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Minister of State Lenihan launches Phase Two works at Silvermines

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The Minister for Natural Resources, Conor Lenihan T.D., today launched Phase Two of the remediation works at the Gortmore Tailings Management Facility, Silvermines, Co. Tipperary. The contract will be undertaken by SIAC Construction Ltd., Ballycurreen Cross, and Airport Road, Cork.

The Minister formally launched the project at the Gortmore site in the presence of representatives of North Tipperary County Council, the project design consultants SRK Consulting, the contractors and representatives of the Silvermines area communities.

The Minister remarked that these works were the first of their kind in Ireland. Complimenting North Tipperary County Council and SRK Consulting on their roles in bringing the project to this stage, he said "Phase One of the remediation works have been completed in 2008 on time and within budget and that I have every confidence that Phase Two will mirror that success."

The site at Gortmore was used for the deposition of mine tailings, a residue from the lead and zinc mining carried out in the Silvermines area from the mid-1960s until 1982. Since then the Gortmore site, and other mining sites in the area, have been the subject of studies and reports in relation to any possible potential threat to the environment and the local community.

In 2005 the Government decided that the State would undertake the remediation of the former mining sites in the area with North Tipperary County Council acting as agents for the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

The Phase I Contract was completed in December 2008. The Phase 2 Contract will be substantially completed by the end of 2009 with final soil placement and grass seeding in early 2010.

Minister Lenihan added "A cooperative relationship has been developed with the local communities in progressing the remediation project to its current stage" and he further confirmed "The Government is committed to working with the community in addressing the environmental problems associated with the long history of mining in the area."

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Notes for Editors:

The Gortmore Phase I Contract, completed in December 2008 involved the placement of a geotextile layer and a 300mm stone capillary layer over approx. 20 hectares of the uncovered surface area of the Tailings Management Facility.

The Phase 2 Contract will involve the placement of soil and topsoil over the stone capillary layer and ancillary works including buttress strengthening, surface drainage works and remedial works to surface ponds and wetlands. The contract will be substantially completed by the end of 2009 with final soil placement and grass seeding in early 2010.