

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the current construction programme for the Recycling Bulking Facility?

The contractor started on site on the 7 October 2019. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, works were suspended in March but have recently recommenced. It is now anticipated that all construction works will be complete by the end of 2020, with the site operational in Spring 2021.

All works are being carried out in accordance with current Covid-19 regulations and guidance.

2. What is the cost of the project?

The current anticipated cost of the project is £4.1m. This includes construction costs for the recycling bulking facility and site investigation, surveys, fees, etc for the entire site, including the business unit element.

3. Has Powys CC liaised with the local community?

Since the commencement of the development, as agreed at the Cabinet meeting on 21 May 2019, the project team have liaised with the local County Councillor, along with members of the community council, as the elected representatives, with a number of meetings being held.

4. Did Powys CC cabinet overturn a full council decision not to proceed with the site?

No. At the Full Council meeting on 3 May 2019, where a virement for the funding of the facility was being discussed, due to the presence of the Abermule community, one of the Members requested a vote on whether the Council supported the development of the facility.

It was explained by the Monitoring Officer that this was a purely indicative vote as there was nothing within the constitution for this to happen and the decision remained with Cabinet. In this indicative vote, seven Members voted in favour of continuing with the project with eight against and six abstentions. The remainder of the 62 Members present did not register their view, because they either had a conflict of interest (i.e. they were on Cabinet or the Planning Committee), or because they had no opinion on the issue.

At a later meeting on 21 May 2019, the Cabinet simply confirmed the decision made several years previously to use the business park (designated in the LDP for industrial use) for a bulking facility. This did not go against a Full Council decision. The reports that went to these meetings which clearly detail the background to this project are available on the Powys County Council website.

5. Can the name of the bulking facility be changed?

Yes, the name could be changed to North Powys Bulking Facility, to reflect its purpose and the area it will serve.

6. Are there flooding issues at the site?

A significant amount of flood modelling work was undertaken during the design phase, showing that the site is not within the River Severn flood zone.

Flood compensation has been provided in the adjacent field to deal with stormwater during significant rainfall events and this was shown to work successfully over the Autumn, Winter and Spring. During this period there was no flooding from the Severn. However, there was water ponding/standing on the site prior to the drainage system being installed. This is no longer an issue.

7. What is the contamination issue on the site?

Geo-environmental investigations and reporting have been undertaken during the design phase and small areas of the site have been identified as being contaminated with asbestos containing material which was dumped there in the past. This material has been there for several years.

The areas have been cordoned off and, as stated in geo-environmental reports, pose no significant risk to site operatives or the wider public in their current, undisturbed condition, which has been the case for some time.

The contaminated material will be removed from site in accordance with the approved management plan. The contractor and site operatives are aware of the contamination and will be responsible for the management plan which will ensure removal of material complies with all current regulations and guidance.

All geo-environmental investigation work, reporting and future proposals have been reviewed and approved by the contaminated land officer and have also been signed off by Planning Committee.

8. What ecology measures are being undertaken?

Great Crested Newts (GCN) are known to be present in the area and surveys and reporting have been undertaken to support this. An ecology mitigation scheme is being undertaken in accordance with a development licence issued for the site by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Continual liaison is being undertaken with NRW and PCC ecologists.

The ponds on adjacent land have been developed to improve the habitat for the newts and the flood compensation area will also be suitable for newt habitat.

Newt fencing which complies with the requirements of the development licence has been erected as part of the mitigation scheme to exclude newts from the site.

The perimeter newt fencing is complete and in good condition and is subject to regular inspections and maintenance, with the exception of the main site access road where a 'return' has been included in the fencing on both sides to provide a barrier to great crested newts. This is standard practice.

The newt fencing will be amended as the scheme progresses, alongside specific construction elements and habitat enhancements.

Suitably qualified ecologists are present on site when required and have delivered thorough briefings to all representatives of the contractor and their vegetation management subcontractor.

Regular project team liaison meetings with NRW are required under the development licence and these will continue throughout the project.

