

**Minutes of the South Wales Regional
Aggregates Working Party Sub-Group
Wednesday 8th October 2003**

Present: -

Martin Hooker (Chairman) – Bridgend County Borough Council
Steve Bool (Secretary) – Bridgend County Borough Council
Ruth Amundson – Caerphilly County Borough Council
B Hankey – Caerphilly County Borough Council
K Warren – Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
M Lucas – Vale of Glamorgan Council
G Fry – Newport City Council
R Crossley – Cardiff City Council
N Morgan – Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
A Wilcock – Monmouthshire County Council
M Frampton – QPA
R Henderson – City and County of Swansea
R Brown – BBNP
C Morgan – Welsh Assembly Government
S Martin – Welsh Assembly Government

1. Apologies

A Wilkes – EA
R Millard – QPA
M Lawer – QPA
D Pollock – QPA

2. Purpose of the meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a timetable / critical path for marine dredged sand and gravel produced by WAG so that the implications for potential land based sand and gravel extraction could be determined in the future.

WAG confirmed that the figures in the timetable circulated at the meeting were by no means certain and should be viewed with some caution.

In order to gauge the extent of potential land based sand and gravel resources reference was made to the Symonds 2000 report. It was deduced that approximately 390 million tonnes of sand and gravel was potentially available. WAG acknowledged that a significant proportion of this figure would probably be ruled out for technical or quality reasons when more investigative works were carried out.

It was noted on the question of economic viability that the passage of

Action: -

time and changing market forces that some resources considered uneconomic now, may well change in the future. This issue, and the interpretation of the term, was giving LPA's some difficulty in understanding the way in which policies should be formulated.

Geographical location of land based sand and gravel resources was also identified as an important issue. This, together with the cost of transporting the material, were considered to be key factors in the consideration of identifying strategic / priority resources.

Another factor identified was the location of deep water ports and their relationship to key markets. Only these ports would be able to accommodate the larger dredging ships that were required to dredge marine deposits in deeper waters such as Nobel Banks South West of Gower.

A current planning application submitted for employment at Llanfoist on a sand and gravel resource block was highlighted as epitomising the current situation regarding the pressure on the individual resources.

The question of blight was discussed. It was suggested that the question of blight did not arise as the safeguarding areas were not allocations which did not necessarily convey a future grant of planning permission.

In an attempt to overcome the current sensitivity of including safeguarding areas in UDP's WAG were asked if they would accept the inclusion of sand and gravel resources on development control plotting sheets. In this way, authorities could pick up any applications submitted within the resource areas and they could then be given due weight in the determination of the application. This option was recognised as being very easy to implement compared with the inevitable delays if the UDP process was relied on.

WAG confirmed that their policy was to ensure that adequate regard is made to the protection of the resource. They also identified a difficulty because they could not respond to a consultation from an LPA because it may prejudice their position in the event of an appeal. It was suggested that WAG could in any case exercise its call-in powers if the proposals were seen to be of regional rather than just local significance.

An alternative option was suggested for consideration by WAG which was a non-site specific or general UDP policy for the protection of reserves which may be deemed acceptable. This could be explained in the explanatory text for the policy. In response, a view was given that this should cover the safeguarding of other minerals as well as sand and gravel.

In response to a question regarding the need for a comparative study

<p>on the relative environmental impacts of marine v land sand and gravel, it was confirmed that Symonds had already completed such work and this would inform the planning process. This report seeks to define 'economic viability' by setting out various parameters.</p> <p>In response to WAG requests for a clear 'steer' on the way forward, it was agreed that the Secretary prepare a paper containing the main bullet points of the discussion so that further consideration could be given to all options.</p> <p>WAG referred to the thresholds that had been established on Nash Bank which could lead to the cessation of dredging at any time if significant adverse impact was demonstrated. This meant it was difficult to establish with any certainty, a gap or window in marine production. Further investigation of the sand and gravel resources areas was considered as a way forward but WAG confirmed that sufficient funds to investigate <u>all</u> sites would be unlikely given the constraints on the current research budget. Hence, it was suggested, that a start could be made on those most likely to yield good quality mineral in commercially viable amounts. These would be 'sandur' (outwash deposits) in the Usk Valley and Pyle. There was a general acceptance, having first considered the disadvantages of obtaining more information, on obtaining more boreholes data to inform debate. This information could then possibly be put before the SWRAWP sub-group for discussion and agreement of a way forward.</p> <p>In conclusion, MPA's were asked if they had any objection to the view that all were happy about the <u>principle</u> of including safeguarding areas in their UDP's. As two MPA officers expressed uncertainty over this view, no unanimous opinion could be agreed. The inevitable delay to the progress of the UDP process was seen as a major hurdle to overcome if safeguarding areas were included in plans which had reached an advanced stage.</p>	SB
--	----