

Meeting about the quarry 15th February 2024 at Walton Hall

Councillor Ed Jones said that the quarry had agreed to attend the meeting but then had dropped out. He explained that the purpose of the meeting is to collate everyone's questions and concerns that he can then put to the quarry.

Ed had emailed the quarry asking about their application for a licence. They said that dewatering had been going on for a number of years, and that this is an additional application to get rid of the water so that they can get to the mineral reserves. This is in keeping with the development of the quarry, who have permission to dig until 2042. Ed said that he originally thought that the application was a technicality to extend the licence.

In response to his email, the quarry sent him a 160 page document. Ed had selected the most relevant pages and put them into a power point presentation. One page was a map that showed the sighting of the proposed borehole, and the existing springs. He said that Dolyhir is a designated environmental site to preserve fauna and flora.

The quarry has said that the water present is mainly surface water for which an abstraction licence is currently not required. However, as the pit gets lower there is more to dewater. In 2020 they only extracted 20,000, but there will be a need to extract over 1.2 million.

Only a small percentage of water is used for cleansing the vehicles, and it is not known what the bulk of the water will be used for.

Q. Why do they need such a vast amount of water?

A. They won't need it for another 5 years.

Q. What is the mineral?

A. Greenstone, which is a very good quality stone.

Q. Where is the waste water going to?

A. Into a reservoir or lagoon, where it's allowed to settle.

Q. Is it contaminated?

A. They say not.

Q. Can the existing lagoons cope with a greater volume of water?

A. Don't know.

Q. How will this water impact upon the Riddings? It may cause flooding to farmland, roads and homes.

Q. Are they going to clear the streams and rivers to be able to take the increase in water? Has any research been done? This may affect our property and our ability to sell it because we have to declare if it is liable to flooding. We have to notify our insurance and our mortgage lenders. Will the quarry compensate us?

Q. How will it affect the environment? Brooks may dry up like Burlingjobb.

A. Problem is that the water has to be moved.

Q. What will happen to the environment if the water is contaminated? It will affect the wildlife everywhere including on trust land.

C. The water they release now is contaminated. It's released every Saturday morning, and you can see that its dirty with mud or minerals, lime and sometimes you can see a petrol sheen on the surface. The Riddings has failed. No life in it.

A. Having spoken to a hydrologist, they are confident that a settling period clears the water.

C. But the water is low quality, even the Environmental Agency doesn't do anything to the quarry. And this water goes on to the Wye. If a farmer did this he would get done.

C. If we lose our water in our boreholes and on the land, then NWR would be responsible because they granted the licence.

C. Very sceptical about the report because it's a private company being paid to write a report on another private company. They will downplay the effects. If they grant this application then it all has to be monitored.

A. NRW check the water 4 times a year.

Q. But does the quarry know when they're coming?

Q. Who does the quarry pay its rates to? Powys?

C. The quarry is going to say that nothing they do affects other people. They're bound to down play it.

Q. Have they done an environmental study? Have they done a hydrological study? We need to see the full reports not redacted ones.

Q. Is there any nitrogen or lime in the water?

C. It needs to be tested by an independent 3rd party. And where they take the water from is important. It's always been done in Watery Lane.

Q. Will the quarry's action drain peoples bore holes?

A. Hindwell went dry in 2020. It went below the water table and the farm went dry. We put a bore hole in and found water at 25 foot. Found clay at 177 metres and water at 182 meters. The clay is 15 metres above the proposed floor of the quarry. The report says that there will be no ingress of water into the quarry. What reassurances do we have from the quarry that the water won't dry up? We want strong reassurances that they won't dry us up.

C. There must be some contamination in deep water because there are no filters there. There are no filters below the water table, and if that drops the water must be contaminated.

Q. Theres a site 730 metres away at Burfa Bogs that mustn't be affected. Has the quarry provided any analysis of how the land surrounding them will be affected?

A. No nothing.

C. The area of influence is 100 – 200 metres away from the quarry.

Q. Based on what information?

A. The Riddings starts as a bog so there's a big danger that it could dry up.

A. But it gets flooded as well.

C. Surface water and underground water is interconnected and so it will be affected for miles and miles.

C. They say that there's a massive amount of water below ground that is millions of years old.

Q. Been told that the NRW is the permit authority for the Welsh side, but what authority deals with the English side? They should be involved as well.

Q. Can the quarry put a band around its own border so they can't take water from elsewhere? ie. Waterproofing its own area?

A. No it doesn't work like that.

C. This is a bigger affair than just us. The whole valley needs to know about this and get involved. Its much bigger than just Walton.

Q. We're allowed to see the zoom meeting with the quarry, but not allowed to comment. Can we phone you during the meeting to prompt you with questions? Can we have your phone number?

A. Yes, you can send me a text message. The meeting is on 20th at 8pm. The quarry is giving a talk for the first hour. The public can make comments. All of the community council will be there. My number is online and the link to the meeting is online.

C. We need a hydrologist and NRW to be there at the meeting.

A. A hydrologist will be there.

c. We are very concerned. We're not convinced that we can achieve anything. NRW needs to be influenced.