9. What are the issues commonly perceived from Recycling Bulking Facilities?

Wind-blown litter

Any material that can be carried by the wind (paper and plastics) will be unloaded/loaded and stored inside the building to prevent any escape.

Odour and attraction of pests

The main source of odour is the collected food waste. This will be stored securely to prevent the escape of odours. Furthermore, these materials are only stored for two to three days prior to onward transfer. As part of the NRW permit, an odour risk assessment and management plan will be required.

As part of the NRW permit, a pest management plan is also required, with NRW ensuring that it is strictly adhered to once the site is operational.

Fly tipping

The site will have a CCTV system which will deter flytipping. Powys CC does not have issues with flytipping at any of its other recycling bulking facilities. Comparisons have been made with Community Recycling Centres (bring sites) which are unmanned facilities where residents can drop off their recycling and are often abused. This site will not be available for public use.

Noise

The only significant noise generated from the site will be when the collection vehicles offload in the afternoon for a few seconds per vehicle. The loading of the glass for onward transport occurs at most three times per week and during working hours. Glass will not be crushed on site.

In accordance with the noise assessment, acoustic fencing will be erected adjacent to Bryn-y-Maes Farm as this is the closest property to the facility. Properties further away do not require mitigation for noise from the bulking facility. The positioning of the building will also shield noise sources.

As part of the NRW permit, a noise risk assessment and management plan will be required which again will be monitored by NRW.

Fire risk

Concern has been raised regarding fires at other waste and recycling sites, with comparisons being made to the Abermule facility. The waste management facilities that have been referenced are many times larger in terms of capacity than the facility currently under construction at Abermule. The building that is currently nearing completion will never be full to the ceiling with material as would appear to be the perception – the height is to accommodate vehicles and machinery when unloading and loading.

The building will be constructed to the latest standards in terms of fire resistance and will only store material collected at the kerbside for a short amount of time. This material will be regularly removed for onward transfer and will not be processed onsite. Therefore, there will be limited amounts of materials stored within the building to combust and, with limited ignition sources to enable a fire to start.

As part of the Building Regulations process the fire service have been consulted on the final design of the buildings and recommendations have been incorporated as required.

The site will be managed in accordance with the NRW Permit which will strictly govern operations to minimise any environmental risks. A Fire Prevention and Mitigation Plan will form part of the permit. Fire detection and control measures will be in accordance with current regulations and guidance. Firefighting equipment will be available on site and will be regularly inspected.

Prior to the site becoming operational the fire service will be provided with all pertinent information relating to the site to ensure if there are any issues these are dealt with effectively. Measures have been incorporated within the drainage systems to prevent water leaving the site and entering watercourses in the event of a fire. The full details of the system will be submitted as part of the NRW permit application.

The Welsh Government and Network Rail, who have responsibility for the A483 Trunk Road and the Cambrian Rail Line respectively, have been consulted as part of the planning process and have raised no concerns about fire risks at the facility and the operation of the A483 and rail line.

In the very unlikely event of a significant fire, as with other emergencies such as road traffic collisions, flooding, etc, both the North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency and Network Rail have procedures in place to be able to close sections of road and railway and provide alternative arrangements for road and rail users.

As with any other property, including farms, businesses, etc, if there are issues with smoke during a fire, the fire service will take the lead in advising residents on actions required, which may range from shutting doors and windows to evacuation in exceptional circumstances. Powys County Council has evacuation plans in place for emergencies and these would be enacted if deemed necessary at the time.

Traffic

A Transport Statement has been prepared which has concluded that the current Trunk and County Road highway layouts are appropriate for existing and proposed traffic volumes.

The A483 junction, which will be used to access the Business Park, complies with current design standards and is of a better standard than a significant number of other junctions along the A483. The Welsh Government, who are responsible for the A483 Trunk Road, have not raised concerns regarding the site and access. Any changes to this junction would be the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

In the past five years there has only been one recorded injury collision and the cause of this was poor driving and human error. We are aware of recent collisions, which will not yet have been recorded on the collision database. Whilst these are obviously unfortunate, enquiries have indicated these were again due to poor driving and human error and not associated with any aspect of the junction.

