

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: TO/JJ/00326/24 - FW: Fw: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions
Date: 14 February 2024 15:21:51
Attachments: [Outlook-swuvcuht.png](#)
[image001.jpg](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 11:13 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: TO/JJ/00326/24 - FW: Fw: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions

And another...



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 6:42 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Fw: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions

[REDACTED]

Thank for your email.

I provided you a link earlier to the information paper which sets out the haul route options.

As you quite rightly state in your email below the A472 is a more than adequate haul route once you are on that road and I expect you will agree the A462 (we are proposing to connect into with our preferred haul route) is equally as adequate given both are part of the main A-road network in the area and have the same general specification and use as each other.

Unfortunately, the capacity of strategic A-roads is not the issue we have when accessing our site or even when I talk about the route options below, in fact, the main issue is getting from our site to these main A-roads instead. So, when I talk about the route options within the Information Paper, the Options I refer to are the options to get from our site to the main A-road network only.

Within the information paper I provided a link to earlier, you will see a plan in Appendix 1. This plan shows the possible routes to obtain access to the main A-road network from our site. In particular, I would draw your attention to Route Option 1 which shows the route which has to be travelled along to get from our project area to the A472. This Route Option 1 is 4.3km long and has the following issues associated with it;

- It is informal single lane track at its upper level, then onto a single-lane road, then onto a short stretch of double lane road to get to the A472 roundabout
- At its upper parts and for around a third of its length it is a shared access route with PRoW rights
- Passes directly in front of residential dwellings
- About two-thirds at least of its length is a single carriageway in both private and public ownership.
- Will require the construction of various laybys to enable its use as a haul road (which requires the acquisition of private land either side)
- Is a shared vehicle accessway with local residents and farmers and golf club members so not a dedicated access route
- requires tree pruning and branch removal to accommodate HGVs

- requires discrete widening in a couple of locations to enable use by HGVs (which requires the acquisition of private land either side)
- May require traffic management to ensure its safe use and to minimise lorry-car conflicts (because it is only a single carriageway for the majority of its route)
- much of the single carriageway is of poor road-surface quality which will degrade further likely requiring resurfacing adding more disruption to the rest of the road users

This list is not the entirety of the issues for Route Option 1 but still, they are clearly significant issues when considering it as a haul route to get to the A472. The preferred route option utilises an established haul route (for NRW's lorries as required) to get to the A462 and doesn't impact in the same way that Route Option 1 does. The preferred route is not perfect by any means, but none of the access routes from our site are perfect, but, we have assessed the preferred option as the least impactful for various different reasons (again, which are set out in the information paper). I truly wish the tips we are proposing to reclaim were closer to the main A-road network, but unfortunately, they are not and every route option requires passing over open countryside first before getting to this A-road network.

So, I hope this sheds further light on why route Option 1 was discounted, but I do agree that the A472 itself and A462 are decent haul routes with little to choose between them in terms of specification when you eventually get to them. Feel free to have a look over the Information Paper and the various route options we considered and perhaps we can talk again.

Regards,



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 February 2024 17:05
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Fw: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions
 Thank you [REDACTED]

I think that we need to explore your decision making a little further as the route that I am suggesting fits all the criteria that you mention. However, it will add an additional travel time.

The route to the A472 you have already defined as staff entrance. As car users the staff can access via access roads from Bedwas and Trethomas as this would be the closest and easiest access for staff, and as these are not HGVs not subject to the same constraints.

So taking the HGVs out to the dual carriage on A472 to Newbridge. Then taking the A467 to the dual carriage at full moon roundabout. This is the route all HGVs are directed to travel. Are you suggesting that Caerphilly Borough Council are failing in their duty to manage the roads effectively and don't have roads suitable for the type of vehicles on the roads?

[REDACTED] is this something that Caerphilly Borough Council would agree with that the A467 is not suitable for HGVs?

You are basing your decision on a presumption that the Caerphilly Borough Council will object to the idea that HGVs use the A467, even though this is the road designed to cater for HGVs? This seems a little inconsistent with your other statements.

