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rep 864

Mr Billy Hughes

Mr Alwyn Nixon
Independent Planning Inspector
Care of Barbara Prosser

24/03/10

Representor No: 864

Dear Mr Nixon,

As per your instruction I am writing to inform you before the 6th April that I will be attending the Hearing Session 5: Former Bedwas Colliery Site and i am submitting new evidence.

Having submitted evidence at various stages of the plan and at the deposit stage of the LDP plan and attending meetings from then and up to this date, I am still of the opinion that the councils LDP plan submitted to you is not sound. In my opinion the plan is too heavily reliable on the Bedwas Colliery Site for a number of reasons, one being the site has numerous physical and chemical challenges to overcome and on top of this there will be the huge cost implications. It seems on the face of the evidence so far the Bedwas Site will not be deliverable during the plan period.

Also I am still of the opinion that the plan has not been prepared in line with LDP Delivery Agreement, Section B- Community Involvement Scheme.

SHOULD THE SITE INSTEAD BE DEVELOPED AS A COUNTRY PARK.

I am submitting new evidence that suggests there are possibilities of turning this site into a low key country park, please see attached letter from The Land Restoration Trust .

Also could we add to the agenda for hearing session 5 Protection of industrial landscapes. And under the heading of, **What are the reasons for the councils continued pursuit of the proposed allocation in the plan despite the extent of local opposition** could we add to the agenda why are the council trying to appropriate land from leisure for a new access road on an assumption the plan is going to be sound this does not inspire public confidence in the plan preparation at this time.

Yours Sincerely

Billy Hughes

Our Ref: DE

18th March 2010

Mr Bill Hughes



Dear Bill

Re: Former Bedwas Colliery, Caerphilly

It was good to speak to you again this morning and to hear more about your aspirations for the former Bedwas Colliery site, near Caerphilly. However, as I explained, the Land Restoration Trust is unable to assist you at this stage. With limited resources and a seemingly unlimited supply of potential sites, we have to prioritise those where funding is already secured for restoration and future management.

Your proposals for Bedwas are clearly at an early stage and it is not really for us to comment on the planning situation. However, it might be worth bearing in mind a few points as you develop your proposals in further detail.

Firstly, I would recommend taking an ecologically-informed approach to the site's restoration, looking to preserve as much of the site's historical and ecological heritage as possible. This will help to preserve the unique character of the site whilst minimising unnecessary capital and future maintenance costs.

Secondly, this will need to be balanced with careful consideration of dealing with any environmental liabilities, including contamination, drainage and slope stability. However, in many instances a low-intervention approach is often quite acceptable, provided that the site's use is focussed on informal open space.

Thirdly, a key consideration is how the site will be managed in the long-term and how funding to ensure this can be secured, as it is often overlooked. It would be worth exploring whether Section 106 monies from nearby developments could be used in part to develop a dowry, which could then be invested to ensure an annual income to pay for maintenance costs.

In relation to all these points you need to be careful to set a clear brief to any design professionals, so that they work to your aspirations and objectives. Otherwise you can end up with a design that destroys much of what is valuable, is over-designed and over-engineered, and therefore costly to implement and to maintain.

Once your proposals have developed further, particularly if you are able to identify funding for the restoration and management of the site, it may well be worth getting back in contact. Although our remit has focussed on England to date, as we develop into an independent charity we are widening our remit beyond our current boundaries. So it may be that we will be able to help you in more detail in the future, particularly if you are looking for an organisation that can take on the future ownership of the site and is keen to manage it with the local community.

I am sorry that I cannot be of more assistance at this stage but good luck with your endeavours.

Yours sincerely

David Evans
Community Engagement and Policy Director

Mr Alwyn Nixon
Independent Planning Inspector
Care of Barbara Prosser



Billy Hughes

4 / 4 / 10

Dear Mr Nixon

Representor No 864

RE / BEDWAS COLLIERY SITE.

SHOULD THE SITE INSTEAD BE DEVELOPED AS A COUNTRY PARK.

Would you please except as part of our evidence a letter of support from Professor C. Malcolm Parry. Please see copy attached to this note.

Yours Sincerely.

Billy Hughes

Mr Bill Hughes

Dear Bill

BEDWAS COLLIERY TIPS : CAERPHILLY

Many thanks for the wonderful aerial photograph of the Bedwas tips. As you know, I feel strongly that it is important that the shape and nature of these tips are maintained as significant features of the South Wales' Industrial Heritage Landscape.

In his book, "The Making of Wales", the historian John Davies makes the point that : " In the transformation of the landscape, industrial buildings were perhaps less significant than industrial refuse. By the early twentieth century, Wales was a land of tips. The most dramatic was the White Tip above Merthyr... the largest was that at Bargoed, a vast, square man-made mountain."

Perhaps it is only Bedwas that now remains to rival the diminished geometries of these vast South Wales deposits.

The same does not apply to North Wales where the slate industry, with its nine to one ratio of spoil to slate, has left the most dramatic and lasting impact. Blaenau Festiniog, Corris and Llanberris are all dominated by their spoil/waste landscapes. Elsewhere in Wales, little grows on the less obvious spoil heaps associated with the lead and copper industries of Cardiganshire, Montgomery and the lower Swansea Valley.

Those of us brought up in the South Wales Coalfield area and over the age of Fifty will have vivid memories of the massive conical or sprawling, ridge-backed, steep sided spoil heaps which formed the settings for our mining towns. But this all changed in 1966. After the Aberafan disaster, the National coal Board undertook a enormous safety programme which attempted to stabilise all the tips associated with their industry. Much of this work consisted of flattening, reshaping and seeding. The idea of anything looking obviously like the sharp geometry of the traditional 'coal tip' was to be avoided. As a consequence, we will have little industrial coal mining landscape to show future generations how the South Wales Valleys communities were formed, apart from the few remaining buildings that have been preserved, re-used or turned into museums.

Bedwas has one of the few sites where the scope, scale and size of the spoil associated with an individual colliery can still be seen. Despite its post Aberfan re-sculpting it still retains the landscape elements which remind us of the most important moment in the history of South Wales when the economy was flourishing and a new kind of industry based community developed.

It seems to me that it is important that future generations see evidence of the past that has helped form their society, not just those buildings that remain, but also, where possible, elements of the landscape, as in this case. It is often difficult to appreciate the potential and the unique character of those things that form our immediate surroundings. Often it is the stranger, the visitor, who points out to us those essential parts of our every day environment. Sometimes as with this case those elements have associational characteristics that the community as a whole feel entirely negative about. Post Aberfan it must be difficult for anyone to feel anything but negative thoughts about tips. But, nonetheless they form an undisputed part of our Heritage.

On a positive note, here is a splendid opportunity to establish a unique type of Country Park. Not one associated with the more normal rural or moorland of 'natural' landscapes, but an industrial one with suitable interpretation explaining what life would have been like in the area of Caerphilly and its surroundings in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A place for future generations to walk and enjoy the open air in a way that their ancestors would never have had the opportunity to.

The site will of course need major restoration and remedial work carried out whatever plans for development are agreed for the area and its surroundings . I believe that these should be implemented in such away as to enhance the dramatic shapes of the tips from the major viewpoints of Caerphilly and Bedwas. The lower edges and boundaries between proposed new housing and steep areas alongside neighbouring farmland will need special treatment for drainage and broad scale planting. I realise that there are major considerations to do with ecology issues, contamination, drainage and stability but these will still exist whatever planning decisions are reached.

I only hope that you and your group will be able to petition for the retention of the tip shape in the future of this site.

Yours Sincerely

Pro C. Malcolm Parry