include the Radio Eireann Question Time which was held in one of the hostels in February 1946 and which was followed by a special Variety Concert and a one-act play performed by the Turf Development Players!

| Reason | Number |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Other Work | 32 |
| Dissatisfied With Work Or Pay | 27 |
| Domestic | 26 |
| Own Accord | 26 |
| Going Home | 24 |
| No Work | 18 |
| Refusal To Work | 15 |
| Health | 14 |
| Dissatisfied With The Hostel | 8 |
| Emigrating | 8 |
| Fired (Dissatisfaction) | 5 |
| Disappeared | 4 |
| Other Reasons | 3 |

TABLE 5 : REASONS GIVEN FOR LEAVING HOSTELS

Interaction between the hostel residents and local communities was quite high. Apart from the G.A.A. fixtures mentioned, many residents travelled to local bars for entertainment at week-ends. In addition to this, dances at the turf camps were common. One article published in *An Sleán* in 1945 stated that at a dance held at the Timahoe camp "the fair sex were very well represented - some coming from as far away as Sallins, Clane and Naas". This interaction was to continue and a substantial number of workers married local girls and settled in the locality, with many couples moving into houses in the Bord na Móna housing schemes.

Although hostels continued to be built on newly developed bogland until 1956, it was clear by this stage that the era of the turf camp was nearing an end. Mechanisation was taking over from the traditional method of winning turf by hand, and enabled more permanent jobs to be available on the boglands. The hostels had always been seen as a temporary measure and, since the early 1950s, the Bord na Móna housing schemes began to take the place of the turf camps. This aspect of the Board's development is examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 : THE BORD NA MÓNA HOUSING SCHEMES

"The Board gave serious consideration during the year to the necessity of having houses for workers erected adjacent to the bogs in development. In the opinion of the Board, such houses are vital for a permanent labour force. Hostels can only be regarded as a satisfactory solution for the housing of seasonal labour."

(Bord na Móna Annual Report 1948)

When the Kildare Turf Emergency Scheme ended in 1947, increasing mechanisation had begun to bring many changes, not least of which was the availability of year-round jobs. Seasonal employment became less significant because mechanisation required training, which in turn meant that the high staff turnover indicated in Chapter 3 became undesirable. What was needed was a permanent work force, and the consideration given to the building of houses in the Annual Report of 1948 soon became a reality. In 1950 the Turf Development Act authorised the Board to provide houses for its workers in close proximity to the bogs. Nine schemes comprising a total of 582 houses were submitted to the Minister for Industry and Commerce and approval was granted. Site development work commenced that year. By 1956, 574 houses were either completed or in course of construction. This chapter examines the socio-economic contribution of these housing schemes to rural renewal in the East Midlands.

An early decision was made that the houses would be concentrated in fully serviced villages and not erected as isolated units, or in small groups on the periphery of the bogs (Glynn, 1959). Five hundred and seventy four houses were built as new villages or attached to already existing villages depending on whether the site satisfied certain essential criteria (Glynn, 1959):

- The site must be within 2 or 3 miles of the bog railhead.
- If an existing village was covered by (a), the site was to be picked as near as possible to the village.
- The site must have all the other necessary requirements of a good building site.

| Name | County | Works | Houses | Year |
|---------------------|-----------|---------------|--------|------|
| Coill Dubh | Kildare | Timahoe | 156 | 1952 |
| Breacnach | Offaly | Clonsast | 50 | 1952 |
| Pairc Naomh Cormaic | Offaly | Boora | 104 | 1954 |
| Beal Atha Liag | Longford | Derryaroge | 64 | 1952 |
| Doireachan | Longford | Derraghan | 22 | 1953 |
| Cluain Tuaiscirt | Roscommon | Mountdillon | 70 | 1952 |
| Doire Dhraighneach | Westmeath | Derrygreenagh | 100 | 1957 |
| Baile Iomhair | Meath | Ballivor | 8 | 1957 |

TABLE 6 : BORD NA MÓNA HOUSING SCHEMES

* A consultant architect was appointed and was to be responsible for the house plans and general layout

plans of the various village schemes. A detailed description of the housing schemes is given in Glynn (1959). The eight villages constructed are listed in Table 6.

In the scheme two particular house types were chosen: (a) a single storey semi-detached type, and (b) a two storey terraced type house. Both provided the following accommodation: a large living room-kitchen, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, toilet, scullery and fuel stores. A few 'feature' type houses were included in the plans. The schemes were designed without individual front gardens, but the houses fronted onto lawns and paths which were to be maintained by Bord na Móna.

The selection of initial tenants for the scheme was of great importance and first choice was given to those employees who had previously lived in the Board's hostels for some years and who expressed a desire for more stable employment. After these had been accommodated, the remainder of the houses were let on a dual rent scale to the Board's employees, with skilled workers paying more than twice the rent of unskilled workers. In 1975 the Board decided to transfer the leasehold of the houses to the occupants and over 96% of the houses have since been sold in this way.

Bord na Móna is extremely proud of its housing schemes and considers them to have been instrumental in generating rural renewal in the Midland area. In his account of the Bord na Móna villages, Glynn (1959) concluded that:

"In realising its aim of building model villages, the Board has struck a new note in rural housing. The amenities of laid-on electric power, hot and cold water, efficient sewage and refuse disposal, taken in conjunction with spacious village greens and attractive lawns, have raised living standards to a high level in what were formerly backward areas".