The only vehicles from the bulking site that will go through the village will be the collection vehicles that currently collect in that area. Any larger vehicles transporting material away from the site will access via the main trunk road.

Visual amenity

The building's impact on the surrounding area was considered as part of the planning process and on balance the development was considered to be acceptable.

The landscaping details are yet to be finalised and the council are happy to work with the Community Council to agree an appropriate landscape scheme.

Crime

The site will be secured and monitored by CCTV.

10. Will residual waste be stored at the site?

The residual, or 'black bag' waste as it is sometimes referred to, is the waste that is left after the recyclable material has been removed. With the increasing amounts that are recycled, the amount of residual waste is very small in comparison. Furthermore, with weekly food waste collections, this residual waste should not contain anything that can decompose, and it poses no more of an issue than any other waste. This is why it can be stored at home and we are able to collect it every three weeks.

As part of the application for the NRW permit, provision will be made to bulk and transfer all the materials that we currently take at the kerbside (all of which are classified as waste). In practice this means that the site will be managed and monitored by NRW to the highest standards to ensure that there are no issues with our neighbours and wider public regardless of the type of material being transferred.

The long-term position is that recycling rates will need to increase to over 80%, in line with the Welsh Government's current and proposed targets, with the small amount of left-over residual waste being sent to an Energy from Waste facility. As a result, the residual waste becomes a resource, as with any other recyclable material bulked at the site.

In line with the Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy - to make a low carbon, zero waste Wales, we are making provision for this resource to be taken to Abermule for onward transport, when appropriate. This will be subject to a further planning application.

11. Was the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Permit Application rejected?

The permit application has not been rejected. An initial application was submitted with the expectation that more information would then be requested which has been the case. This is now being formulated, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is taking longer than anticipated as resources have been diverted elsewhere. It will be resubmitted in due course, at which point the local community will be consulted.

PCC currently operate two other bulking facilities in Powys (one of which is adjacent to housing) under NRW permits with no issues.

12. Is there a Vehicle Operators Licence in place?

An application for the vehicle operator's licence has been submitted and is being considered by the Traffic Commissioner. The application is in accordance with the planning consent and is for waste and recycling vehicles currently based at Newtown and Welshpool to operate from the site. It does not include any other Powys CC Highways vehicles and only refers to the bulking facility part of the development.

13. What is happening with the business units?

A number of parties have previously been interested in the proposed business units, however, due to the timescales involved and their business demands they have decided to relocate elsewhere.

It is the Council's intention to construct speculative business units and the design process for this is ongoing. Enquiries continue to be received for the units on the site. Formal marketing for these units has not yet been undertaken and at the appropriate time the units will be marketed on the Council's own website and Zoopla page.

14. Where can I find further information?

All information, including drawings, and all documents submitted as part of the planning process can be found at the links below.

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ZZZZUYMPRW184>

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=PINOP6MPHSC00>

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=PUQPQEMPH6G00>

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=PVLKVNMPHLJ00>

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=PWMM5RMPL4100>

<https://pa.powys.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=Q10KBTMPMDV00>

Last updated 2 July 2020

16. Q What insurance will PCC be putting in place to compensate residents of Abermule in the event of a fire? Will the cabinet and Ashley put their money where their mouth is an resign if there is a fire and they have put in no fire suppression equipment?

A As I have explained on numerous occasions to Alan, including last week, the Fire Prevention and Mitigation Plan is a comprehensive document and we will not receive a NRW permit unless they are happy with it. This is publicly available on the NRW website and it does include a fire detection and alarm system as well as a number of measures to prevent a fire occurring in the first place.

Whilst I agree that there has been quite a few reported fires at waste sites recently, they are still at sites with significantly higher tonnages concentrated together. Whilst I cannot of course guarantee that there will not be a fire at Abermule (and never have), due to the smaller quantities of material stored at the site it would be quickly brought under control. As explained to Alan when he visited Rhayader, when the alarm does go off (as it falsely did at Rhayader a few weeks ago), the fire service are on site very quickly.