

Meeting Minutes



Project:	Ffos-y-Fran Final Restoration Scheme	Job No/Ref:	RML 3247
		Date held:	31/07/2024
Held at:	Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd Offices Cwmbargoed Disposal Point, Fochriw Road, Cwmbargoed, Merthyr Tydfil. CF48 4AE	Prepared by:	[REDACTED]

Purpose:	Technical Working Group Meeting No. 2 to provide an update on work to date and ongoing investigations and surveys.
-----------------	--

Present:	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (Acting for MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (Acting for MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - (MTCBC)
	[REDACTED] - Welsh Government
	[REDACTED] - The Coal Authority
	[REDACTED] - Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
	[REDACTED] - Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd
	[REDACTED] - Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd
	[REDACTED] - Farsight Group
	[REDACTED] - Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
	[REDACTED] - Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
	[REDACTED] - Groundwater Science Ltd
	[REDACTED] - Mine Environment Management (MEM)
	[REDACTED] - Richards Moorehead and Laing Ltd (RML)
	[REDACTED] - (RML)

Apologies	[REDACTED] - Waterco
	[REDACTED] - Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

No.	Item	Action By
1	Introductions	
1.1	The attendees introduced themselves and their roles on the project.	
1.2	█ provided a summary description of the recent history and current situation at Ffos-y-Fran with coal extraction ceasing at the end of November 2023.	
1.3	Following coal cessation, the site will enter a care and maintenance stage with some staff retained for that purpose. This will include for attendance to issues such as environmental monitoring, health and safety, site security and statutory inspections.	
1.4	A legally binding unilateral undertaking and S106 agreement has been agreed between MSW and MTCBC to cease coal extraction on the 30 th November 2023.	
1.5	█ explained that a previous planning application that was submitted last April through a S73 application had been refused by MTCBC and a new for an alternative restoration strategy application is currently being prepared by RML. The original scheme that was approved is unachievable given the budget/surety of £15 million agreed between MSW and MTCBC in 2016.	
1.6	RML had prepared a presentation that illustrated work to date and included an outline restoration strategy for discussion. █ presented and described the work undertaken to date, scheme objectives, general assumptions and approximate timescales. Several items were discussed during and after the presentation.	
2.0	Progress to Date	
2.1	<p>RML █ had prepared a presentation that highlighted progress to date in a project summary:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extraction of coal from Ffos-y-Fran ceased at the end of November 2023.• Site then entered period of aftercare and maintenance.• Pit lake levels rose following cessation of pumping and during the drier periods of the summer now gradually receding and returning to around original groundwater levels – recorded on 23rd July 2024 to be 277.244 mAOD.• Highest pit lake level recorded on 12th April 2024 @ 281.100 mAOD.• Pit lake will remain as a permanent water feature – an affordable and sustainable approach with biodiversity benefits.	

No.	Item	Action By
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pit lake is not classified as a reservoir under the Reservoirs Act 1975 – not a raised structure for the storage of water but a large, excavated void holding groundwater that is now exposed to view and acting as a large soakaway. Overburden material from backfill and top of sidewalls will be used for restoration of the void. Tips OB2 and OB3 shall remain in situ avoiding need for extensive earthworks by plant and machinery that could cause air borne pollution. Central ecological area will remain intact and be further protected with creation of buffer zones. Pit lake levels continue to be monitored by MSW and Groundwater Sci) following cessation of mining activity. EIA Screening Opinion received from MTCBC on 04/12/2023 – EIA required by MTCBC. Regular meetings held between MTCBC, MSW, FSG & RML (to discuss issues such as PRow, BOAT & ESCROW). Restoration scheme for Phase 2A submitted to MTCBC on 08/04/2024 and approved by MTCBC Planning Committee on 17th April 2024. Site works commenced in June 2024. EIA Team appointed May 2024. Surveys and monitoring ongoing. Surveys (EDNA only) for Great Crested Newt (GCN) and revealed that there was evidence of GCN in several ponds on the site and surrounding area. EIA Scoping Report submitted to MTCBC on 22/07/2024. 	
2.2	RML presented the EIA team and summarised the EIA topics to be covered as part of the EIA. The focus of today's TWG was the water environment. ■ introduced the consultants who were working on environmental factors such as hydrology, hydrogeology (Groundwater Science), water quality (MEM) and flood risk (Waterco) and ecology (RML). The consultants presented the scope of their inputs to the EIA and work to date.	
3.0	Discussion	
3.1	■ asked if there were any plans for the Cwmbargoed Disposal Point (CDP) as proposals need to be prepared to discharge a planning condition. The site lies within the Caerphilly County Borough Council. It was agreed that this should be picked up as a separate matter outside the meeting.	MTCBC/MSW

No.	Item	Action By
3.2	■ asked if noise had been considered as a factor in the EIA. ■ explained that it had not been included as it was not considered a potentially significant factor. ■ requested that this should be recorded in the EIA.	RML
3.3	■ and ■ asked what the volume of water within the pit lake has been measured. Both ■ and ■ had estimated that this would be in the region of 1.7 million cubic metres. Groundwater Science had estimated the volume was circa 1.1 million cubic metres. The current volume had been calculated as circa 832,000 cubic metres at the lowest lake level of around 277AOD. It was suggested that the difference was likely to be due to the higher volumes being calculated from an old ground terrain model.	
3.4	Phase 2B was discussed and ■ asked what works might likely to be involved. ■ advised that the scope of works for Phase 2B had yet to be defined. ■ suggested that Phase 2B could be implemented during the period of time when the final restoration scheme was being considered. ■ suggested that the proposals for Phase 2B needs to be assessed in the EIA.	
3.5	■ asked of there was any likelihood impact pathways or connections to the nearby Trecatti Landfill site. ■ advised that MSW had requested information from Biffa Waste Management (BWM) but that to date no information had been received. MSW will contact BWM again.	MSW
3.6	■ asked where the groundwater from the pit lake may be draining to. ■ explained it was thought to drain ultimately to the river Taff to the south-west. ■ asked if there was any information on the Dowlais Free Drainage System. It was thought that there are no known detailed records, and that part of the system may have been affected by the open cast operations.	
3.7	■ asked if a programme had been prepared leading up the submission date of a S73 planning application. ■ advised that the submission should be completed by beginning of December 2024 but that a programme was yet to be prepared and is awaiting a response from MTCBC on the scoping report that was due in early September 2024.	MTCBC
3.8	The issue of if the pit lake was classified as a reservoir under the Reservoirs Act 1975. It was generally agreed that it was not a reservoir as the water was not stored and there was no artificial structure impounding the lake. The volume of the pit lake was well above the 10,000 cubic metres of water defined in the Act as being a reservoir capable of holding of water above the natural level of any part of the surrounding land.	

No.	Item	Action By
	■ stated that there had yet to be anything in writing received from MTCBC or NRW to confirm this. MSW/RML will write to NRW to confirm this.	MSW/RML
4.0	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
4.1	It was agreed that the next TWG meeting will be held at Cwmbargoed Disposal Point on Thursday 26th September at 10.00am.	