

SWRAWP

Draft Options – RTS

Context

All options need to be considered against the objectives contained in the overarching documents relating to mineral planning in Wales, namely, Mineral Planning Policy Wales (MPPW) and Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 on Aggregates. (MTAN1) These in general terms seek a more sustainable mineral planning process to ensure the old system of “predict and provide” is replaced with a new “plan, manage, and monitor” approach. Such an approach also requires an assessment of how minerals are transported to market .i.e. at present usually by road, but also reviewing the possibility of other modes of transport such as by rail, canal or sea. Another important issue is the maximisation of use of construction and demolition waste, quarry waste, and secondary aggregates. The objective is of course is to meet the demand for aggregates by first considering if these alternative sources can substitute for virgin aggregates from greenfield sites.

Other key objectives include the efficient use of aggregates so that high quality stone is not used for low end uses such as fill .

Three options are considered worthy of consideration and these are summarised as follows. (the justification for each option follows the summary).

OPTION 1.

No change. This option provides a baseline or picture of the current situation against which the new sustainable options can be compared.

- (i) continue hard rock extraction from existing sites
- (ii) continue land based sand and gravel extraction from existing sites.
- (iii) continue marine sand and gravel extraction from existing sand/gravel banks accepting that the extraction of resources in deeper water may not be acceptable (await results of ongoing research-Outer Bristol Channel) and
- (iv) continue with existing levels of construction, demolition, and quarry waste usage as a substitute for primary aggregate.

OPTION 2.

(i) Minimise the amount of hard rock extraction and plan for current working in areas defined as being ‘over capacity’ moving to less environmentally sensitive areas.

(ii) Maximise the use of secondary aggregates.

(iii) Maximise the use of construction and demolition waste.

(iv) Maintain marine sand and gravel supplies at current levels subject to environmental capacity being OK.

(v) Maintain land based sand and gravel supplies at current levels subject to environmental capacity being OK.

OPTION 3.

- (i) as 2(i)
- (ii) as 2(ii)
- (iii) as 2(iii)
- (iv) Reduce marine sand and gravel supplies by xx %.
- (v) Increase land based sand and gravel supplies by xx % where appropriate.

Notes: Only 35% of blast furnace slag and pfa is used at present.¹

Option 1

A 'no change' situation would allow the continuation of long established practices which are considered unsustainable and contrary to objectives in MTAN 1. Hard rock extraction would be allowed to continue indefinitely in areas which may be demonstrating 'over capacity' by virtue of serious landscape impact, heavy traffic generation, serious blasting etc. This would allow potential adverse health impacts to continue without the benefit of control by the RTS, and be contrary to the findings of the HIA². It would also allow the level of use of construction and demolition waste and secondary aggregates to continue without this source being increased to maximum levels to substitute for primary aggregate.

Option 2

This option acknowledges the principle objectives of MTAN 1 in that it seeks to provide sufficient supplies of aggregate to meet demand but from sustainable sources which minimise impact on the environment. Hence, in order to decrease the pressure on the use of 'greenfield' areas for mineral extraction, it seeks to decrease this pressure (ii / iii) by encouraging the maximum use of construction / demolition waste, and secondary aggregates to meet some of the demand. Whilst recent surveys³ indicate that the majority of 'useable' construction and demolition waste is being utilised, some secondary aggregates such as blast furnace slag and power station pulverised fuel ash are under-used. Factors such as the location of the source in relation to potential markets may inhibit wider use without significant investment in infrastructure.

(iv) Maintaining the current level of marine sand and gravel supplies assumes that existing tonnages can be maintained from the licensed dredging areas

¹ Arup / EMAADS (P. 25)

² RTS HIA

³ Smiths Gore / Arup

without unacceptable environmental impact. There is also the question of the nature of the sand (fine / medium) to consider as each sandbank differs. If North Bristol Deep / Culver Sands / Outer Bristol Channel applications are approved, continuity of supply can be maintained. If North Bristol Deep / Culver Sands applications are refused supply would be reduced by approximately 50%. South Wales uses 1.2 mtpa of which 0.95 mtpa comes from the Bristol Channel. IMADP currently sets the framework within which applications for licensed dredging are considered.

- (v) Land based sand and gravel supplies are primarily located in West Wales and serve local needs. Unless the environmental capacity of the areas is being exceeded, little or no change is anticipated in the immediate future.

Option 3

3(i) – 3(iii) remain the same as 2(i) – (iii) above because they are considered to be 'core' objectives of MTAN 1 which cannot be changed unless policy alters.

(iv) A reduction in marine sand and gravel supplies would result in one or a combination of the following: -

- a) new land based sand and gravel supplies in South East Wales or
- b) greater substitution of sandstone fines or
- c) imports of land based sand and gravel from England.

Whilst the report the 'Comparative Impact Assessment of land and marine sand and gravel' (Symonds, 2001) considered that it is unlikely in the foreseeable future that the marine-dredged sand could be substantially replaced from other sources without raising the cost and reducing the quality of construction, each license application is determined on its merits and there may be reasons why future licenses are not granted.

Implementation of chosen option

It should be noted that the MTAN 1 states that the need for aggregates in Wales is not likely to change significantly over the next five years. This statement is endorsed by the ODPM report⁴ which indicates that the total aggregates demand will be flat for the next 5 years and that it will become progressively difficult to increase the use of construction and demolition waste as aggregate. Hence, there is unlikely to be any marked change in circumstances within this period and any chosen option is unlikely to take effect for a minimum of 5 years given current factors i.e. level of permitted reserves, and rate of extraction / sales.

⁴ Second Monitoring Report 2004/2005

