

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL CASTELL-NEDD PORT TALBOT**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
ASSESSMENT) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 1999**

**SCREENING OPINION – ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT NOT
REQUIRED**

Name and address of the applicant

**Tetra Tech - Will Ryan
Tetra Tech
5th Floor Longcross Court
47 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 0AD**

DATE REGISTERED: 13 December 2021

APPLICATION NO: P2021/1230

LOCATION: Bwlch Ffos Quarry, Bwlch Ffos Access Road, Cwmgwrach,
Neath Port Talbot,

PROPOSAL: Screening opinion request for sandstone extraction and
completion of the restoration at Bwlch Ffos Quarry, Mynydd
Resolfen, near Cwmgwrach.

THE NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AS THE LOCAL PLANNING
AUTHORITY IN PURSUANCE OF ITS POWER UNDER THE ABOVE MENTIONED ACT
AND REGULATION HEREBY ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING SCREENING OPINION THAT
THE DEVELOPMENT IS NOT AN E.I.A. DEVELOPMENT AND THAT THE APPLICATION
NEED NOT BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT. THE
REASONS FOR THIS OPINION ARE SET OUT IN THE ATTACHED REPORT.

Signed:



Ceri Morris – Head of Planning & Public Protection

Date: 18 January 2022

EIA Screening Assessment.

Application No.:	P2021/1120
Site Location:	Bwlch Ffos, Mynydd Resolven
Description:	Sandstone extraction and completion of restoration - The proposal details the extraction of stone from two areas to the west, a proposed 200-250,000 tonnes of stone is proposed to be extracted, to the east approx. 100 -150,000 tonnes, totalling a maximum of 400,000 tonnes. The stone is a high polished stone value (PSV) sandstone and will be extracted over an extraction area of approximately 1.5 hectares and a total site area of circa 16 hectares - the remaining 14.5 hectares, made up of previously worked open cast and quarrying operations, will be restored (details of restoration yet to be confirmed). Overall working of the site would be based upon common practice (i.e., phasing of extraction and restoration, appropriate methods to minimise impacts relating to blasting and processing of material and a detailed restoration scheme) It is not proposed to extract any coal from the site, the proposed areas for coal extraction do not have coal seams in them, both of these faces were previous working faces when operations halted in 2015. The applicant highlights that none of the proposed operations would take place outside of the original planning permission boundary, the existing arrangements such as drainage and haul roads would also be utilised. There would be a requirement for a processing area located on the 'plateau' area and this would consist of mobile plant, a temporary office and other welfare facilities, further details on this would be required at application stage. The material extracted from the site would be hauled via the existing forestry roads, either to Unity mine to the south, or towards Tower colliery in the east, again, routing of this material would need to be confirmed. Following the cessation of operations on site they site would be restored, previous restoration mostly allowed for tree planting. They have confirmed that there are large amounts of overburden and soils already on site that could be used for restoration. The type, qualities and quantities of these soils and overburden would need to be assessed to demonstrate their suitability in delivering an appropriate restoration of the site.

	Restoration would be followed by a period of aftercare, the length of which will most likely be determined by the type of planting (and other works) carried out.	
Date of submission:	13/12/2021	
Relevant Regulation:	2017 Regs. Submitted on or after 16 May 2017.	
Schedule 1.		
Is the project Schedule 1 Development?	NO	
Does the project change or extend development described in schedule 1?	N/A	
Schedule 2.		
Is the project listed as a description of development under column 1 of Schedule 2?	Yes – Part 2 (a) extractive industries	
Are the applicable thresholds/criteria in column 2 exceeded/met?	Yes	
Does the project change or extend development described in column 1 of schedule 2?	No – there was a previous permission for minerals extraction at this site, and the site had been subject to a section 73 application (P2012/0333) to extend the lifetime of operations at the site. This application, however, remained undetermined until it was withdrawn by the administrators for the site in June 2021 –therefore, there is currently no extant planning permission at the site.	
Is the Project located wholly or partly within a 'Sensitive area'? Sensitive Areas are: - SSSI. - National Park. - World Heritage Site. - A scheduled Ancient Monument.	No	

- ANOB. - A European Site – SAC, CSAC etc.		
Have the Welsh Ministers issued a screening Direction?	No	
Has an ES been submitted?	No	

Whilst the proposed site is not located within, or in proximity to any protected sites for ecology (or for other reasons), there are a number of potential impacts on a number of different considerations, which, cumulatively, have the potential to result in the development being considered EIA development, a full screening exercise will therefore be carried out.