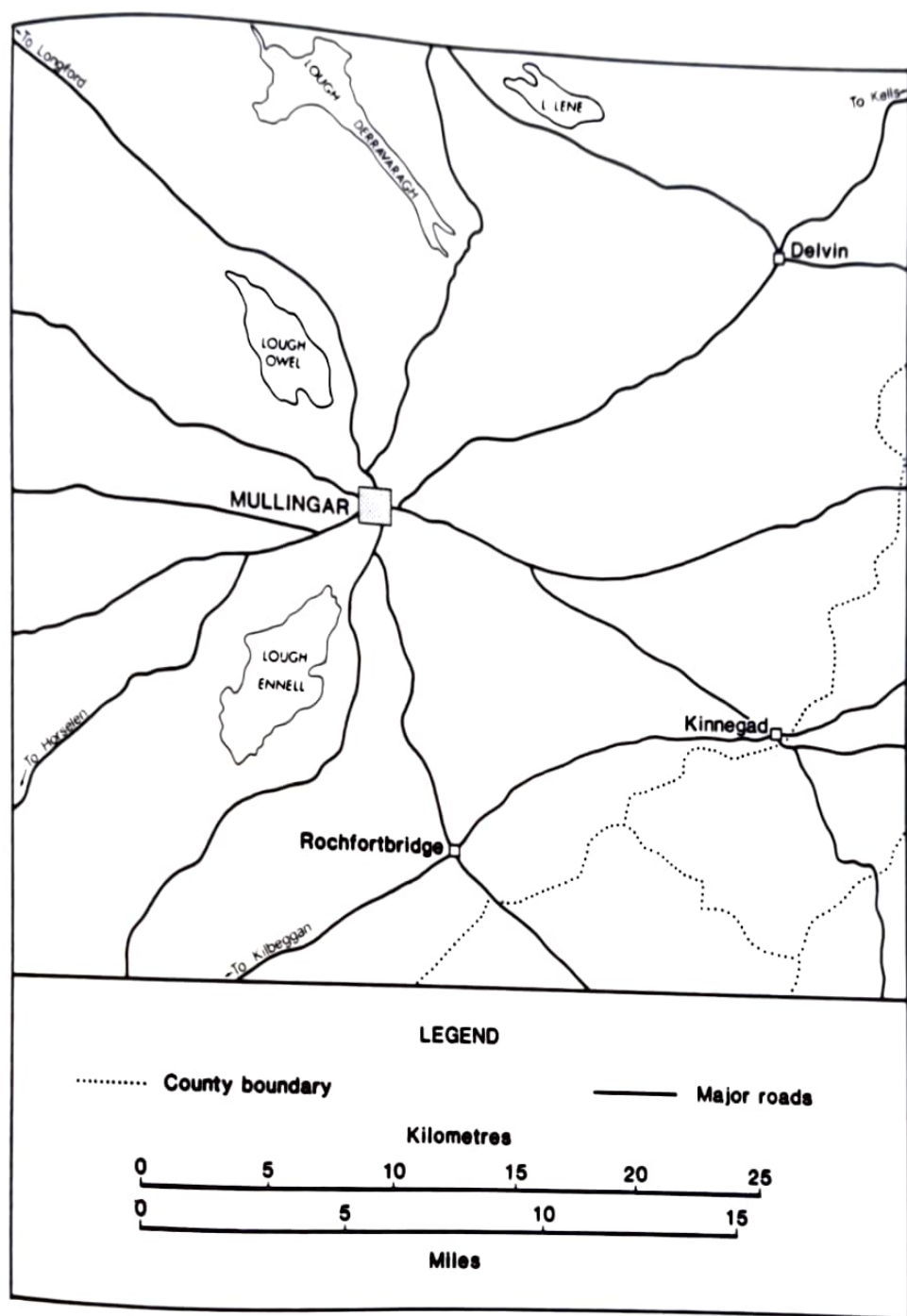
CASE STUDIES : ROCHFORTBRIDGE AND COILL DUBH

In order to assess the socio-economic implications of the housing schemes and to illustrate the reality or otherwise of Bord na Móna's boast, it is necessary to examine the schemes in more detail. Three housing schemes were located in the study area of this paper: Rochfortbridge, Coill Dubh and Bracknagh (see Fig. 2, page 7). These comprise 306 houses - i.e. over half of the overall housing scheme total. Two villages are examined here as case studies - Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh. The former scheme is an attachment to a previously existing community, whereas the latter differs from the other seven schemes by being located in an area where, prior to its construction, only a small and scattered community existed.

Rochfortbridge is situated in the South-Eastern part of county Westmeath (Fig. 4). Mullingar, the county town of Westmeath, is eight miles north of Rochfortbridge, whilst the 20,000 acre Derrygreenagh group of bogs lies 1.5 miles to the south of the village. This tract had been an almost complete marsh prior to the Board's take-over of the Derrygreenagh bog in 1952. Apart from a few artificial channels made by local farmers, drainage was practically non-existent. In winter especially, the roadway leading north into Rochfortbridge was impassable (Rochfortbridge School Project, 1972).

In 1951 Rochfortbridge had a population of 430, mostly farmers and rural labourers, and the town's function was that of service centre providing 4 shops and 1 garage. Like most Irish towns of that era, Rochfortbridge was declining due to emigration which claimed about half of the town's youth. Things changed, however, with the opening of the Board's works at Derrygreenagh bog and the building of 100 Bord na Móna houses which was to follow in 1957.

Coill Dubh is situated in Co Kildare and is 23 miles from Dublin (see Fig. 2). The area was the site for the Timahoe Works hostels when the Kildare Hand-Cut Turf Emergency of the 1940s was in existence, and it was subsequently picked as the location for the Board's 156 house scheme erected in 1952. Before the activity of the 1940s, the Coill Dubh area was an isolated and very desolate spot, just like any other place on the periphery of a bog. A small community of several dispersed houses existed in the area, which



was very remote due to the characteristically poor bogland infrastructure.

These then were the areas into which Bord na Móna introduced what to them was a massive influx of people. Interviews with local people enabled an assessment to be made of the impact of this influx and the following points were highlighted.

(a) Population Growth And Emigration

Fell (1972), on the basis of a survey done on the workforce of Bord na Móna, concluded that "As a best estimate not more than 30% of the unskilled workforce could have been expected to find jobs in the absence of Bord na Móna". Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh would have been no exception to this. Prior to the Board commencing its activities, the only employment opportunities available lay in the agricultural sector and in the few local businesses nearby. The economic climate in the whole of Ireland at that time was unhealthy and stagnant. Local people from Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh speak of the traumatic impact caused by the massive emigration which their areas experienced. Much badly needed employment was created when peat production commenced. In Derrygreenagh alone, 150 people were employed when peat operations commenced in 1952. In 1959, 319 people were employed, rising to 400 in 1960. However, the 1956 Census reveals a decrease in the population of Rochfortbridge from 215 in 1951 to 173 in 1956. This probably reflects the fact that it took some time for the unattractive nature of bog work to be considered as a viable alternative to emigration. It was not until the work became heavily mechanised that it gained any status and attracted the local residents. The occupation of the Board's houses at Derrygreenagh Park in 1957 obviously led to a significant increase in population, especially as many of the occupants were young married couples. The 1961 Census shows that the population of the town had risen from 173 to 365 in five years, and by 1966 this figure had reached 487. This increase, in the context of Rochfortbridge, must have been considered a population explosion. The impact which Bord na Móna has had on the area is highlighted when Rochfortbridge is compared with other towns of similar size. The town of Delvin (Co. Westmeath) which, apart from the absence of nearby bog works, has a similar economic base to Rochfortbridge, is selected for comparison (Fig. 4). Figure 5 shows the great difference between both towns as regards demographic trends between 1936 and 1981.

In 1936 the populations of Delvin and Rochfortbridge were somewhat similar, being 145 and 140 respectively. Between 1946 and 1966 Delvin experienced uninterrupted population growth and its population rose from 149 to 413, an increase of approximately 175% in 20 years. However, this growth was not sustained and Delvin's population fell to 235 in 1971. The 1981 Census reported an increase on this figure and the population stood at 313 in that year.

The initial population growth which took place in Rochfortbridge in 1946 was shortlived. Although the population rose from 129 in 1946 to 215 in 1951, it fell from 1951 to 1956, reaching 173 in that year. This however, was the year that the 100 houses of the Bord na Móna Rochfortbridge Housing Scheme were occupied. In 1961 the population had risen dramatically to 365. With the emigration flow from the town falling off due, for the most part, to employment opportunities with Bord na Móna, and the continued increase in population among the young housing scheme residents, the town of Rochfortbridge has experienced sustained population growth from 1956 to the present day. In 1981 the Census records that the population of the town stood at 716, an increase of 543 in 25 years. This figure means that the population of the town is almost twice that of Delvin, and this may be directly related to Bord na Móna activity in the area.

