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## APPENDIX 2-3

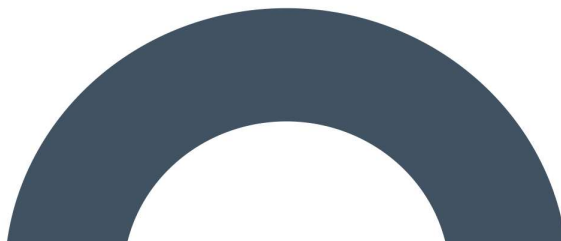
COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT REPORT



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# Community Engagement Report

Proposed Quarry  
Extraction and Restoration,  
Ballyquin, Co Clare





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1.

# INTRODUCTION

This Community Engagement Report has been compiled by MKO on behalf of Roadstone to document the processes of community engagement and public consultation carried out during the pre-submission phase of the application for planning permission to extend quarrying and restoration activities at the Roadstone Ballyquin Sand Quarry in Co Clare (Proposed Development).

The report will set out the aims and objectives of a proactive programme of community engagement prior to the lodgement of the application for planning permission with Clare County Council. The report will outline the steps that Roadstone have taken to achieve these objectives and will demonstrate the applicants' commitment to establishing an open dialogue with the relevant stakeholders up to and beyond submission.

Roadstone have sought to place transparent community engagement at the heart of their plans to apply for permission to extend quarrying activities at Ballyquin. The applicants believe that meaningful consultation with members of the local community is crucial to ensuring that the voices of residents are heard and respected. Engaging proactively with local stakeholders has also enabled the applicants to understand local needs, preferences and expectations, and has helped to develop trust between the applicants and the wider community.

1.1

## Project background

The existing Ballyquin Sand Quarry occupies a site within the Killaloe Municipal District. The nearest settlements to the site are Bridgetown (located 1.5km to the south-east), O'Briensbridge (4km to the south-east) and Kilbane (4.4 km to the north). The nearest town is Killaloe, which is 8km to the northeast of the site.

The site is accessed via the R466 regional road, which is designated as a Scenic Route in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. There are some residential properties located along the R466 within 1km of the site and a second quarry, Jim Bolton Sand and Gravel, is nearby to the east.

The quarry at Ballyquin has been in operation since 1954, prior to the statutory requirement to obtain planning permission. It has gone through official processes including registration, substitution consent, and a planning application, beginning in 2005. The quarry's primary use is as a sand and gravel pit which has provided necessary materials for construction within the local and regional area for almost 70 years.

An infill application for the import of inert material was granted by Clare County Council in 2018 and expired in May 2023.

1.2

## The need for community engagement

At present, there is no statutory requirement for a programme of community engagement to be carried out prior to the lodgement of an application for planning permission to extend activities on a pre-existing quarry site, such as the one being applied for at Ballyquin. However, Roadstone chose to engage with the local community in the pre-submission phase, with the goals of ensuring that the members of the local community most likely to be affected by the Proposed Development were made aware of the nature of the project plans, and building upon the relationship that has existed between the operators of the sand quarry and the local residents for the last 70 years.

Emerging from these overarching goals were several key objectives of the community engagement programme. These included:



- > Putting the needs of the local community at the centre of the engagement process.
- > Identifying appropriate groups with whom to engage, based on their proximity to the quarry site and the impact the quarry has, and will continue to have, on their day-to-day lives.
- > Reaching out to the community in a manner that was timely, proactive and respectful.
- > Ascertaining the main concerns being expressed by the community in relation to the quarry and addressing these concerns as comprehensively as possible.
- > Establishing an open, two-way dialogue between the operators of the quarry and the local community for the duration of the planning process.
- > And counteracting the potential spread of speculation and misinformation relating to the application.



2.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

MKO's dedicated Project Communications implemented a community engagement strategy designed to meet these specific objectives. The centrepiece of this strategy was an in-person Public Information Event, to which members of the local community were to be invited to view the project plans, meet with and speak to representatives of Roadstone and the wider project team, and raise whatever questions or concerns they may have about the application to extend activities at the Ballyquin quarry.

The project team deemed it important that this Public Information Event be held well in advance of the lodgement of the planning application to Clare County Council, to allow time for any design modification arising from the community engagement process to be reflected in the final application. It was also deemed appropriate for the event to be held at a location as close as possible to the quarry site, to make it as easy as possible for the local residents most likely to be affected by the quarrying activity to attend.

