

## St Athan Environment Interest Group Project Team Response March, 2009

### Overview

This document provides a record of the questions asked and comments made during the 'question and answer' breakout session at the Environment Interest Group held at St Athan Community Centre on Tuesday 24 February, 2009.

The project team's responses follow each question and/or comment.

### Energy and Renewables Strategy

#### Is biomass a new technology?

No, it is used quite extensively in many European countries.

#### If there is an energy centre on site, will Aberthaw power station become redundant?

No, an energy centre on site would not impact on the need for Aberthaw power station as it will only be sized to provide power for the proposed development on site.

#### If the energy centre produces more energy than is needed on site can it be sold?

Yes, any excess energy produced can be sold to National Grid.

#### Have you considered using ground source heat pumps?

Yes, we have considered it. However, the bedrock in this area is very hard and so the cost of drilling through it would be prohibitive.

#### What will happen to the DARA super hangar – will it have green improvements?

We will look at the opportunity of providing energy for the super hangar from the Energy Centre resulting in reductions in cost and energy consumption. All existing buildings used as part of the college estate will be upgraded to BREAMM Very Good.

#### Are there plans to grow biomass crops locally?

We would welcome and support any initiatives to encourage the growth of biomass crops in Wales.

#### Who would provide the energy centre?

We would expect one of the major energy suppliers to be interested in providing and managing the energy centre.

**Who would own the energy centre?**

This is still to be decided but it is likely that the energy centre would be owned by either the Metrix consortium or by a major energy supplier.

**Would there just be one energy centre on site?**

Yes, the energy centre would be housed in one location.

**I am concerned about the transport of biomass to the site. Would the new access road be completed by the time the energy centre is operational?**

Yes, the new access road would be completed before it is necessary to transport biomass to the site.

**Could waste be burnt at the energy centre?**

Yes but the assessments carried out have shown that there is more support for a biomass plant at present. Waste to power/heat requires different planning consents which Metrix will not be seeking at this time.

**Is biomass really green? Is it harmful to replace arable crops with energy crops?**

This is a potential problem, but the growth of energy crops can be carefully managed to ensure that this issue is avoided.

**Could solar panels be used at the energy centre?**

Solar panels have been considered, but a lot of energy is used to produce them and the payback periods for UK locations make the costs prohibitive.

**Are you aware that Aberthaw Power Station uses some biomass fuel? Could you rival them for supplies?**

A bigger market for biomass should create more supply and we do not envisage competing with the power station for fuel supplies. We are currently investigating a supply chain in which waste wood may be processed in to fuel.

**What are the proposals for any ash created by the energy centre?**

Any ash created through the burning of biomass would need to be transported away from the site. We will look at sharing the current disposal arrangements made by the power station. There is also the opportunity to reuse the ash for local agriculture.

**How will the biomass be transported to the site?**

It is envisaged that the fuel would be transported by road vehicles. During the peak winter operation this would require the equivalent of ten vehicle movements to the site per day. However, increasing the available storage may mean that this can be reduced. Vehicles would not be allowed to travel through St Athan and would use the new northern access road to reach the site.

**Where will the energy centre be located?**

It will be located beside the DARA super hangar, near 'twin peaks'. This location has been chosen as it can be easily accessed from the northern access road. In addition, in this location and under the prevailing wind direction any smoke from the burner flue would largely

disperse in the direction of the open fields to the north-east of the site and not over built up areas.

#### **What forms of biomass are there?**

In theory, anything that can be burnt can be used as biomass. We are considering using wood, in a chip or pellet form as a fuel for the energy centre. This could come from locally managed forests or as waste wood from pallets etc. There are other crops that can be used as fuel such as Miscanthus or Willow grown in short rotation coppices and we are in discussion with Cardiff University over their research into the best crops for the local climate. However, the technology that will be used would allow us to change fuels depending on availability.

#### **Where would fuel be stored?**

Fuel would be stored in a three-sided barn close to the energy centre and would be fed straight into the burners.

#### **How will you cope with peak demand in the winter?**

The energy centre will be of a size that can meet the demand for heat (the peak demand will be in the mornings when heat is needed for showers). In addition, there will be a back-up gas supply available to 'top up' if needed.

## **Green Travel**

#### **How will the Green Travel plan get up and running, particularly in respect of maintaining bus routes?**

We will interface with Vale of Glamorgan Council (VoGC) and local bus and train companies to set up and manage the Green Travel plan on an ongoing basis. We will also ensure that the travel plan co-ordinator is in liaison with VoGC and bus companies to ensure best practices are maintained.

#### **St Athan Community Council is currently working on a Travel Plan (covering East Vale to the village school, memorial and a local beach). The Council would like to engage with the project team to ensure synergy with the wider Green Travel Plan.**

We will engage with St Athan Community Council accordingly to ensure that there is co-ordination.