(b) Social Mobility

The decentralisation of managerial functions by any large employer is of great importance, particularly in rural Ireland where few jobs exist in the tertiary sector. Clout (1972) argues that it "is important to provide a range of employment in small country towns to retain a cross section of the population, especially the better-educated and more able people". Bord na Móna does in fact seem to be providing this essential "range of employment". Although most of the work involved at Derrygreenagh and Timahoe was, and still is, unskilled manual, this is not the full story and at each works a number of jobs exist at skilled, administrative and supervisory level. Table 7 gives the breakdown of jobs offered by Bord na

Móna at national level in 1971.

Bord na Móna's managerial structure is quite decentralised. Each of the 25 production centres has its own managerial, accounting and engineering team which works for the most part as an independent unit within the framework of an overall plan. The Head Office in Dublin controls the areas of overall operation more suited to central organisation: research, marketing, purchasing, financial control, training and industrial relations. Such decentralisation is of great importance in rural Ireland where few jobs exist in the tertiary sector.

The attainment of skill by its workforce is considerably fostered by Bord na Móna itself. The Annual Report for 1983-1984 states that 265 apprentice fitters and 52 apprentice electricians were in receipt of training both 'on the job' at the Board's workshops and courses on theory in technical schools and regional technical colleges. On average, about 3 or 4 students from Rochfortbridge receive an apprenticeship each year. Skills such as these, which are in high demand, enhance opportunities for both social and geographical mobility. Many of those occupying senior positions at the Board's works and at Head Office started their career as unskilled manual labourers on the peatlands. There is no doubt that the achievements in this area are among the Board's greatest contributions to life in the Irish Midlands. Fell (1972) in a survey discovered that "if the Board had not existed then it was likely that as much as 50% of the skilled workers now employed in the Board would not have acquired craft skills".

| | Administrative | Supervisory | Skilled | Semi-Skilled & Unskilled | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|---------|-----------------------------|-------|
| MIDLANDS: | | | | | |
| Kildare | 58 | 54 | 171 | 459 | 742 |
| Meath | 4 | 6 | 16 | 84 | 110 |
| Westmeath | 3 | 5 | 11 | 52 | 71 |
| Laois | 8 | 9 | 12 | 199 | 228 |
| Offaly | 85 | 150 | 448 | 1,433 | 2,116 |
| Tipperary | 7 | 11 | 26 | 127 | 171 |
| Longford/Roscommon | 13 | 29 | 83 | 276 | 401 |
| TOTAL | 178 | 264 | 767 | 2,630 | 3,839 |
| OTHER AREAS | 227 | 41 | 78 | 374 | 720 |
| OVERALL TOTAL | 405 | 305 | 845 | 3,004 | 4,559 |

TABLE 7 : NUMBERS EMPLOYED BY BORD NA MÓNA, 1971
(Source : Fell, 1972)

(c) The Emergence Of A Rural Managerial Class

As mentioned above, the number of people in the decision making bracket who commenced their career at ground level and have remained in rural areas is significant. Thus we see the emergence of a relatively rare species in Ireland - the rural industrial manager. It is particularly important for Bord na Móna to decentralise its managerial hierarchy. The great majority of the Board's employees are from a rural background and work manually on the bogs, a job which is more akin to agricultural labour than to factory work. Supervisory positions need to be filled by those who understand the outlook of the rural worker. It could be argued that the near absence of major disputes and strikes at Bord na Móna may reflect this rural presence at top level, giving rise to a situation in which there are similarities in background and outlook between manager and employee.

(d) Unequal Opportunity

When speaking of the increased employment base and greater social and geographical mobility brought to a community through the activities of Bord na Móna, it should be noted that these factors really only

apply to men. Peat production is a male-dominated activity and the only areas where female labour is in any demand are the 'administrative' and 'skilled' categories, which, as indicated in Table 7, offer relatively few employment opportunities. Added to this, it must be remembered that these categories include engineering, accounting and managerial teams, areas which traditionally have had a very high male content. Out of the 165 and 450 jobs at Timahoe and Derrygreenagh respectively only a handful are filled by women, most of which are low paid secretarial and receptionist positions.

(e) Improved Services And Revitalisation

One of the most obvious effects of the Bord na Móna housing schemes has been the improvement and (in the case of Coill Dubh) creation of services and recreational facilities. One of Clout's observations concerning the installation of industry in the countryside is that it "should encourage improvements in the physical amenities and social standards of the countryside" (Clout, 1972). This indeed occurred in both Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh. As regards Rochfortbridge, the biggest improvements in terms of infrastructure are to be found in the roads. 60 miles of open outfalls drain marginal land at Derrygreenagh. Roads through this bog had hitherto been impassable during winter, but this drainage by the Board has greatly improved the situation. Drainage has enabled County Councils to make improvements, and in some cases to establish secondary roads in appropriate areas. In the Rochfortbridge region sewage disposal was made possible by the Board's drainage of the nearby Mongagh river.

As a result of the increase in population of Rochfortbridge, services were used to a much greater capacity and many were improved. Expansion has occurred, for example, in education. In 1956, 124 children were registered on the school roll. With the steadily increasing registration of children from the growing town, this figure reached 145 in 1961, 169 in 1966 and by 1970 it had grown to 221. A girls' secondary school was opened in 1951 to 26 pupils. Ten years later, in 1961, 92 pupils were attending the school. In 1963 the school became co-educational, resulting in an extension of the school whereby woodwork and metalwork laboratories were added. By 1966, 127 pupils were enrolled (Rochfortbridge School Project, 1972).

Recreational facilities have also been in receipt of greater attention. Existing clubs such as the football, tennis, and youth clubs were strengthened, and in the 1960s the need for a Parochial Hall became obvious. This was constructed by local labour and opened in 1968. When the housing scheme was built, Bord na Móna provided 8 acres of space for children and gave land to the pitch and putt club enabling it to be extended to an 18-hole course. Evidence that this once very parochial community was spreading its interests over a larger area was provided by the fact that the national final of the Macra na Feirme debating competition was held at Rochfortbridge in 1969 (Rochfortbridge School Project, 1972).

The increase in social activity was paralleled by an expansion in the commercial enterprises in the town. Local people estimate that business has increased almost threefold since the 1930s. Population increase and the greater spending power of the town's inhabitants was reflected as early as 1958 in the establishment of a new supermarket. Existing premises were modernised and extended and public houses increased lounge capacity considerably. In recent times two new petrol-filling stations have been opened, but this could also be attributed in part to the main Dublin-Galway road which passes through the town.

A similar story can be told of improved services in Coill Dubh, but here the impact of Bord na Móna's housing scheme was much more dramatic as no nucleated settlement existed in the area prior to the scheme. Due to the lack of essential services in the area a number of shops had to be included in the scheme. Four shops were built - a grocery, drapery, newsagents/tobacconist and chemist/post-office. In addition, a privately-owned supermarket has opened in recent years. The increase in the school-going population has led to the building of a small primary school, but post-primary education still remains outside the area and students must travel to either the vocational school in Prosperous (4.5 miles away) or the secondary school in Clane (7 miles away).

