Hive Aggregates

Retford Circular Economy Project (RCEP)

Project Update and Clarifications – February 2023

In the Autumn of 2022, we undertook a comprehensive public consultation with the local community to hear feedback on the proposals ahead of submitting our planning application. Following the close of the formal consultation period on 28 October 2022, we have been reviewing comments received, responding where necessary and continuing to prepare our planning application.

We have recently been made aware of some third-party information circulating in the local area regarding the project, some of which is not entirely accurate. We want to take this opportunity to provide clarifications and correct the record on some topics in advance of submitting our planning application in the coming weeks.

We would also like to reiterate that the planning application will include full details on the range of topics raised, including the local environment and amenity. There will be a further formal consultation exercise carried out by the planning authority when the application is submitted.

Will PFA be extracted from the nature reserve?

We can confirm that no part of the PFA proposed for extraction by the RCEP is located within the nature reserve. The proposals have been designed to avoid the nature reserve as far as is possible, including routing a section of the site haul road and conveyor specifically to avoid it.

It follows that only a very small section of the Site of Special Scientific Interest ('SSSI'), the nationally protected part of the nature reserve, falls within the RCEP site boundary. This area includes a small section of embankment where no PFA is located, accounting for only 0.5% of the site area. Our latest designs preserve the lower sections of this embankment, and any vegetation removal and mitigation required within the SSSI boundary will be detailed in the restoration concept plan to be submitted as part of the planning application.

The planning application will include a detailed assessment of potential impacts on the nature reserve and protected species in accordance with best practice guidance. The assessment will be based on extensive ecological surveys of the site and surrounds, carried out over a number of years. This approach provides a robust baseline to identify protected species that could be affected and inform any mitigation that may be required.

The assessment will be reviewed by organisations, such as Natural England and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, who will comment on the suitability of proposed measures.

What will the extraction of PFA look like?

There have been some photos circulating of a PFA site located elsewhere in the UK. We can confirm that this is not the RCEP site and has no relation to our project. The photos in question show a site that has never been restored, including multiple large and uncovered areas, and contains roughly seven times the amount of material that is located at the RCEP site.

The appearance of the RCEP site, if extraction were to commence, would be different. The areas that would be subject to extraction would be smaller, with the site worked on a phased basis and progressively restored following each extraction phase. This means that early phases of the site would

be fully restored for important habitats like reedbed and wet grassland before later phases are subject to extraction, bringing benefits forward by many years.

It is estimated that restored habitats could be present within the site in as little as four or five years. The proposed extraction method, phasing scheme and restoration concept will be included in the planning application.

Is RCEP a circular economy project?

Yes, RCEP is a circular economy project. The key principles of a circular economy include eliminating waste and circulating materials back into the economy for productive use. RCEP would take millions of tonnes of waste PFA from a landfill and produce a sustainable building product from it, thereby beneficially using waste and circulating it back into the economy for productive use.

In a circular economy, instead of taking resources from the earth, using them once, and disposing of them in landfill, the aim is to keep them in use for as long as possible. This is exactly what RCEP is proposing to do.

How will the extraction of PFA save on carbon emissions?

The aim of RCEP is to produce a sustainable cement substitute material, made from PFA, that would replace some of the traditional Portland cement in concrete mixes. The significant carbon savings that the project would achieve are directly linked to replacing traditional cement.

Cement and concrete are a fundamental part of today's world and vital to the global construction sector. Making traditional Portland cement is the most carbon-intensive part of concrete production. It involves kilning raw materials, including limestone, at high temperatures, requiring a large amount of energy. It is estimated that this process can produce up to 1 tonne of carbon for every tonne of cement made.

Because of this, if the cement industry alone were a country, it would be the third largest carbon emitter in the world with up to 2.8 billion tonnes, surpassed only by China and the US.

On the other hand, PFA can save close to 1 tonne of carbon for every tonne used in place of traditional cement, because it has already been through a thermal process in the power station furnace when it was produced, and therefore does not require kilning. This would thereby save a colossal amount of carbon, helping the UK to meet its climate change targets. The use of PFA in this way is proven and has been used in the UK for many years, however the material previously came fresh from power stations, rather than from landfill as is proposed by RCEP.

The PFA at the RCEP site requires a simple process of extraction, screening and drying - no kilning. To save further carbon, it is proposed to use a low energy drying technology that applies air rather than large amounts of heat to dry the material. RCEP is proposing to extract up to 6.7 million tonnes of PFA which it is estimated could save around 5.3 million tonnes of carbon than if the equivalent amount of traditional cement was produced and used.

