

## **Ffos-y-Fran Technical Working Group Meeting Notes**

**24 March**

**Welsh Government Offices, Merthyr Tydfil**

### **Attendees**

██████████ – Welsh Government  
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██████████ – Merthyr Tydfil CBC  
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██████████ – Natural Resources Wales  
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██████████ – Mining Remediation Authority  
██████████ – Mining Remediation Authority  
██████████ – HSE

### **1. Section 73 application for revised restoration scheme**

Since receipt in February, the application remains under consideration by MTCBC.

A fact finding/site visit arranged for the Technical Working Group has been arranged for the 7 April at Cwmbargoed disposal point to discuss application. There is currently minimum plant on site, and a plant supplier has already contacted MRA regarding any potential future Ffos Y Fran needs – officials raised concerns regarding whether on-site plant would meet the needs of a restoration scheme.

The application is currently going through the consultation exercise. Council highway engineers have not raised any initial concerns, and ecologists are looking for background information for the ecological impact assessment.

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MTCBC advised that around 230 representations have been made to date, with the vast majority from Friends of the Earth and Coal Action Network. This commentary is objecting as the application would not be implementing the previously approved scheme. The vast majority of these representations are from individuals who are not residents of Merthyr, so UK-wide representation is being made.

Concerns were raised by attendees regarding the general detail within the application and lack of supporting evidence, with the following specifics raised:

- Detail lacking on pumping proposals to temporarily lower the water level in the flooded excavation to facilitate earth working operations (re-grading the low wall backfill batter)
  - Pumping volumes and rates
  - Discharge points and necessary consents
  - Seasonal constraints
- Absence of site drainage arrangements within proposal
- Costings have not been included with the application or provided to Merthyr separately
- How the revised restoration proposals tie-in with current Phase 2A works and proposals for future Phase 2B
- Application is lacking proposals for the many attenuation ponds and lakes across the site
- Aftercare - Care and maintenance-post restoration. What plans are in place and for how long, and who is responsible?

A Community liaison meeting will take place on the evening of 7 April.

MTCBC has commissioned a geotechnical expert to review the application.

## **2. Phase 2A**

While the operator stopped most restoration works in early December due to inclement weather, machinery is moving once more with reprofiling, topsoil and seeding work taking place. A significant amount of machinery either has been or is being sold, with only "adequate" machinery left on site for restoration.

Works on Area 8 (eastern side) have not been agreed due to concerns from the MTCBC ecologist.

## **3. Phase 2B works proposals**

Initial discussions between the Operator and MTCBC on Phase 2B have begun, with the Operator looking at areas that can be restored in line with the agreed restoration scheme. An area adjacent to the A4060 trunk road is being considered for profiling works, and most additional works would take place towards Bogey Road on the west flank of the void.

The Operator has suggested tidying areas around buildings and works to the high wall where the viewing platform is situated.

MTCBC and the Operator are looking for a steer on drainage works in restored areas. There are currently unlined ditches in place directing water into the void but the Operator is looking at formalising these channels and how best to line them. The Operator originally suggested concrete canvas, MTCBC raised some initial concerns and suggested stone lining in some areas would be preferable.

Drainage is currently not included in the application, and it is unlikely for formalised drainage works to be seen this year. The drainage scheme under the currently approved strategy is viewed as not fit for purpose and requires further development (defining catchment areas, ditch routes, ditch linings, discharge points etc.), however, temporary drainage can be put in place. NRW noted that any drainage must align with NRW permits.

Phases 2A and 2B could be running concurrently dependent on agreements. Concerns were raised by attendees that the Operator has demonstrated an apparent unwillingness to include higher priority restoration works within either Phase 2A or proposals for Phase 2B.

MTCBC advised that a more detail draft of the programme of works for phase 2B should be shared following Easter.

No agreement has been reached to allow Phase 2B work to commence. This is still work in progress with MTCBC and the Operator reviewing scope, programme and costs.

#### **4. Call-in Request**

WG confirmed that a request is being considered to call in the Section 73 application for determination by the Welsh Ministers. The call-in request is under active consideration although MTCBC (and the Carmarthenshire Joint Minerals and Waste Unit, which is advising MTCBC on the application) should continue to process the application as normal.

#### **5. MotoCross Application**

An EIA screening exercise for a planning application for a MotoCross track on tip OB3 has been completed. The proposal is focused on the plateau itself and with no consideration for retention of the sides. The application would be contingent upon site restoration.

#### **6. AOB**

A watercourse survey has been unable to progress on the site despite having been commissioned by MTCBC. This is principally due to their being a lack of information available to inform assessments.

MRA stated that any highwall trimming had the potential to encounter/disturb insitu coal seams which would require agreement from the MRA prior to works. From

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discussions with the Operator, MTCBC do not believe that coal would be excavated as part of the revised restoration scheme where 'over digging' was required but are mindful that of this possibility.

The current water level was report as 279m AOD.

## **7. Next Meeting**

TWG to attend site visit with operator on 7 April.

**Action 1 – WG and MTCBC to arrange meeting between lawyers**