A community hall was built a few years ago, to which Bord na Móna contributed a substantial amount. However, it is only now that the Board is trying to set up a playing field, a service which many local people feel ought to have been provided a long time ago. The sewerage scheme accompanying the houses has improved standards in the locality. Population increases have resulted in a branch of the County

Library being located in Coill Dubh and the provision of bus services by C.I.E. Two buses bound for Dublin pass through the village, in the morning and evening, and return en route to Edenderry. In addition, a bus provided by private concerns brings shoppers to Newbridge each Saturday.

Thus it can be seen that social and economic impacts arising from the housing schemes have combined to make both Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh more attractive places in which to live.

(f) Community Tension

One of the first questions which comes to mind when one speaks of an influx of people into a rural area is that concerning integration with the pre-existing community. This question was faced by the Atomic Energy Authority in Britain, during the 1940s and 1950s, when 'imported' workers were being housed in close proximity to its atomic stations. Bracey (1963) states that the Authority did not want to create 'atom towns' where "employees would be concentrated in settlements remote from existing centres of the population and usually close to the works". It was felt that self-contained 'atom towns' created the notion that their inhabitants were somewhat different and this initially led to suspicion. Interviews with local people in Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh suggest that a similar situation occurred in these villages, and that a considerable amount of tension existed in the early days. Resentment was often felt towards the people of the Bord na Móna housing estates, who in Rochfortbridge were known as either "the people in the houses" or "the Bord na Mónas", and this resentment manifested itself in various ways. In the case of Coill Dubh this resentment, although present, never reached large proportions, due mainly to the insignificant size and dispersed nature of the pre-existing settlement. One local, however, did speak of her initial alarm at having "ex-soldiers" and "every sort" living so near her home. Coill Dubh, due to the inclusion of shopping facilities, is also much more of a self-sufficient unit than Rochfortbridge. Therefore much of the discussion here on integration and community tension will focus on Rochfortbridge. On these points various factors were highlighted by local people.

(i) *The Suspicion And Snobbery Of The Local Community*: To the conservative, dominantly farming, community of Rochfortbridge of the 1950s, farmers and people involved in either business or the professions held the most respected occupations and those who did not fit into these categories were considered to be on a lower social level. Bog work was considered to be tough and demanding and people who travelled far in order to work on the bogs were regarded as having left places of great poverty. The traditional Irish concern with family background and place was in great evidence. The lack of knowledge concerning the roots of the 'blow-ins' aroused much suspicion and perhaps led to a certain amount of insecurity within the community, which no doubt provided a breeding ground for rumour and gossip. This suspicion was heightened by the remoteness and inaccessibility of the village, which led to a very parochial outlook on the part of the original inhabitants. In fact, residents of Derrygreenagh Park (the Board's housing scheme) reported that they felt very much as though they were 'exhibits'.

(ii) *The 'Superiority' Of The Migrants*: A sense of snobbery was also apparent in the attitudes expressed by the new residents, many of whom considered themselves to be in certain ways superior to their neighbours. These views may have been the cause for the local complaint that the people in Derrygreenagh Park stayed very much together. It has been stated that there is a danger in bringing urban workers into a rural area, as this may lead to social disturbance and result in a weakening of the rural culture (Clout, 1972). Although this did not happen to a great extent in Rochfortbridge, the differing attitudes between 'natives' and 'blow-ins' created its own forms of social disturbance. The previous chapter indicated that 53.4% of a sample of hostel residents came from either small towns or remote rural areas. This figure could be applied to the housing scheme occupants and would imply that integration in a rural community such as Rochfortbridge should not have been very difficult. Yet the newcomers were very much inclined to 'look down' on their new surroundings, despite the fact that their home environment was probably quite similar. One resident of the housing scheme who moved to Rochfortbridge in the 1950s described it as then being a "most decrepit piece of a village" whose inhabitants, as a result of never having left the locality, had turned in on themselves and "didn't know anything". The Bord na Móna estate residents were quite aware of the fact that 'key' workers and those occupying top positions were, like themselves, new to the region. Even today they hold the view that it was they themselves who brought drive and initiative to the town and improved the economic and social life of Rochfortbridge. This created further tension with the locals who resented some boastful statements such as the following.

made by one 'blow-in': "of course we revitalised the area, that is if it was ever vital at any stage".

(iii) *Shift In Local Power Structures* : One of the more subtle impacts of Bord na Móna's presence in Rochfortbridge was the shift in the local power base that resulted. Prior to the Board's operations, people have stated that exploitation of labourers sometimes occurred, particularly with regard to wages and hours worked. Due to their positions as employers, the landowners and business people had a considerable amount of power. The opening of the Derrygreenagh works however provided labourers with an alternative employment source and former power-groups began to lose their hold. Their power was further threatened by the building of 100 Bord na Móna houses in 1957. This meant the advent of a population of between 100 to 200 adults, a population which by itself was near to that of the whole of Rochfortbridge previously (173 in 1956). The fact that the male estate residents were fully employed at the same works, and receiving a stable income independent of the local elite, meant that they were in a position of relative power in the community. The new residents' power led to local fears that the new residents would now have the largest say in the community. Although business people welcomed the increased custom brought to their premises, they resented the threat these same customers provided. An example of the power struggle and perceived threat is provided by an account of a local meeting held in order to elect a committee for the running of the Parochial Hall. During the elections some local business people were quite open about their hostility towards the Bord na Móna workers and one local businessman was heard to shout "don't let the Bord na Mónas in, boys". The fact that the Parochial Hall was built in 1968 shows that tension was present even after the houses had been occupied for more than a decade.

(iv) *Increase In Class Consciousness* : The very concept of building a relatively large housing estate to accommodate workers for the same employer, the majority of whom receive similar incomes, seems almost designed to increase class awareness in a rural community. The superiority felt by both natives and 'blow-ins' has been seen to have been quite significant in the housing scheme's early years. Not only are the occupations of the scheme's inhabitants different to those of their rural neighbours, but the actual design of the estate stands as a concrete manifestation of these differences. A large housing estate located in a small village is not in harmony with the surrounding rural area. The Bord na Móna housing estates are characterised by the inclusion of several 'feature' houses which are apparently designed to relieve the monotony of the estates, but while doing so also create a 'toyland' appearance and have led to some visitors describing the constructed villages as "architectural freaks". The accommodation provided in the housing scheme stands apart from the housing of the local area and rendered harmony between the two groups that bit more difficult.

One very notable point concerning accommodation provided by Bord na Móna is that 'staff housing' for managerial and supervisory employees was constructed away from the housing scheme unit, where unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled manual workers reside. Eighty 'staff-houses' in all have been built by the Board. In Rochfortbridge, 4 such houses were built at the opposite end of town to the 100 houses of the Derrygreenagh Park housing scheme. The design of the staff houses often differs from that of the housing scheme counterparts. Five different types of house were erected for staff, in contrast to the choice of two different house styles to be found in the housing scheme. Additionally, housing for staff at top level did not include any feature houses.