A. I'll email everything, I'll ask the clerk to the council to do it.

C. The quarry will do whatever they want. NRW has to protect the water resources. If they infringe their own policy, they will be open to repercussions. We should go after NRW more than the quarry.

C. This meeting is to get your questions and comments. The quarry has requested that the window for comments be left open for longer after 2nd February for more replies.

C. Didn't know that. There must be a lot of people unaware of this problem. It's not been publicised. People need to know about all of this and be allowed to comment.

C. It needs to be in the newspapers.

C. Ed only found out about it from the County Times.

C. Was a small piece in the Mid Wales Journal.

C. Womaston School will be affected. If we have floods, how will the emergency services get access to them?

C. The quarry told Ed that nothing will change for the next 4 – 5 years, until they have gone down another 20 metres.

Q. How can you ensure that communities will not be affected? It could be a desert in summer and a flood plain in winter. Both desert and flood will kill the habitat. It will affect sites of special interest. They don't know how worried we are.

C. We need a community report and evidence of what they're telling us. We need an urgent investigation.

C. There's a liaison meeting with the quarry coming up, a week after the community council meeting. 28th Feb. We will find out what's going on and get back to you. I hope to get answers to questions, and if I don't get answers, I will raise it at the meeting with NRW.

C. We need to form an action group and to be seen to be taking action.

C. We can use John Goodwin's WhatsApp group to communicate. NRW have until 28th March to make a decision. The quarry has applied to extend that deadline.

C. We need to push back that deadline so that people can make comments.

Q. They are going to pump out the aquifer and mix it with other water, and then release it. Can there be another use for that water?

A. We don't want anything to be mixed with contaminated water.

C. If the aquifer water is clean, why can't it be used elsewhere? Why waste it?

C. We need to find out what Stanners pumping station churns out. NRW should have the answer to that.

C. I heard it was 1 million tonnes.

Q. Do the Welsh and English water authorities know about all of this?

A. Don't know.

C. We need to go back to the County Times and Mid Wales Journal and ask them to run a story about it.

c. John Goodwin has had some interest from NFU, and there may be a way to lead into ITV, but it's too soon yet. We need more info.

Q. Will you (Ed) report back to us? Can we have another meeting?

- A. Yes I will report back to you and maybe arrange another meeting.
- C. Shame a multi national company can't come to a meeting with a few locals!
- A. Send your comments to me via Tracey, the clerk of Old Radnor. If you want to you can have the minutes of the community council meetings.
- C. I encourage everyone to join the WhatsApp group
- C. But not everyone has access to it.
- A. Its very easy to get on to the group. We'll keep everything factual and give dates and deadlines etc. Send your details to John and he will add you on.
- Q. They've kept this very quiet, what else haven't they told us?
- C. Is there fracking going on? It's so dangerous, all these explosions and digging so deep could cause an earth tremor. Will quarrying this deep cause a major problem? We don't know enough.
- C. We don't want to stop the quarry altogether, they employ a lot of people. We just want to know what's going on.
- Q. Is there any way of finding out how many bore holes there are in the area? A lot of people and businesses could be affected.
- A. No. Don't need a license for a private bore hole, so can't tell how many there are.
- Q. If one dries up, how can you prove what caused it?
- C. The burden of proof should be on how this work will NOT affect us.
- C. If they can't keep digging down, it will end the quarry.
- C. Dolyhir has another 150 years to run. The Gore ends in 2042.
- C. This is just about the Gore.
- Q. If it is such a valuable resource, couldn't they put a pipe down the valley to supply people and businesses with water?
- C. If they keep extracting water from deep down, then the surface will be dry and we can't grow arables or feed the animals.
- C. The quarry basin is collecting rain as well, so it's a massive amount of water were talking about.
- Q. If it dries up, what do the quarry have in mind to retain and supply water?
- C. We have to prove it's the quarry who's responsible in the first place.
- C. There's got to be monitoring of sites around the basin, including checking levels of water.
- A. there's some info in the slides.

C. Water recovery after extraction is not good. It took 33 hours to recover water during the testing.

Q. Will their figures stand up to scrutiny?

C. I know of 3 businesses who are waiting to get a licence for constant pumping. They have to stop pumping if the water level drops in the Wye. Will this apply to the quarry?

A. If they affect any bore holes, they will have to stop pumping. But they may blame it on a drought.

C. We are above the water level at the quarry at the moment.

Q. Have they been pumping out water before?

Q. is this a retrospective application?

A. Don't know.

Q. What is the depth of the bore holes?

Q. What is the Gore pumping out at the moment?

Q. How can we measure how it's affecting our bore holes?

Q. Will the quarry claim that it's just surface water that they're using?

Q. They have 2 bore holes at the moment. Didn't they need a licence for those?

Q. Any more questions?

Meeting ended at 8.30pm

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Eds mobile: 07717 080008 – he prefers a phone call rather than a text, so he can speak to people

Contact details are all online on the old Radnor / Gladestry / Powys web sites

John Goodwin 07786 007979 – send hi your details and he'll add you to the whatsapp page