- When deciding upon a preferred option for a haul route a number of considerations must be factored in including:
- deliverability of the route, -- route is already in place to A472 as a track
-
- ability to actually physically pass down the route, -- route to A472 is flat and no "pass down" to manage.
-

- safety, -- seems safer to all concerned going to A472
-
- minimising impacts on local roads and communities, -- A472 is dual carriage, A467 is a road designed to manage hgv's
-
- environmental impacts,--- least damage to country park, nature and wildlife
-
- damage to public roads, -- roads are designed for HGVs.. creating roads in the country park is creating more damage
-
- congestion -- this are main roads design to cope with volume of traffic
- noise effects on sensitive receptors,-- mitigation already in place for HGV traffic
-
- highway authority policies and requirements,-- working on presumption
-
- length, --- what do you mean here? Length of vehicle? Route I'm suggestion already caters for HGV
-
- condition, -- what do you mean?
-
- height rises--- what do you mean?
-
- , ownership? The route I'm suggestion is all Caerphilly council
-
- and cost and so on.-- cost this is the one there is increased cost to you using this route to exit the coal
-
- All these factors (plus others) -- what other factors?

Looking at the criteria you have listed the most sensible and obvious decision would be using existing network rather than destroying the mountainside and the country park.

I'm not sure you have full understand the impact on local economy and people by destroying this mountainside. There is nothing in your points that illustrates the logical benefit of not using existing infrastructure except again your profit margin.

Perhaps you can put the actual decision making process on the table? The pros and cons of each route as I find it impossible to believe that anyone would identify that ripping up the mountainside is favourable over using the existing infrastructure that is in place for HGVs unless they are looking at end financial return.

The very fact that you are having to explain the decision means that there other options that are far more suitable. Unless you are dismissing the communities views, who know the area far better as the community lives here.

So I will ask you again to detail the decision process and detail why the decision was made to not use the existing infrastructure to exit the coal from the mountain. Further to that why the decision to destroy the wildlife and mountainside was selected over using the existing infrastructure. Please go into detail and I will ask if I don't understand.

If there is good rational then you will have no issue going through the detail, but if it's purely commercial then I would expect this reluctance to share the detail.

I will look forward to the decisioning document.

Thanks

On Tue, 13 Feb 2024, 2:48 pm [REDACTED] wrote:

[REDACTED],

Thanks again for your feedback and the questions raised.

The Information Paper is going to be uploaded to our website today and will be able to be accessible through this link:
<https://erireclamation.co.uk/bedwas/>

I am more than willing to send you a copy of the paper when the final draft is ready. This same link takes you to our Environmental Impact Assessment, Transport Assessment and Planning Statement amongst a number of other documents and combined these give a very detailed precis of our project. As I have recommended to others, the Non-Technical Summary document is a useful read as it summarises the project and technical information/findings.

We have a consultation event planned in Cwmfelfin on 21st February and I have attached details of all our events as you are more than welcome to attend one or all of them. We are currently trying to extend the Cwmfelfin event on 21st February from 1830 to 2000hrs (venue allowing) appreciating that people work. At this event we are proposing to make a presentation on the project and the haul route at around 1830 then have a Q&A session thereafter. We are in the process of setting a date for a new consultation event which is likely to be at Crosskeys Rugby Club but a date is yet to be confirmed as we are awaiting feedback as to when the venue is available. When I know, I will send over the details of this event too.

Addressing some of the points you make specifically, as requested:

- The presence of coal within the coal tips is the contaminating and safety factor and reclamation of coal tips cannot deliver the benefits of reclamation without its removal. Our reclamation project will take a Category D tip (most at risk category) to a Category A tip (least at risk) and will in the process remove the financial burden for inspecting and interim safety works off CCBC as well as the latent risk of having to remediate these tips at some point in the future at huge cost to the public purse (a few years back CCBC estimated the cost of remediating these tips to a safe state to be in the order of £30-40 million which is likely to be higher now given the impact of inflation and market costs).
- Removal of the coal off-site is therefore a critical aspect of delivering the project benefits and this will need to occur regardless of whether this is done as a private or public project - coal needs to be transported away. Therefore, given the haul route enables the removal off-site of the separated coal it is also a critical aspect of the project. As such, this haul route needs to be one which can actually be guaranteed and delivered for the project (again regardless of whether it is a public or private project). Without a haul route, the project benefits cannot be delivered by any organisation private or public.
- When deciding upon a preferred option for a haul route a number of considerations must be factored in including: deliverability of the route, ability to actually physically pass down the route, safety, minimising impacts on local roads and communities, environmental impacts, damage to public roads, congestion, noise effects on sensitive receptors, highway authority policies and requirements, length, condition, height rises, ownership and cost and so on. All these factors (plus others) lead to a decision and the preferred haul route option has been proposed because on the balance of all these factors it is the least impactful route. Therefore, the decision-making process isn't really by commercial factors but a range of other more important factors when assessing the options.
- The location of the tips is a challenging one and there are few options for a haul route none of which are perfect including the preferred option. So, we have to decide on balance which route can deliver the benefits of the reclamation scheme and cause the least impact across all factors of consideration. In overview, there are 5 possible haul routes of which the preferred route and the one you mention below are two of them. All routes would require works to enable them to be useable, even the one you refer to, which incidentally, is being proposed as the staff entrance route and for use by smaller vehicles.
- Our estimated use sees around two lorry movements an hour during normal working hours outside which it won't be used as a haul route.
- There is a general presumption by planning and highways authorities that the use of single carriageway public roads should not be considered as part of HGV/lorry routes and are often refused by highway authorities if they do propose such

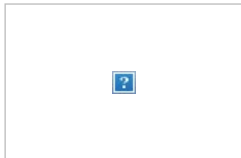
roads - normally done again after consideration of the factors I have listed above. On the many projects I have worked on, highway authorities actively discouraged the use of single lane or even narrow double-lane roads as temporary haul routes together with routes which pass directly in front of sensitive noise receptors like residential properties.

- The Information Paper is in the process of being uploaded but thought I would provide some level of feedback ahead of it so you can understand a bit better the considerations.

So, in summary, the decision-making process is based on a number legitimate factors all of which have to be considered during the process of assessing the preferred option i.e. commercial factors are by far not the most important factors. The considerations I have broadly set out above are those normally required when assessing appropriateness of HGV routes and have been applied across every project I have worked on in my career.

I am more than happy to talk through all aspects with you and am available in any way you might want to discuss further.

Regards,



[Redacted signature block]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 13 February 2024 06:54
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: Re: Fw: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions
[Redacted]

Thank you for your email,

I would be grateful if you could answer my specific questions, and also send me a link to your information paper. Which I'm assuming you are expecting people to go and find somewhere on your website, rather than pro activity telling people. I'm sure that my councillors will pass comments if this is the 1st they heard of this paper.

Unfortunately you only seem to have one pre - application event days in Cwmfelinfach (which seems to be an after thought) which, I believe, is mid week during working hours. I, as most people, have a job so will not be able to attend. I did note that you didn't mention when or where the event is in your response.

I would most certainly welcome you answering my question and clearly going through your decision processing regarding the route, and I think you should publication that decision making for scrutiny and full transparency. I would also question why you are not actively doing this anyway!

I say this as the route to the A472 is flat wide and easier to navigate than the forest tracks down the mountain while driving an HGV. The A472 is the main dual carriage way for HGV lorries and the route down the A467 is the route HGVs use rather than the road through Cwmfelinfach. This is the route for HGVs travelling to and from M4, Newport, Cardiff, Monmouthshire etc... which you have easy access to... or at least easier than carving through a country park and down a steep sided mountain.

With this in mind I find your decision nothing more than commercial. The route I have just suggests will bring you back to the full moon roundabout on the A467. This route is less intrusive route, and onto the HGV route to and from the M4 and Newport. So please explain specifically why this route is not the preferred route? I'm really struggling to see anything other than profit margins!

I look forward to your response, which I hope will hold some detail in answering the questions, as at the moment I don't have any answers to the questions raised.

Thank you
[REDACTED]

On Mon, 12 Feb 2024, 11:27 pm [REDACTED] wrote:

[REDACTED]

I have been forwarded your email below by [REDACTED] whom I work with on this project, particularly around the forthcoming pre-application consultation events and consultation generally. I was also the ERI member who attended the December consultation event alongside [REDACTED] and others, attended by your ward councillors.

Thank you for your email and the comments contained within it.