(g) The Present Day Situation

At the present, the populations of Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh are approximately 716 and 876 respectively (1981 Census). The Board's works at Derrygreenagh employ 500 and those at Timahoe 245. Much of the resentment present in the early days is gone due to intermarriage, and the fact that many small farmers have found employment with Bord na Móna.

Although roughly 90% of Derrygreenagh Park and 50% of Coill Dubh house owners are employed with Bord na Móna, the children of these workers do not find that the Board is, for them, a large employer. Large scale unemployment is characteristic among the youth of the housing schemes. It is particularly bad in Rochfortbridge due to the absence of any major industry in the locality, although many travel to employment in Mullingar. Local people say that emigration is on the increase once again. The 1981

Census, which shows a decrease in population since 1979 from 749 to 716, supports their claim. Houses which become vacated in the estate are often bought by older, often retired people. The situation does not appear likely to change in the near future. Peat production will peak shortly and will then be followed by a reduction in the workforce. The situation in Coill Dubh is similar, although its proximity to Dublin (23 miles away) and to the meat packing factory at Sallins means that many of the younger people have been able to find employment. Although the housing schemes provide an experienced and, in some cases, skilled work force, alternative industry will not be easy to establish in the short term due to the current recession, and, in the case of Coill Dubh, poor communication links may hinder its chances in the long term.

This chapter has focused on the impact of Bord na Móna in areas which were selected for the building of Bord na Móna housing estates. However, revitalisation has also been marked in nearby larger towns, even where no house building was undertaken by the Board. This is particularly true of established towns adjacent to the Bord na Móna works. This aspect of development is examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5 : THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON AN EAST MIDLAND TOWN

For many East Midland towns, proximity to Bord na Móna works has had a major influence on social and economic life. While the development which took place in these towns is not as visually obvious as that which occurred in the villages selected for construction of a housing scheme, it has none the less been very marked. This chapter examines the impact of Bord na Móna on the town of Edenderry in Co. Offaly.

(a) The Town Of Edenderry

Edenderry, a town on the eastern boundary of County Offaly (see Fig. 2, page 7), had a population of 3,452 in 1981. The town has a hinterland with a radius of approximately 10 miles and is an important local centre for trading, services and educational facilities. Its importance was originally due to its function as a market centre on the edge of the Pale. Growth was pronounced in the nineteenth century when the town expanded as a thriving market centre. In the early decades of the twentieth century manufacturing industries, such as the Ailesbury furniture factory, were set up. The very successful Shoe Company was opened in 1935. This activity was reflected in the scheme for 129 local authority houses which commenced in 1936. The town's fortunes received a considerable further boost in the 1940s with the introduction of the Bord na Móna Hand-Cut Turf Emergency Scheme. Edenderry became an important service centre, because of its location (Fig. 2), following the growth of Bord na Móna and E.S.B. activity in the East Midlands.

(b) The Socio-Economic Impact Of Bord Na Móna On Edenderry

Three hostels were built in Edenderry and its immediate environs to accommodate seasonal turf harvesters during the Hand-Cut Turf production scheme of the 1940s. The camps at Shean, Glashabaun and Edenderry town, between them, accommodated approximately 600 to 700 men. In 1936 the population of the Edenderry Rural District was 556. By 1946, after two turf camps had been located here, the figure had swollen to 1,066. In the same period the population of Edenderry town rose from 2,093 to 2,996, an increase of 43.1% in 10 years. In 1951, following the closure of the Bord na Móna camp, the population fell to 2,596, but rose again to 2,627 in 1956. In sharp contrast to this, the population of County Offaly as a whole fell from 52,544 in 1951 to 51,970 in 1956.

An indication of the increase in population, due in part to the seasonal harvesters settling in the area but also to a reduction in numbers emigrating, is reflected in the increased activity in Local Authority Housing Schemes. Seventy one houses were built in 1947 in the Gilroy Avenue scheme. This received 24 additional houses in the 1954 extension. This was added to again in 1959 with the nearby construction of 18 houses at Fr. Killian Crescent. Local people interviewed for this study state that many of these houses' original occupants were workers with Bord na Móna who had either come into the town, had always lived in the town, or who had returned from other parts of Ireland and England. One person interviewed put the number of families who settled in the town from outside the area during this period at about 100.

As was suggested in Chapter 3, there was a high degree of interaction between local people and the

turf workers. In the case of Edenderry, an example of this can be found from a study of the marriages which took place in the town from 1946 to 1957. Table 8 gives an account of the number of marriages held between these dates. Column 'A' represents the number of male spouses with origins outside of County Offaly and the neighbouring counties of Kildare, Westmeath and Laois. Column 'B' represents the number of these 'outsiders' who came to Edenderry as a result of obtaining employment on the bogs. The latter section was determined by the addresses of 'best men' who were resident in the turf camps and by the sacristan's knowledge of many of the people recorded in the book. It is noticeable that 34 of the 46 'outsider' spouses (73.9%) were Bord na Móna workers.

| | Total Number Of Marriages | Total Male Outsider Spouses (A) | Bord na Móna Outsider Spouses (B) |
|-------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1945 | 26 | 5 | 5 |
| 1946 | 21 | 3 | 3 |
| 1947 | 16 | 5 | 4 |
| 1948 | 19 | 8 | 4 |
| 1949 | 15 | 3 | 3 |
| 1950 | 18 | 2 | - |
| 1951 | 13 | 3 | - |
| 1952 | 16 | 4 | 4 |
| 1953 | 11 | 3 | 3 |
| 1954 | 20 | 2 | 1 |
| 1955 | 24 | 4 | 3 |
| 1956 | 25 | 2 | 2 |
| 1957 | 16 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 240 | 46 | 34 |

TABLE 8 : MARRIAGES IN EDENDERRY INVOLVING MALE 'OUTSIDERS'
(See Text For An Explanation Of Columns A And B)

Increasing mechanisation on the bogs at this time created year-round jobs enabling the workers to reside permanently in the town. Thus 14% of all marriages in Edenderry between 1945-1957 were between a local and a turf-worker from another part of the country. Almost all of these couples now reside in Edenderry. It is quite possible that such a state of affairs adversely affected the marriage prospects of local males and this perhaps was behind some of the resentment which was occasionally directed at the non-local Bord na Móna workers.

The increase in population at this time had great social and economic implications for the town. With job security and increased spending power, improvements in the town's services became obvious. The facades of local shops were improved and extensions were built. Business in the seven bars is reported to have boomed while the turf camps were in the area. Many new private enterprises opened up, one of which dealt with the sale of bread and milk to the 'westerns', as those who lived in the hostels were called. At the time two dance halls were in use, but due to increased demand a larger dance hall was built in the town around 1950. Educational facilities improved greatly. In the 1930s two primary schools existed, but the only form of post-primary education available consisted of a girls' 'secondary top' which remained under the primary school board of management. No such education was available for boys until the building of a vocational school in 1958. Then in 1959 a new boys' national school was opened leaving the former school vacant. Despite the fact that the building was declared unsafe, it was re-opened after some repairs as a secondary school for boys and senior girls, satisfying the increasing local demand. In later years the school was expanded through the addition of prefabricated classrooms. A co-educational secondary school was built in 1982.

