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Dyddiad/Date : 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013

Ein Cyf/Our Ref: DAC/P/13/0326  
Eich Cyf/Your Ref: 13/0732/MIN

Llinell Uniongyrchol/Direct Line : 01685 724632  
Gofynnwch am/Please Ask For : Mr David Cross  
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Dear Madam

**RE: NANT LLESG SURFACE MINE - LAND WEST AND SOUTH-WEST OF RHYMNEY, NORTH AND WEST OF PONTLOTTYN AND FOCHRHIW.**

I write in response to your consultation letter with supporting documents, received on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013, in respect of the proposed Nant Llesg surface mine.

Having considered the information provided, this Authority has **NO OBJECTION** to the proposed development. However, I would like to make the following observations:

#### Landscape and Ecology

- The proposed Bryn Caerau Biodiversity Compensation/Enhancement Area is welcomed and would have a net positive ecological impact on habitats and species within the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. To ensure the implementation and success of the compensation/enhancement area, a Section 106 agreement would need to be entered into with this Council. A commutable sum would also be required for the monitoring of the S106 agreement.
- The restoration strategy approved as part of the Ffos Y Fran Land Reclamation Scheme (FLRC) includes the creation of 4 No. ponds for Great Crested Newts on land adjacent to the south-west boundary of the Cwmbargoed Disposal Point (CDP). These ponds would fall within the boundary of Caerphilly County Borough Council and should be appropriately safeguarded from the continued use of the CDP.
- The Cwmbargoed Disposal Point adjoins the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough area and continuity of after use restoration will need to be contiguous with that of the adjacent land. The restoration phase will have the greatest long term landscape impact, the emphasis being on ecology and recreational benefits, which accord with much of the aspirations of the Ffos Y Fran restoration proposals.

#### Highways

- During the construction phasing the necessary enabling works would affect the highways with the delivering of materials, plant and machinery along the highways in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, including A465 (Heads of the Valleys) trunk road. However, during the operational phase, the coal haulage route would be entirely within the County Borough of Caerphilly and along their highway network.

The Environmental Statement concludes that the transport impact of the proposed development would not be significant following mitigation. Nor would there be significant cumulative impacts on sensitive parts of the highway network. These conclusions are agreed with by our Highway and Engineering Manager. Furthermore, the conclusions made in respect of hydrology, hydrogeology and drainage within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough are considered appropriate and are accepted.

### Heritage

- The proposed site is located on the eastern slope of the ridge between the Merthyr (Taff) Valley and the Rhymney Valley. The proposed works will therefore be screened somewhat by the natural variation in the landscape. In addition the presence of the Ffos y Fran works are considered to mitigate the impact of the proposed works in respect of its impact on areas within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, until the Ffos y Fran works are complete and the Ffos y Fran site has been remediated.

In respect of the proposal's impact on cultural heritage assets, there is no objection raised by my Design, Heritage and Conservation Officer. It is acknowledged that all disturbed land would be within Caerphilly County Borough, and any impact on cultural assets would be a matter for your authority to apportion appropriate weight in any considerations.

### Noise

- The location of the proposed excavation and associated works is not expected to have an adverse effect on residents within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. However, our Environmental Health Manager has raised concerns in respect of the night time rail activity. If the limit of six train journeys were reached during the evening, (on a more frequent basis than is currently the case) there would be significant adverse affects on a number of residents within Bedlinog and Trelewis that are in close proximity of the railway line.

It is predicted in the Environmental Statement that the rail activity levels during the day and night would scale up by a worst case of 70% respectively, equivalent to a negligible 2dB increase in the noise levels. However, it would be entirely possible for all of the additional train movements as a result of the Nant Llesg Surface Mine to be accommodated during the night time rail activities. This would amount to a substantially greater level of night time activity (above the 70%) with a corresponding increase in noise levels above the predicted 2dB.

Although the applicant does not have control over the train pathways assigned to it by Network Rail, it does have control over which of the network pathways it uses. Therefore, to overcome the potential impact to residents near the railway line, a suitably worded condition would be required to limit the number of night time train pathways used. Either a condition is imposed that restricts all rail activity to the day time only, or, it is limited to two night time train pathways with one between the hours of 23:00 -24:00 and the other between 06:00 – 07:00.

## Community Benefits

- It is noted within the Environmental Statement that the applicant is providing a Community Benefit Fund and has set out their intention to improve employment opportunities in the area. Partnerships with employment agencies and any contributions that would improve job/training opportunities within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough would be welcomed.

I trust the above comments are of assistance and I have attached the comments received from our Environmental Health Manager and Countryside Officer for your reference. If you wish to discuss these matters further, please contact my case officer David Cross on 01685 724632.

Yours faithfully



**J Jones**  
**Head of Town Planning**