With any project of this nature, there would be a comparatively small carbon cost in the extraction, processing and associated transport movements of the extracted PFA. However, it should be noted that the demand for cement and building products in the UK is many millions of tonnes annually, and if sustainable material is not extracted from the RCEP site and used, then it is reasonable to consider that

natural resources needed for traditional cement would be extracted and exported somewhere else to meet the demand.

It follows that the important focus for carbon savings is on the comparison between PFA and traditional cement, where the potential savings are in the millions of tonnes.

Will the extracted PFA pollute both the local air and water supply?

The PFA is wet/moist when extracted and measures would be put in place to ensure dust generation during construction and operation is managed. The planning application will include a detailed set of management and mitigation measures, and it should also be noted that the project would require an environmental permit from the Environment Agency before it can operate, which would strictly regulate on site activities.

Additionally, an assessment of soils, geology and land contamination, hydrology, hydrogeology and flood risk will be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted with the planning application.

The assessment will examine the risks of any contaminants dispersing/leaching in the surrounding environment and how this shall be mitigated. It should be noted that RCEP is proposing to remove any already present waste material from the ground, not introduce anything new.

Will the local villages be impacted by traffic?

We can provide assurances that traffic would not significantly impact the villages of Lound or Sutton-cum-Lound. Importantly, this is because it is now intended that construction and operational traffic would use the A638 to access the site, thereby avoiding the villages. This is supported by our traffic and transport assessments, which will be available alongside all other documents when the planning application is submitted.

We had previously proposed to use Chainbridge Lane to the north for a limited period in association with the Temporary Optimisation Site north of Lound Low Road. However, for the avoidance of doubt, this proposal has been removed from the project, which was confirmed at the local meeting at Lound Village Hall.

There have also been some questions around the HGV numbers associated with the project. The Scoping Report that was submitted to the planning authority and consultation materials make clear that during operation we anticipate there would be up to around 6-8 two-way trips per hour. This means up to around four HGVs leaving the site per hour, or one every 15-20 minutes. The same number would return to the site every hour.

We trust that this provides transparency and clears up any confusion around anticipated HGV numbers. Further detail and a full breakdown of numbers will be provided in the planning application.

Industrial sites already operate in this area, why is this project also being considered?

There is a legacy of quarrying and the production of building materials in the area that has contributed to the industrial sites that still exist. The local area is therefore not alien to extractive industries. Indeed, many of the valuable habitats in the local area have been created as a direct result of quarrying.

The legacy of industrial sites means that there is useful brownfield land that the RCEP is seeking to use beneficially, including the Bellmoor Industrial Estate to the south where the main processing site would be located. It is reasonable to consider that an area that does not benefit from such industrial assets and brownfield land would require further use and development of greenfield land.

When preparing our planning application, we are required to show due consideration for all other development in the local area, ensuring it complies with local and national planning guidance and legislation. This includes any wider cumulative impacts on the community. Nottinghamshire County Council will assess the merits and feasibility of this development in the wider context of development and currently operational sites in the local area.

Why has there been no consideration for local people in the development of these proposals?

There has been significant consideration given to the local community. We undertook a comprehensive and transparent pre-application consultation to hear views on the project and receive feedback that has influenced the final proposals submitted with the planning application, such as removing the Temporary Optimisation Site.

This included two in-person consultation events at Lound Village Hall and Sutton Cum Lound Village Hall in addition to an online webinar, the recording of which is available on our project website. We also agreed to attend an additional public meeting at Lound Village Hall, in response to a request from the local community, to present our proposals and answer further questions, and extended our consultation period following local requests to allow for further feedback to be submitted.

All events have been well attended, and we have received a significant amount of feedback that has been vital in finalising the design of the RCEP proposals.

How will this project enhance biodiversity across the site?

Enhancing biodiversity and protecting the existing ecology across the site are a vital part of the proposals for the RCEP. We have engaged with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and other stakeholders to ensure our approach is aligned with local nature conservation and biodiversity enhancement strategies as far as possible.

Details of our proposed mitigation and enhancement measures will be contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment submitted as part of the planning application. The restoration concept has been designed to complement habitats in the nearby SSSI and nature reserve and help restore the historic condition of the Idle Valley. It will include wetland habitats, notably ponds, wet grassland and reedbed, which will support a range of wildlife.

Getting in touch

Our communication channels remain open to anybody who has questions regarding our proposals.

We can be contacted by email, freepost, or via our freephone information line through our details below.

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