It can be said that the changes which have been mentioned here also occurred at more or less the same time in other towns where there was no Bord na Móna influence. However, in many cases these changes

were largely due to national policies aimed at increasing industrialisation and thereby improving social services and standards of living. These policies, which became particularly important during the First Programme for Economic Expansion in the late 1950s, were responsible for bringing much prosperity to rural Ireland. However, Edenderry gained little from these policies at that time. Due to the fact that a substantial employment was provided by Bord na Móna and by existing industry, Edenderry was not developed in the 1930s, was expanded.

It must also be stated that services in Edenderry improved not only because of a population increase in the town itself, but also because of expansion in the surrounding towns. Due to the activities of Bord na Móna and, later on, the E.S.B., both the population and spending power of these towns was increasing, to the benefit of Edenderry due to its central position. For example, the village of Rhode (7 miles west of Edenderry), which has a population of 498, depends to a large extent on Edenderry for the provision of secondary education. Additionally, many of Rhode's inhabitants travel to Edenderry for weekend recreation. The figures for those receiving education in Edenderry have increased greatly over the years, as Rhode itself has increased its population from 307 to 498 in the last 30 years. This increase is due to increased opportunity arising from living in Rhode. Much of the village's labour force is employed at the nearby Derrygreenagh Bord na Móna works. Added to this, an E.S.B. peat-fired generating station was completed in the village in 1960 and presently employs 155 people. Construction of this station was accompanied by the building of 24 houses for E.S.B. employees.

In the Derrinturn/Carbury area (about 5 miles to the east of Edenderry) a similar story can be told. A very high percentage of the population in this area is employed by Bord na Móna: the Lullymore bog works and Lullymore briquette factory (238 employees) state that most of their labour force comes from Derrinturn and Carbury. Due to its proximity, people from these villages are highly dependent on Edenderry for provision of educational, recreational and trading facilities. In fact, some time ago a weekly bus was arranged by private interests in Edenderry to bring shoppers from Derrinturn to the town, thereby giving business a boost. Thus, it can be seen that increasing prosperity in its hinterland, caused by Bord na Móna operations, has a very desirable indirect effect upon the standard of services provided by Edenderry.

However, not all people have been satisfied with the Board or, to be more precise, its workers. In the early years tension developed at times between the local community and the incoming workers. During winter, many of the seasonal harvesters were kept on at the camps, engaged in maintenance. Local people in Edenderry objected to their presence because, they claimed, those staying for the winter months were, unlike the majority of summer workers, people with no place else to go and became troublesome and disruptive, particularly in the public houses. One respondent spoke of the village of Clonbullogue (6 miles from Edenderry and just north of the Clonsast group of bogs) as having a very strong Garda presence in the 1950s. This he thought to be directly related to the trouble caused by the turf workers in the nearby hostels. Clonbullogue, which had a population of 130 in 1956, was served by 1 sergeant and 4 gardai. Today its population is 330, but there is only 1 garda present in the village. No doubt other factors such as cut-backs must be taken into account when explaining this situation, but the respondent's bias reveals the underlying suspicion with which some people viewed the 'imported' workers.

(c) Conclusion

Overall then, it can be suggested that in socio-economic terms Bord na Móna has contributed greatly to economic prosperity in the town of Edenderry. Today, however, with a slowing down of extraction from the bogs, the workforce is being reduced in many works. As a result, one must ask questions concerning the future for communities such as Edenderry, Rochfortbridge and Coill Dubh, which have been revitalised as a result of Bord na Móna activity. The following chapter accordingly reviews some possible future uses of cutaway peatland, focusing upon the employment potential of the alternatives now under examination by Bord na Móna.

CHAPTER 6 : THE FUTURE

It is clear from the previous chapters that Bord na Móna's peat production has provided a tremendous social and economic boost to the East Midlands region and indeed, in a wider context, to the whole national economy. Peat, however, is a limited resource. To date, the Board has acquired over 80,000 hectares (ha) of bog and at present 700 ha are in use for research into the possible future uses of cutaway bog. By the year 2,000, some 4,000 ha of cutaway will be available for development. After that period, the rate at which cutaway becomes available will accelerate, with the result that 70,000 ha to 80,000 ha will be finished as regards fuel production by the year 2030 (Healy, 1979).

The projected development pattern of Bord na Móna cutaway bog is shown in Figure 6. The Lyrecrumpane bog in Co. Kerry is now cut out and supports a forest of young Sitka Spruce and Contorta Pine. Clonsast bog in Co. Offaly is the next bog scheduled to be cut out. Here 1,619 ha out of a total of 4,452 ha will be reclaimed in the near future. In 50 years time peat production as we know it will have stopped. What then of employment prospects in areas such as the East Midlands which now rely heavily on Bord na Móna for provision of employment? Will future utilisation of the bogs provide employment opportunities to match the current labour intensive production of peat which employs one person per 10 ha?

This chapter examines the plans which exist for future utilisation of cutaway bogland, and the implications of these plans for future employment and consequent social and economic life in the areas where the Board is now in operation. Due to the level of information presently available on this topic, the chapter will, for the most part, be of a general nature and will not apply specifically to the East Midland region.

Agricultural experimentation has been conducted on bogs in the Midlands by An Foras Talúntais, in conjunction with Bord na Móna, since 1955. The most notable finding of these tests was that peat could produce virtually any crop with proper doses of fertilisers and other additives. Peat, when drained, has certain advantages over mineral soil, mainly a physical texture ensuring good workability, aeration and moisture-holding properties. The Bord na Móna Annual Report for 1980-1981 states that although bog overlying weathered sub-soils is favourable for reclamation for husbandry, only 30% of the Board's boglands provide such conditions. However, investigations into how this figure could be increased are being carried on. Livestock raising enterprises do quite well on cutaway grassland areas. Satisfactory grass growth has been achieved and beef breeding, beef finishing and sheep rearing have reached an acceptable level. As regards nursery stock, it has been shown that 6% greater growth can be achieved on peat compared with mineral soils on 8 ha of cutaway at the the Peatland Experimental Station at Lullymore.

Research done at Clonsast indicates the suitability of sod peat cutaway for forest crops. With E.E.C. financial support, research was initiated in the 1970s regarding the feasibility of growing crops for energy. 160 ha were planted for the Biomass Demonstration Project.