#### **Why did the presentation on Green Travel not include more information about how public transport will be enhanced?**

The Green Travel Plan will look at all aspects of travel not just public transport.

#### **I don't think the Green Travel Plan goes far enough - why not make it a condition of employment not to use cars?**

Through the Green Travel Plan we can only encourage people to use green travel options. It is not appropriate for us to use it as an opportunity to legislate. However, the Ministry of Defence has confirmed that those residing in the new Service Families' Accommodation will not be offered a car pass for the Defence Technical College unless operationally essential.

#### **Will travel co-ordinators be employed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council?**

A travel plan co-ordinator will be employed by Metrix.

**Will the travel co-ordinators have sufficient incentive to improve things?**

Yes, we believe they will. They will be incentivised on the same basis as other Metrix staff in relation to performance.

**You need to increase the number of train stations to support the increase in population.**

We do not have any plans to increase the number of train stations at present but are investigating the provision of a shuttle bus service at half hourly intervals between Llantwit Major station and the site at peak times.

**Are the road solutions for the redevelopment of St Athan linked with the proposed new Cardiff Airport road?**

No, they are not directly linked. However, they will both be taken account of in the development of an overall solution for SE Wales.

**Are cycle tracks being considered as a solution?**

Yes, cycle tracks will be enhanced as part of the scheme.

**Will people working at the Defence Technical College have to travel far to the site?**

At this early stage in the project, it is not possible to give a definitive answer. However, things like locating SFA houses close to the site will help reduce the numbers of people driving to the site.

**Will any improvements be made to local paths to the Heritage Coast?**

The Heritage Coast is not directly linked to the redevelopment of MOD St Athan.

**Why aren't you considering a different solution to Eglwys Brewis Road? For example and access road from the south through the MOD Estate?**

The main access to the Defence Technical College will be via a new access road and junction built from the B4265 to ensure that traffic to and from the site is provided with direct and separate access onto the main road. In addition, there are proposals to create an access to the southern area of the Aerospace Business Park, located to the south of the runway, from the B4265. Alternative options have been considered and discounted for a variety of reasons.

## **Surface Water Management**

The following comments were made by attendees about specific areas of concern to them:

**Gileston**

- flooding off fields to the South East of the site, adjacent to B4265 around the lane leading onto Higher End
- the River Thaw is subject to tidal flooding

**Caravan Park**

- North of Millands Farm – overland flows coming down from Llanmaes will be blocked from flowing to the Boverton Brook

### **Boverton**

- Boverton tends to flood approximately every 5 years
- The Culvert needs widening in Boverton (under The Causeway)

### **Our response**

Ditches and dry ponds will be put in place to collect storm water and then release it slowly back into the ground/watercourses. As part of the development proposals, all components of the development will need to provide appropriate surface water management.

### **Picketson**

If sports facilities are built here, they will flood

### **Our response**

Any sports grounds built will be well drained, with attenuation to prevent downstream flooding, and will be located outside the floodplain.

### **Eglwys Brewis Road (next to railway line)**

- Where Boverton and Llanmaes brook meet, there are real flooding problems
- The culvert often gets blocked
- One cottage in particular suffers from serious flooding caused by water running off from the road and the owners are very concerned that the development will exacerbate this. They are also concerned that construction traffic using the road will make matters worse
- The railway culvert blocks flows, resulting in standing water on the low-lying land upstream and water flows onto the road and under the railway arch
- The triangle of land U/s of the Llanmaes/Boverton confluence is vulnerable to flooding

### **Our response**

Ditches and dry ponds will be put in place along this stretch of road to handle the surface water run-off. While any construction is ongoing, temporary drainage measures will be in place

### **Tremains Farm**

- The point was made that the Environment Agency doing work at Tremains farm aren't even aware therefore not even considering the new development at St Athan (these are likely to be Operations Delivery staff – i.e. clear brush/silt from channel – not necessarily briefed at this stage. Contact EA for more information)

### **Sewage**

- The sewage level is already too high and overflows occur at various locations

### **Our response**

A new pumping station to serve the development and adjacent area will be on site at the Defence Technical College. The sewage will then be pumped to the nearby station to the West of the site (Llantwit Major WWTW) as this sewage works has sufficient capacity, is modern and has good treatment facilities

### **The Bridge**

- The new bridge should have a wide, clear span, well above the floodplain to avoid blocking flows
- This will be overlooking the cottage opposite Church Meadow

**Our response:**

Screening will be in place around the bridge to minimise its visual impact.

## **Ecology**

**A local resident living near Boverton Brook is concerned about the project's construction phase.**

We acknowledge that the construction phase usually has the most significant impact on local ecology and we have accounted for this in our studies. These issues will be incorporated in the Environmental Management Plan.