Case Officer's Signature: Thomas Boothroyd

Date: 1701/2022

Detailed EIA Screening Assessment.

In answering the following questions due regard must be given to the impact of the development taking into account:-

- (a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (b) the nature of the impact;
- (c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- (e) the probability of the impact;
- (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
Criterion 1. Character of Development		
Question 1a Size and Design of Development.		
Will the design, Construction, Operation or decommission of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies	Yes – the topography of the area will change, during extraction and again following the completion of restoration operations	No – there is an existing quarry which has been there for some time and the proposals would not result in significant changes to the existing quarry, and would ultimately result in the

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
etc)?		restoration of the existing quarry site
Question 1b Cumulation with Other Existing Development and/or Approved Development.		
Are there any other factors which should be considered such as: • Consequential development which could lead to Environment effects? • The Potential for cumulative impacts with other existing approved development or planning activities in the locality? • Any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project? • Transfrontier impact?	Yes – there is a windfarm development in proximity to the boundary of which is approx. 400 metres to the east of the proposed quarry. Quarrying operations could lead to landscape and visual impacts on its own, but given the presence of the windfarm any potential landscape impacts from the quarry would need to be considered cumulatively along with the windfarm The Authority is also in receipt of a statutory pre-app for a larger scale sandstone extraction lower down Mynydd Resolve, at Bryn Cwm. This proposal would involve clearance of woodland and would have a potentially large visual impact of its own so this may need to be considered if this application progress's however, at this time there is no permission, or even a full planning application registered for this proposal.	No – impacts are unlikely to be significant. There is already an existing quarry and the proposed development would not see a large increase in active faces or result in large amounts of material being tipped above ground in visible places – there is enough space for any overburden/waste stockpiles to be sited in less visible locations. Whilst the site area is quite large at approx. 15 hectares, only approx. 2 hectares of this would be areas of extraction. The site is also relatively isolated and would not be visible to a large number of receptors, excepting users of the bridleway.
Question 1c Use of Natural Resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;		
Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity etc. which are non-renewable or in	Yes – the proposed development would extract pennant sandstone, recognised as a High Specification Aggregate (HSA) which is relatively	No – minerals operations are different to other developments as minerals can only be worked where they are found. Whilst technically the resources at the proposed site are in

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
short supply?	scarce at a UK level	short supply, minerals of such quality are in demand, specifically because of the properties they hold (minerals such as these are often used as road stone for example) Therefore, the proposal, whilst utilising materials in short supply, would be meeting a market demand.
Question 1d. Production of Waste		
Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes – there will always be an element of material that is not up to the required specifications along with overburden/sub soils	No – any non-saleable material/waste can most likely be utilised as material for the restoration of the site – it is highly unlikely that there would be a need to export waste from the site (unless any ‘specialist’ waste was found, that would need to be dealt with by relevant, licensed waste companies)
Question 1e. Pollution and Nuisances.		
Will the project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	Yes – the operations have the potential to generate dust which can be harmful to human health if inhaled on a regular basis	No – for the quarry operations themselves, they do have the potential to generate dust. However, best practice measures can be put in place to minimise the creation of dust and to mitigate impacts. In addition to this, the site is isolated from any nearby sensitive receptors, the closest property being approx 1.2km’s to the north. The haulage of material along the internal forestry roads has the potential for the generation of dust, particularly during periods of dry weather. There are

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
		numerous measures that can be employed to reduce the generation of dust (water bowsers on haul roads in dry weather, temporary cessation of operations during periods of extreme dry weather etc). These can be detailed in dust management plans, which could then be conditioned, if required. At this current time there are two proposed haul routes, one via Unity mine the other via tower colliery. Whilst the applicant has not confirmed the routing as of yet, neither of these routes would pass through densely populated areas for a significant amount of time. It is considered that, with the mitigation measures mentioned above, the use of appropriate conditions, and the separation distances (and limited travelling distances) associated with either of the two haul roads, any impacts are unlikely to be significant and result in the requirement of the proposal being considered EIA development.
Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes – there are numerous quarry operations that have the potential to generate noise – including blasting (which can also cause vibration) excavation of stone and crushing screening operations.	No – the quarry operations themselves will not cause any significant noise issues – the site is a long way from any sensitive receptors, and there are also numerous, mostly best practice measures which can be implemented to reduce noise impacts.