There also exists quite an amount of potential for amenity facilities in bogland areas. Untouched bogland is quite beautiful and supports a variety of flora and fauna such as the Curlew, Red Grouse, Heather and Bog Cotton, which have become quite rare due to exploitation of peatlands throughout Europe. At present various types of bogland are being conserved at Pollardstown (Co. Kildare), Raheenmore (Co. Offaly) and the Redmond Bog (Co. Tipperary). Certain works have other possibilities. At Derrygreenagh for

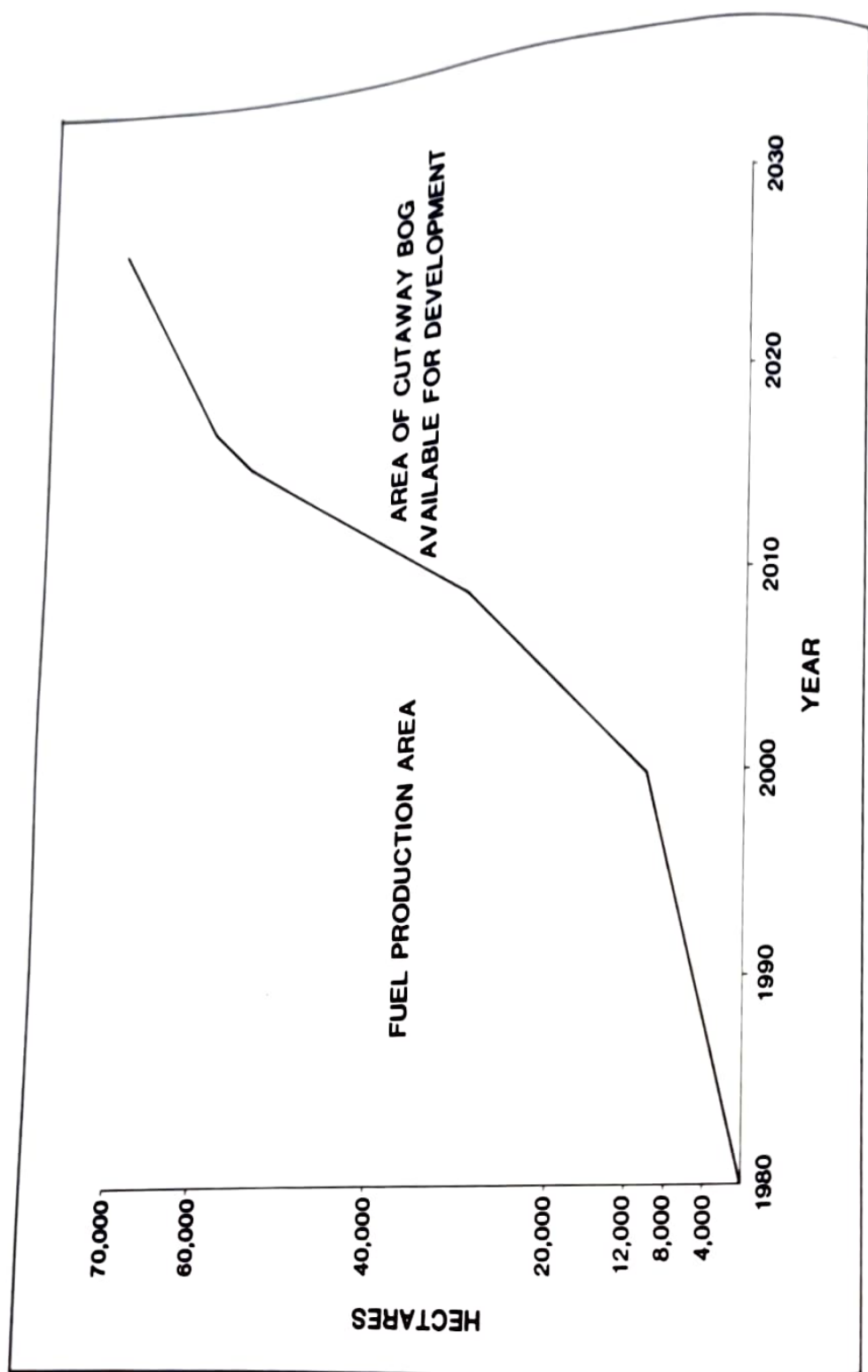


FIGURE 6. Development Pattern Of Bord Na Móna Cutaway Bog.

instance, over 200 ha of free draining gravel have been revealed through the stripping of peat. This has been described by the Works as having very good commercial possibilities. There is also the possibility of creating lakes by flooding cutaway bogs.

These then are the main options open to Bord na Móna. The socio-economic implications as regards the employment opportunities and marketability of the products chosen for development on cutaway bog must now be examined.

(a) Agriculture

Indications are that agriculture is only capable of employing one person per 40 ha of cutaway bog. This could mean a drop to 25% of present employment levels on the bogs. However, it is argued by those who support this option that spin-offs from agriculture in the form of food processing plants would employ many more. On this argument, Healy (1978) points out that: "there is ample food processing in the country at present with most processors finding it difficult to remain viable. There is no question of further processing being set up by Bord na Móna". The recent troubles of the Irish Sugar Company highlight the difficulties faced by food processors in Ireland. The demand for fresh agricultural produce is high, both at home and abroad, but without the processing plants bogland areas would suffer acute unemployment.

(b) Commercial Forestry

Both employment and marketing prospects relating to forestry look good. Ireland imports wood products (and pulp), to the value of £100m. each year. Approximately 86% of Ireland's imports are softwoods and could be produced domestically. Although land under forest in Ireland presently employs approximately one person per 133 ha, it has been estimated that an integrated forest scheme in rural Ireland could provide employment for 25,000 (Kearns, 1978). Despite this fact, commercial forestry is unlikely to be very significant on cutaway bog because trees are one of the few commercial plants that can be supported on relatively infertile soils, and for this reason might more appropriately be located on marginal land west of the Shannon rather than on the fertile milled peat cutaway bog, provided cost-efficient alternatives for cut-away are found.

(c) Horticulture

On the South Allenwood Plants (S.A.P.) nursery in Co. Kildare, 12 people are employed on 16.2 ha which works out at about 1 person for 1.35 ha. A very good demand exists both at home and abroad for the ornamental plants grown in the nursery. Although horticulture would be quite a labour intensive activity on cutaway, only a limited amount of land could be used in this way in order to avoid flooding the market.

(d) Biomass

The suitability of Bord na Móna cutaway for Biomass production, in both social and economic terms, is outlined by Healy (1979). He lists the following factors:

- (i) The eventual 80,000 ha of cutaway is already in State ownership and does not require the difficult task of acquiring privately owned land for this purpose or encouraging private owners to commence production.
- (ii) This land also has a complete network of railways which in the Board's opinion will be suitable for transport of the produce.
- (iii) The 7 existing peat-fired power stations are in close proximity to these cutaway areas and would lend themselves to Biomass conversion in the future.

(iv) There is an experienced labour force in the Bord na Móna operation, 90% of it in rural areas where it is socially desirable to maintain this level of employment.

(v) There is also a high degree of mechanical expertise within the Board with a vast amount of expertise in machinery design and manufacture.

While the production, harvesting, delivery and conversion of biomass would make it appear to be the option most suited to take over from peat production, results at the end of the second phase of the biomass project are not favourable. The Bord na Móna Annual Report for 1983-1984, states that major modifications to cutaway bog would have to be made before existing coppicing species would grow, and costs incurred therein are higher than anticipated. The Report also states that "it has now become clear that energy forestry with presently available species on industrial cutaway bogs is uneconomic". The short rotation forestry biomass project has in fact been terminated, but small scale investigation into biomass is continuing.