I have been collating the various consultation comments and representations we have received throughout our pre-application consultation and there are various themes and questions which are common amongst them. So, in response, we have produced an Information Paper which seeks to provide clarity on these many themes and questions and this should be published tomorrow as I sent it over to our web team this evening for upload. This particular Information Paper provides information on the project principles and the proposed HGV haul route and we are intending to add other papers on other aspects of the project in due course, but this is the first.

Ahead of the Information Paper and the consultation events, I would like to reassure you that the proposed HGV haul route was selected as the preferred route after assessing all others (of which there are very few given the remote location, topography and nature of the tips we are proposing to reclaim) and that a commercial decision was certainly not the driver in deciding upon the preferred option. What is clear is that access to and from the site is difficult at best but especially for HGVs, which are a crucial part of delivering the benefits of the project. We assessed all possible routes and within the Information Paper we have provided a summary and plan of the preferred route and the alternative options considered. I am more than happy to discuss our decision-making process with you in detail because, unfortunately, HGVs don't have the same liberty over roads as cars do so there are a host of wider considerations which might not be immediately apparent to you when selecting dedicated lorry routes.

I am personally attending all the pre-application consultation events and so will be more than happy to discuss any aspect of the project with you and provide feedback on all of the matters you raise. I genuinely hope to see you at our consultation event if you can make it. If not, lets catch up anyway to discuss.

Regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Date: 11 February 2024 at 16:14:53 GMT

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Bedwas Tip reclaim issues/questions

Good Afternoon,

This email is mainly directed to Energy Recovery Investments Ltd, but I have copied in relevant government officials to ensure that the correct scrutiny is in place before any planning application is submitted.

I must confess that I don't have all the detail, as it seems this has been discussed with almost everyone except the people being impacted, which is something that I find strange. I won't dwell on the fact that the people of the Sirhowy Valley have not been consulted in any way, or engaged in the conversation, as that will not change the fact. What I will say is that thankfully our councillors have found out about the plans and I trust will now be kept abreast of any further developments and discussions.

I will now go through a few points that I have noticed, and I do take into account that you are a commercial

company and therefore looking to make a profit out of this venture, which probably accounts for the questions that I will be asking.

There are currently 4 category D tips at the location that you submitting your proposal, why are you only planning on making 2 safe? In fact, I understand that you also plan on building on to one of the tips (making it less safe). This doesn't seem like a very good ethos of The only company in the UK specialising in this type of work , I would expect that within in your core values if you are working in an area you would want to make it safe across the board and build that into your business case.

The next part that I would like to pick up is your value to the surrounding natural environment in which you will be working, obviously these tips are in areas of countryside, and this one in particular in close proximity to the Sirhowy Valley Country Park and is also on a number of nationally acclaimed footpaths. There is also the cycle track route 47 running through the country park which runs from Newport to Pembroke. Further to this there is a number of sites of historical importance (your paperwork doesn't highlight them all and misses at least 2 bronze age burial sites).

With this in mind I would like to understand why your proposed route to remove coal is to go through the Sirhowy Valley Country Park, which is a local tourist attraction and has been increasing its profile on social media for the past 3 years with walkers and cyclist. The route your company has recommended will cut through the country park and make it unusable, and thus thwart the work being done to connect Cwmcarn to Penallta as active travel route (something the Welsh government is promoting). I strongly suspect that your rationale for selecting to promote this route is purely commercial and nothing to do with any interest in the countryside. The route that you have selected will give your lorries the quickest (and cheapest) route to a dual carriage road to move the coal to a different location, any other route off the mountain will mean extended travel time and cost.

Please can you explain your rationale behind this decision and why the option to take the coal to the A472 and down the A467 was not put forward as this would appear to be the least invasive route as there is already tracks in place and the ground is level, means there isn't a need to zig - zag heavy lorries down a mountain side. I would strongly believe that it is a purely commercial decision, as it would add driving time and distance to your drivers and therefore reduce your profits.

It seems to me that you are proposing to do less than half a job on making the category D tips safe and further to this planning on destroying the natural beauty in the most invasive way possible. I think that we can all agree that tips that are a danger need to be actioned, but not to the devastation of nature around them, and at the expense of private company profits. You will obviously need to make some profit, but I have a feeling that the profits may be the driver here rather than the good of the countryside.

I will look forward to your response.

[REDACTED]