

Ty Llwyd Quarry Update

Caerphilly county borough council is acutely aware of concerns circulating within the community about the former Ty Llwyd Quarry site.

This newsletter has been created to provide residents with useful information relating to the history of the site, works that have been undertaken to date, as well as ongoing plans to make further improvements in the future.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a lot of inaccurate and potentially misleading information circulating in the community, so the council is keen to help set the record straight and provide a factual update.

The story so far

The site was used for the disposal of industrial waste material by a private company between 1969 and 1972. This included plastics, tin, pens, general factory and canteen waste, chemical waste including Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and drums.

When the tip closed in 1972, the site was covered with shale and stone dust and then a layer of topsoil and seed was added. In 1990 Islwyn Borough Council took ownership of the site. A clay cap was installed over the site to reduce the amount of rainwater entering through the surface and a shallow, concrete lined ditch was constructed along the top boundary to divert any surface water around the tip and prevent it from entering the waste mass.

Historic monitoring indicated that the site did not meet the legal definition of Contaminated Land. As a result, in December 2013 Natural Resources Wales agreed that monitoring of the site could be reduced, however, ad hoc monitoring has continued during spells of heavy rainfall. Over more recent years (since around 2015), we have started experiencing long periods of wet weather throughout the winter months and this sometimes causes groundwater levels to rise within the quarry causing break outs of water at the surface of the ground both on the Ty Llwyd site and in the Pantyfynnon woodland site below. As the groundwater water rises within the quarry, it picks up any chemicals and other liquid substances that have previously been deposited within the site, so when the water reaches the surface, it is sometimes contaminated. This contaminated water is known as leachate.

Due to the recent breakouts of leachate occurring more frequently during the winter months, the Council are currently working with their consultants to design a robust monitoring strategy to include surface water (streams within the area), groundwater (from boreholes

on the Ty Llwyd and Pantyfynnon woodland sites) and soil sampling as well as vapour monitoring in and around the Ty Llwyd and Pantyfynnon woodland sites. This monitoring and sampling will be used to inform a risk assessment for the site for us to once again assess whether the site meets the legal definition of contaminated land or not.

What works have been undertaken?

In May 2021, the council commissioned contractors to carry out drainage improvement works on the quarry site and in the woodland below to help manage the leachate breakouts during prolonged periods of wet weather.

The works were designed to ensure the surface water that flows down the side of the quarry site is kept totally separate from any potential leachate breakouts that may occur during heavy rain. The scheme has been successful in achieving this.

The surface water culvert that goes under the road was also repaired and upgraded.

The improvement works were designed to collect as much of the leachate as possible from the site and from the woodland below the site in one location. Following its collection, the leachate and any surface water that enters the system (rainfall) is passed over a series of very small waterfalls containing rocks which aim to disturb the water as much as possible. This drainage system is called an aeration chamber. The purpose of sending the water through the aeration chamber is to encourage some of the chemicals in the water to turn into a vapour which improves the water quality before it is encouraged back into the ground. For complete clarity, the aeration chamber will only work for specific chemicals.

What happens next?

In January this year, the prolonged wet weather caused the drainage system to become blocked and overloaded, which in turn caused overtopping of the aeration chamber and leachate running down through Pantyfynnon woodland and off the site.

Environmental Health took four samples of the water leaving our land and reported the incident to Natural Resources Wales (NRW). We have shared our sample results with NRW, and we understand they are still investigating the incident.

We discussed our sample results with Public Health Wales and whilst there were some low levels of contaminants present within the samples, these were not of a concentration to cause a significant risk to public health. There were no Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) detected in any of the samples of water that migrated beyond the site boundary.

Representatives from CCBC and NRW were due to meet local residents last month to discuss the latest position. The Leader of Council, Cllr Sean Morgan, called the meeting to help address concerns from the community and it was meant to include the two local councillors, along with 8 local residents.

The council agreed to invite a small delegation, so that the numbers would be manageable and the meeting could be open, meaningful and constructive. We asked the local councillors to supply names of residents who we could invite to the meeting, but unfortunately these names were not provided and the councillors informed the council they no longer planned to attend either.

This newsletter was developed as an alternative way to provide an update to the residents surrounding the site.

We are currently considering further improvement works on the landfill site itself to reduce the overall amount of water entering the chamber, helping it cope better in periods of prolonged wet weather. The Council's consultants are also considering high level options that could be developed to deal with the seasonal leachate breakouts at Ty Llwyd. In addition to this, we are also engaging in discussions with Natural Resources Wales to assess whether there is a requirement for a water discharge permit at the site given our changing climate.

The woodland has also been fenced off to prevent unauthorised access to the site which is private land.

In addition to the improvement works, Environmental Health and their consultants, are in the process of designing a robust sampling strategy, to complement the sampling that routinely takes place during times when breakouts occur as described above.

The first round of groundwater, surface water and spring water sampling has been undertaken and the results are currently being reviewed by NRW. The council will continue to sample and monitor the site for a further 12 to 18 months. **Following the collection of this data, we will be in a position to review whether the site meets the legal definition of Contaminated Land.** A report will be published to present the Council's findings at a later date.

We would like to reassure residents that whether the site meets the legal definition of contaminated land or not, the council are fully committed to managing the site and implementing improvements at the site when required.

The council will continue to monitor the site and the immediate surrounding area in periods of prolonged wet weather. However, if you are concerned about the site in anyway or feel that you are potentially being affected by the site, please do not hesitate to contact:

Maria Godfrey on 01443 811346 or godfrm@caerphilly.gov.uk

Ceri Davis on 01443 811348 or daviscj@caerphilly.gov.uk (only works Wednesday/ Thursday/ Friday)

Email: ehadmin@caerphilly.gov.uk

A series of frequently asked questions have also been developed to help address any additional queries or concerns you may have - these can be accessed on the CCBC website: **www.caerphilly.gov.uk/ty-llwyd**

If you don't have access to the internet and would like a copy of the frequently asked questions, please do not hesitate to use the numbers above to request a copy and we will post them out to you.