At present the official Bord na Móna view on the future utilisation of cutaway bog is that it will be a combination of forestry and grassland, with lake and wetland creation where there are small depressions. It is not known what the breakdown of each will be and future ownership of the cutaway is still a matter for national debate.

The final decision is likely to be influenced strongly by political considerations. The policy on future cutaway utilisation will be established by an Act of the Oireachtas. Given the nature of the political system in Ireland, based as it is on a five year elected term of office, the party in power, if it is to keep the support of the electorate and increase its term in office, must make decisions which will bring benefits in the short term. Decisions relating to long term benefits might only begin to show fruit under another governing party. This may reduce the likelihood of large scale commercial forestry schemes on cutaway, as this would require a lapse period of approximately 15 years before giving positive returns whereas agricultural usage of cutaway would show results in the short run.

This, however, raises another argument. The farming sector, many of whom feel their land was 'robbed' by Bord na Móna, have considerable political clout in Ireland, a fact which politicians are well aware of. The Government of the day, whoever it may be, could therefore be expected to be very careful not to make any decisions which might make it appear as though it is not in sympathy with the agricultural community. Yet, if the Government grants a proportion of cutaway to farmers, even the currently feasible 30%, many Bord na Móna communities will, in the absence of processing plants, suffer great unemployment and possible community decay. This issue is likely to become extremely emotive. In a debate some years ago on the issue of future cutaway ownership, P.C. Mooney of Bord na Móna spoke of the social commitment of the Board to the thousands of children "whose fathers ... turned barren wasteland into a viable industry". On the question of ownership of cutaway he stated his belief that: "A chauvinistic policy of claiming the absolute right to all land utilisation by the farming community is not in the interest of the nation".

Agricultural uses do not necessarily require the land to be privately owned. Another alternative is to create State-owned farms to be run by the Board. This possibility is unlikely to be implemented. Apart from failing to satisfy the demands of the farming lobby, it could also threaten the whole basis of Irish society because a successfully managed State-owned farm system could lead to a closer examination of the whole question of land ownership in Ireland. This, in turn, could have major ramifications for the structure of Irish society as a whole. A successful State farm system could be interpreted by more radical parties in Ireland's political arena as an example of the potential of a more socialistic organisation of Irish resources. Therefore the creation of a State farm system might be perceived as a potential threat to power by the strong conservative parties which currently dominate Irish politics.

Most likely, future policy on cutaway peatland will be aimed at conceding a certain amount to each of the pressure groups involved in the current debate. However, it is admitted in many quarters that the numbers employed in future alternatives will be less than those involved in peat production. A Deputy-Manager at one of the Board's works admitted that "the Board will never again be a vast employer of people". The Board is run on a commercial basis and receives no subsidy or tariff protection; consequently uses which are economically attractive may win out over more socially desirable forms of utilisation. Economic and

political considerations are likely to have more influence than social considerations on the final decision relating to future utilisation of cutaway bogland. Unless the I.D.A. can increase its activity in peatland areas and bring further industry to these regions, the future looks bleak for Bord na Móna dependent communities.

When large-scale experimentation into the possible uses of cutaway began at Derrygreenagh, Scéal na Móna, the Board's house journal, stated that "there can be no doubt that the people of Doire Dhraighneach are on the brink of exciting things". Unfortunately it does not appear as though "exciting" is the most appropriate word which could have been used in this context.

CHAPTER 7 : CONCLUSION

It has been seen that Bord na Móna's socio-economic impact in the East Midlands has brought both advantages and disadvantages to the communities where it operates. Among the advantages, the most obvious is that of rural revitalisation. The employment offered by Bord na Móna has allowed a widening of the employment base, increased mobility and improved commercial, educational and recreational facilities in the localities concerned, due to population increase, increased spending power and multiplier effects. The disadvantages have included the lack of opportunities available to women at Bord na Móna, and the 'importation' of hundreds of labourers into a small community. These advantages and disadvantages are particularly obvious in areas where the Board's housing schemes are located.

The impact of Bord na Móna is in many ways similar to that of any other industry as outlined by Clout (1972). Bord na Móna has been responsible for the provision of substantial employment both directly, at its production sites, and indirectly through its spin-off industries. Such employment opportunities have had a dramatic impact in terms of social and economic revitalisation, particularly in rural areas. However, such development did at times create problems. Community tension was present in varying degrees when revitalised villages expanded, not only in size but with regard to the horizons and social bases of their inhabitants.

The impact of Bord na Móna, however, differs from that of most other industry in Ireland in two very notable ways. First of all, development of the bogs was accompanied by the building of accommodation for the workers. This building increased the size of many existing communities and in one case led to the creation of a new community. Secondly, the decentralised managerial structure of the Board is almost unique in Ireland. Both factors indicate that the activities of Bord na Móna are to a certain extent akin to those of a development agency. They also highlight the potential contribution of industrial development to rural life. The second factor also indicates the sort of policy required if industry is to be genuinely beneficial to rural renewal.

However, one of the main criticisms that can be made of the Board's efforts at community revitalisation is that the substantial renewal which has taken place in peatland regions is based almost entirely on exploitation of a limited non-renewable resource. As noted above, all 80,000 ha of the peatland developed by Bord na Móna will be finished for fuel production by the year 2030, and at present the workforce is being reduced in many of the Board's works in the East Midlands. Possible uses for future cutaway will not provide the level of employment which is offered by the labour intensive production of peat.

Given that the development of the Irish peatlands has been both essential and beneficial to Ireland, a question must be asked concerning the future for peatland regions in light of the fact that future employment prospects in these areas do not now look very bright. I.D.A. activity in the East Midlands could perhaps be stepped up in order to prevent industrial decline, but up to now the I.D.A. appears to have been satisfied to leave rural employment creation in the region largely in the hands of Bord na Móna and the E.S.B. For example, the County Development Report for County Offaly (1981) - a county where approximately 46% of all Bord na Móna employees are located (Fell, 1972) - states that: "Offaly has not maintained pace with other counties in the Midlands Region in relation to the growth of industrial development during the Sixties and Seventies".

In fact the County Development Teams of Offaly, Laois and Westmeath have decided to prepare a submission to the I.D.A. making a case for the reclassification of the entire Midlands region as a Designated Area where preferential assistance for new industry would be available. This would be very desirable in the light of the future facing one of the largest employers in this region. However, unemployment in Ireland today is a fact of life for a large and increasing portion of the national population and the East Midlands is not alone in seeking increased state aid. Perhaps it would be more beneficial if the people of the area were to apply themselves to the problem and, through community based action, involve themselves in the tasks of job-creation and rural development. Such an approach could bear more fruits than an approach which concerns itself solely with dependency on external agencies. However, in order to retain the existing level of well-being in the light of future difficulties, quite an amount of foresight must be shown by both Bord na Móna, the I.D.A. and local community groups. The East Midlands must not be allowed to revert to its former depressed state. If this is to be achieved, planning policy relating to peatland regions must pay adequate attention to social as well as to economic and political considerations.

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