**Are there any owls on the site?**

Yes, little owl and barn owl nest sites have been found and mitigated for. Replacement nest sites have been proposed.

**I would like to see an increase in biodiversity in and around the site.**

We are aiming to develop a flagship scheme, going above and beyond simply mitigation. We are in the process of producing a mitigation strategy which will include significant enhancement and this will be available for public viewing on the scheme's website when completed.

**What was found in the Llantwit Major area? Why was such a large area surveyed? Who is responsible for that area – Welsh Water or Welsh Assembly Government, as neither seem to want to take responsibility for it?**

For ecology, larger areas need to be surveyed and the development is likely to have a smaller footprint than the survey boundary. This is because animals can travel variable distances. There is debate at present as to whether Welsh Water or WAG are responsible for the pipeline that was referred to by the member of the public, due to permitted development rights.

**A land owner was unaware that their land had been accessed for the purpose of conducting surveys.**

Before any survey work was carried out, letters were sent by Welsh Assembly Government to all land owners setting out the need to access land.

**Will there be a final plan showing all the ecology information found during the survey work?**

Yes, a summary plan will be made available. However, this cannot give specific locations because we cannot guarantee the safety of all species if the sites are made public.

**Will Castleton be used as a golf course?**

Plans are evolving, but if this is the case, only a small area of land from Castleton will be used to replace holes affected by the construction of Service Families' Accommodation on the stadium site.

**Will there be works south of the road and how could this impact on the coast?**

No, the B4265 is the Southern boundary of the development.

**Local residents wanted to let the ecologists know about wildlife already on the site to make sure it has been considered- e.g. a Kingfisher in the embankment of Boverton Brook. There is also a natural spring on the outside the wire site which spp found.**

The wildlife highlighted by residents has also been found by the ecological surveys but we welcome the use of the consultation website to provide information which will be passed on to the relevant consultants.

## **Environmental Assessments**

**Why is the Service Families Accommodation (SFA) being located on greenfield as opposed to brownfield land?**

The SFA sites have been carefully selected in line with a number of key criteria, including:

- A desire to locate the SFA close to the DTC to minimise any increased pressure upon the transport network;
- to enable the SFA to share the same infrastructure that will be installed to service the DTC and ABP;
- the sites lie within the development boundary in the approved *St Athan Development Brief*;
- the use of sites at St Athan will not deplete sites that have been allocated through the UDP to meet general demand for housing in the Vale of Glamorgan.

**What was the extent of the landscape survey – why did it not cover 100 hectares?**

The Landscape Character and Visual Assessment was carried out with a 'three kilometre boundary' to encompass all areas with a view of the St Athan site. There is no standard area that is required to be surveyed.

**I am concerned that increased activity at the Aerospace Business Park (ABP), such as engine testing, will have health implications.**

Both the ABP and DTC planning applications are subject to a number of assessments examining the potential impacts of the developments on the environment – these include noise and air quality. This work is being addressed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

**What are the noise implications of aircraft testing at the ABP?**

The noise impact of the ABP and DTC both separately and in combination is being addressed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

St Athan has been an operational aerodrome for many years. What we are proposing is therefore not completely new. Aircraft movements and engine testing take place every week. Although there is expected to be an increase in commercial jet movements in future, this is still less than the number of fast jet movements which occurred in previous years e.g. there were over 2000 fast jet movements in 2004 and currently there are around 465 whereas there are predicted to be only around 30 fast jet movements under the new ABP proposals.

ABP will be carrying out engine tests on modern civilian aircraft for which the duration of tests are shorter compared to older military aircraft e.g. under phase 1, there will be round 1 hour per week of civilian engine tests compared to 3 hours per week currently for the VC10 aircraft.

Military aircraft are often louder than civilian aircraft and it should be noted that none of the military engine test facilities on base are/were screened. The ABP test facility on the other hand will include acoustic screening on three sides of the test pen to control the noise from the engine tests.

**How will the listed building at Batslays Farm be used? I'm concerned about the setting of the listed building.**

The farmhouse is a Grade II Listed Building and will be retained and conserved for the future by giving it a new use as the administration centre for the ABP. This will entail its sensitive refurbishment and extension to provide appropriate facilities. Any development will be done in consultation with CADW.

**Can Cardiff Museum be kept informed of the ongoing ground investigation work and in particular evidence of a suggested Roman Temple?**

The archaeological investigations have been undertaken in close co-operation with the local Archaeological Trust and CADW and we will continue to work closely with them.

**Is it possible to get a photographic record of East Camp prior to its demolition?**

We have been approached by CADW who wish to undertake a photographic survey of all WWII structures proposed for demolition.