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
		HGV's on the haulage route would have the potential to generate noise but the intensity of these impacts could be reduced through a number of measures. This could include, limiting HGV movements to certain hours of the day, speed limits on haul roads, ensuring a good quality road surface, to minimise body slap – all of which could be detailed in a scheme and/or conditions. At this current time there are two proposed haul routes, one via Unity mine the other via tower colliery. Whilst the applicant has not confirmed the routing as of yet, neither of these routes would pass through densely populated areas for a significant amount of time. It is considered that, with the mitigation measures mentioned above, the use of appropriate conditions, and the separation distances (and limited travelling distances) associated with either of the two haul roads, any impacts are unlikely to be significant and result in the requirement of the proposal being considered EIA development.
Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air, or lead to risks of contamination of land or water (including surface	Yes - Dust has already been covered in previous sections above, other than dust it is unlikely that there would be other potentially toxic or noxious emissions to air. The proposed	Proposed works may result in leaks of hazardous materials and result in release of these pollutants into surface and/or ground waters. However, there are a

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea)?	operation would have the potential to contaminate surface or ground waters (through spillage of fuels/oils or chemicals) The screening opinion request states that there is an existing drainage network on site and this will be sufficient for future operations.	number of best practice measures (including surface water management plans, cut off ditches, spill kits etc) which would be effective in reducing both the likelihood and the impacts of any spillages. It is therefore unlikely that any of these impacts would be significant enough to require further examination via an ES.
Question 1f Risk of accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge.		
Will there be any risk of accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge during construction or operation of the project?	Yes – as above there is a risk that hazardous fluids/chemicals may be spilled from storage/vehicles	Unlikely to be significant, contamination of groundwater is considered to be of low probability. If there are spills (which is relatively unlikely in the first place) there are spill kits that can be used to soak up/dissipate any chemicals, making infiltration into groundwater much less likely. A comprehensive surface water management plan would also help to ensure any spillages are dealt with within the boundaries of the site
Are there risks to human health for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	Yes – as mentioned above there is potential for water pollution via spillages and for air pollution via dust generation – which could impact on human health	No – significant impacts are unlikely If water contamination did occur the site is in an isolated position and is unlikely to impact on private water supplies etc – largely due to distance – also – as above there are mitigation measures that can be put into place. As mentioned previously impacts to air

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
		from the quarry operations are unlikely but the significance of any impacts is unclear as the HGV haul route is not currently known,
Criterion 2 Location of development.		
Question 2a Existing and approved land use.		
Will the project result in social changes for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles employment?	No	no
Are there any routes or facilities or approved facilities on or around the location, which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the project?	Yes – there is a bridleway that runs along the western boundary of the proposed site	No – the development would not block or require alteration of the bridleway. Whilst there would be some visual impacts and impacts relating to noise, these would be limited to the relatively short stretch of bridleway that runs along the boundary of the site – impacts from the site would not extend to more distant parts of the bridleway
Are there any transport routes or approved routes which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes – HGV's would more than likely utilise the A465 to move materials	The haulage routes for vehicles leaving the site, have not been confirmed or the proposed annual tonnage. However, transport management plans and conditions relating to lorry numbers/tonnage limits would help reduce any potential significant impacts. A transport impact assessment would be able to identify if there was any capacity for additional vehicles on the highway. Due to the above significant impacts are unlikely.