The most suitable venue to be found under these criteria was the Clonlara Community Sports and Leisure Centre, a large hall in the village of Clonlara, approximately five miles from the Ballyquin quarry. The date chosen for the event was Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The event was to run from 4pm to 8pm, to allow people working both daytime and evening hours the best possible opportunity to attend.

2.1

### Event advertising

As per the strategy, the project team identified the most appropriate groups of people with whom to engage and set about devising an advertising plan to reach these groups effectively. These groups could be subdivided into two distinct strands:

1. *Near neighbours and local residents of the Ballyquin area*
2. *The wider community and general public*

Each of these groups were informed of the Public Information Event via the most appropriate channels.

2.1.1

#### Leaflet drop

The near neighbours, who were regarded as the most important group in terms of direct engagement, were notified of the event via a leaflet drop on Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, six days out from the day of the event.

This leaflet drop was carried out by a member of MKO's Project Communications team, who distributed leaflets to every home within a 1.5km radius of the centre of the Proposed Development site.

Approximately 50 homes received leaflets alerting them to the event. MKO Project Communications were also able to speak directly to several of the residents over the course of the leaflet drop to explain the purpose of the event in more detail.

2.1.2

#### Newspaper advert

In order to reach a wider audience, the project team made the decision to advertise the event in the *Clare Champion*, the highest-selling newspaper in Co Clare. An advert detailing the date, time, venue and purpose of the Public Information Event was placed in the *Clare Champion* edition of Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, five days out from the day of the event (see below).





Plate 2-1 Clare Champion newspaper, page 7, edition of Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## 2.2

## Event format

The Public Information Event was staged as a drop-in exhibition. In the weeks leading up to the event, the project team gathered and collated the relevant information, maps and site layouts and designed display posters to give attendees a fully rounded impression of the project. Among the topics addressed in these materials were:

- The quarry location and layout
- The baseline environment of the site
- The details of the application to develop the existing quarry
- The baseline biodiversity of the site
- The biodiversity enhancement proposals
- The next steps, up to and including the lodgement of an application

These posters were displayed on either side of the hall. As attendees entered the hall, they were asked to sign in with their name and contact details if they so wished and were then given the option of viewing the materials at their own pace or being brought through the exhibition by a member of the project team. Attendees were encouraged to ask any questions or raise any concerns they may have had. The members of the project team endeavoured to answer these questions as comprehensively as possible.

The project team at the event consisted of representatives from Roadstone, along with members of MKO's environmental and communications units:

- Pat Gibney, Roadstone
- Brian Staed, Roadstone
- Tomás Ryan, Roadstone
- Eoin O'Sullivan, MKO Environmental
- Morgan Valvik, MKO Environmental
- Toni Bourke, MKO Project Communications
- Mark Higgins, MKO Project Communications





Plate 2-2 Morgan Valvik and Mark Higgins of MKO pictured at the Public Information Event for the Ballyquin Sand Quarry, hosted by Roadstone at the Clonlara Community Sports and Leisure Centre on Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The turnout at the Public Information Event was relatively low, with only 12 people attending the event over the course of the four hours. While the project team would have preferred a bigger turnout, the relatively low number of attendees did suggest that there was no significant opposition to the application among the local residents or the public at large.



3.

## PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Among those members of the community who did attend the Public Information Event to engage with the developers, as well as the homeowners met by MKO Project Communications representative over the course of the leaflet drop a week earlier, some common areas of concern gradually emerged in relation to the Proposed Development and the application to extend its activities.

These areas of concern are detailed below, as well as the responses given by the project team to address them.

3.1

### Noise

Some residents living close to the perimeter of the quarry site expressed their concerns over the noise impacts that the quarrying activities could have on their day-to-day lives should the application for planning permission be successful.

The project team responded to these concerns by assuring residents that a noise and vibration assessment would form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report as part of the final application, and that all measures will be taken to ensure that noise levels from quarrying activity on the site will be kept below acceptable levels.

3.2

### Ecological concerns

Some attendees at the Public Information Event questioned whether the plan to extend quarrying activities could have a negative impact on the ecology of the Ballyquin site. The project team explained that the application for planning permission contains detailed proposals for biodiversity enhancement measures, such as the planting of new hedgerows, planting of native tree species to compensate for the loss of any immature woodland, and the use of nest boxes around the site to provide additional habitat for bird species such as sand martin and barn owl.