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	no	no
Are there any areas on or around the location occupied by land uses or approved land uses which could be affected by the project, particularly sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities?	Yes – there is a windfarm, approx. 400 meters to the east of the site, blasting from the site could impact on these turbines	No – firstly the document has stated that the majority of material will be mechanically extracted with only minimal blasting as and when required. Secondly, 400 metres is still an adequate separation distance to achieve acceptable Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) levels at the wind turbines – there are a number of best practice measures (drilling more shot holes, double or triple decking of explosives, reducing amounts of Maximum Instantaneous Charge (MIC) that can be used to reduce vibration impacts from blasting. A blast monitoring scheme can be drawn up to ensure adequate monitoring of blasting and on-going records keeping.
Question 2b Relative Abundance, Availability, Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;		
Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, soil, land, water and biodiversity, which could be affected by the project?	No - there are no designated sites for ecology within close proximity of the site, the closest being approx 3.4km's to the east.	No – there are no areas of important, high quality or scarce resources (other than the mineral itself – this has been covered previously).
Question 2c Absorption Capacity of the Natural Environment		

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology, or are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or floras which could be affected by the project?	Yes - as above, there are no areas designated for ecological reasons, but LBAP habitat has been identified on the site (open mosaic - brownfield land)	The applicant has indicated that phase 1 habitat surveys have already been carried out and there are a number of follow up surveys that need to be carried out, including great crested newts. However, with a properly designed excavation scheme along with progressive restoration and any species-specific mitigation measures, significant impacts are unlikely. The current site is a dormant quarry that has been left for some time, it would be relatively easy to replicate this habitat and re-instate the open mosaic brownfield habitat via appropriate restoration. With an appropriately designed restoration scheme and appropriate conditions significant impacts to ecology are unlikely.
Are there any inland, coastal, marine, river mouths, riparian area or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes – the river neath is approx. 2.5km's to the north-west of the site – there are also 2 smaller water courses to the west (approx 500 metres) which feed into the Afon Neath further to the west.	No – there is a significant separations distance between the site and the main river and it is unlikely that run off from the site would impact on the river. A surface water management plan would help to ensure that flows from and around the site would be adequately controlled and would not impact on the closer water courses to the west.
Are there any areas or feature of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which	Yes – the site is located within the special landscape area (SLA) the 'Neath Valley'	Unlikely – the existing quarry faces do not have any significant impacts on the landscape at this time-

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
could be affected by the project?		whilst the proposed operations would extend the extraction area - the area of the proposed extension would not be visible to a wide range of sensitive receptors. The quarry is on the upper slopes Mynydd Resolfen and is not readily visible from areas lower down the slopes. There are large tracts of woodland to all points of the compass that form an effective screen to the site. There is potential for this woodland to be felled in the future as it is commercial woodland, and the visual impact of the site would then be greater. – but this is not known at this time. Appropriately sited planting or other landscape measures could also be implemented to minimise any potential impacts. As mentioned previously, the cumulative impact of the development with the existing windfarm will need to be considered. However, due to the location of the development significant cumulative impacts relating to landscape impacts and wind farm would not be likely
Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	No – the area is in a remote location	No – the site would be visible from the bridleway in proximity to the site but this would not be large number of people. As above, due to the elevation of the site and the thick forest, visibility of the site would be limited.

Questions to be considered.	Yes, No, Unknown – provide description.	For Yes/Unknown are effects likely to be significant?
		There may be glimpsed views from surrounding roads, mostly at higher levels, but these would also be limited
Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?	No – the area is in a remote location	No – there are no properties or areas of population in close proximity to the site
Are there any areas, landscapes, sites or features of historic, archaeological or cultural importance or significance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	Yes- there are numerous site (that CADW) highlighted in response to their consultation on this screening opinion.	No – in their response CADW acknowledged that there are cultural features in relative proximity of the site, but significant impacts on these features are highly unlikely due to a combination of separation distances, surrounding vegetation, topography, and buildings.
Are there any areas on or around the location which area already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g where existing legal environmental quality standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project? Or in which it is considered there is such a failure? Such as AQMA?	No	No
Is the project located susceptible to subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	Potentially – the site is located in an area that has been subject to previous mine workings which could lead to potential subsidence issues	No – the coal authority were consulted on this screening opinion and confirmed that whilst there is a coal legacy on site there are no concerns with the proposals and a coal mining risk assessment would not be required.

Statement Of Reasons

In coming to this decision the Authority has had due regard to all information

submitted by the developers; the available results of other environmental assessments as well as the criteria set out within schedule 3. The Authority's main reasons for coming to this decision are set out within the above table.

In conclusion, the Authority is of the opinion that the proposed development, either alone or in combination, is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on the environment. This is on the understanding that the above identified effects could be avoided or prevented as specified within the table. As such, the likely effects of the development are unlikely to be significant enough to warrant EIA development.