Furthermore, the planning application provides for the backfilling of the Ballyquin quarry site to its original land contours after use. After infilling, topsoil will be restored on the site and reseeded with grass to bring the site back into agricultural use. Provision will then be made for further, short-term (two-year) environmental monitoring of air, surface water and groundwater.

3.3

### Traffic concerns

Some attendees at the Public Information Event expressed their concerns over a potential increase in traffic flow to and from the Ballyquin quarry site, should the Proposed Development proceed. In particular, some local residents along the R466 road had concerns over the volume of trucks that would pass by their homes on a daily basis carrying excavated materials away from the site, as well as the damaging impact these heavy vehicles could have on the road surface.

In response, the project team assured these residents that the EIAR will include a chapter to deal with Material Assets, including traffic, which will set out the measures that will be put in place to ensure traffic disruptions are kept to the lowest possible level.

3.4

### Fahybeg Wind Farm

The relationship between the quarry and the proposed Fahybeg Wind Farm was the most contentious issue to emerge from the community engagement process. The Fahybeg Wind Farm is an eight-turbine



wind energy development currently being planned by RWE for a site close to the existing Ballyquin quarry.

An application for planning permission for the wind farm was refused by Clare County Council in May 2023. That decision was appealed to An Bord Pleanála and a decision was made by ABP to overturn the council's decision and grant permission for the wind farm in March 2024.

Roadstone has an agreement in place with RWE and the Fahybeg Wind Farm developers for access and use of part of the Roadstone landholding during the construction and operation of the wind farm, should the development proceed.

The decision of An Bord Pleanála to grant permission for the wind farm development was made on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and was reported on in the local and national media in the days that followed. The fact that the Ballyquin Public Information Event was due to be held the following week was purely coincidental – the event had been in planning for over a month to allow for the rental of the Clonlara Community Sports and Leisure Centre and other logistical matters.

However, the timing of the event in the wake of the decision to grant permission for the Fahybeg wind farm caused some members of the community who were strongly in opposition to the wind farm to suspect and suggest some form of collusion between Roadstone and RWE, where absolutely none existed.

Some of the attendees at the event raised this issue with the representatives of Roadstone, who reiterated that the only connection between the Ballyquin quarry and the wind farm is an agreement for access and use of part of the Roadstone landholding during the construction and operation of the wind farm, should the development proceed.

Several attendees questioned whether sand quarried at Ballyquin would be used in the construction of the Fahybeg wind farm. In response, Roadstone representatives said that their company will endeavour to win whatever tenders they can and will sell the sand extracted from Ballyquin to any developer willing to buy it, including RWE.



4.

## CONCLUSION

Roadstone are satisfied that the steps taken to engage and consult with the local community were appropriate and sufficient for a project such as the Proposed Development. The local residents most likely to be affected by the resumption of activity in the quarry were personally invited to attend a Public Information Event to learn more about the project plans, and to raise any concerns or questions they may have had directly with representatives of Roadstone.

The Public Information Event was also advertised in the local media to notify any members of the wider community of East Clare who may have had an interest in, or a concern about, the project that the event was taking place. The relatively small turnout at the event was taken by the project team to indicate that there is no significant opposition to the Proposed Development among the local community.

That said, the concerns of the residents who did take part in the community engagement process were listened to and addressed by the project team. Roadstone made clear their position in relation to the Fahybeg Wind Farm, reiterating there is an agreement in place with the developers for access and use of part of the Roadstone landholding during the construction and operation of the wind farm, should the development proceed.

Roadstone also acted to assuage concerns from the community in relation to traffic management, noise, and the ecological impact of the Proposed Development.

At all stages of the engagement process, Roadstone have been fully conscious of the need for members of the local community to be properly consulted with and listened to, and their questions and concerns suitably addressed. The operators of the Ballyquin quarry have endeavoured to make the interests of the local community a key consideration in the application for the Proposed Development.

Roadstone are committed to maintaining the strong community engagement approach throughout the post-application stage and, if the application is successful, will continue to consult with and be available to residents throughout the remaining operational lifespan of the Ballyquin sand quarry.



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