



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11TH NOVEMBER 2024

MANAGEMENT OF TIP SAFETY IN RCTCBC

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR HIGHWAYS, STREETCARE AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on the work that the Tip Safety Team have undertaken in the last 6 months with respect to the management, monitoring and oversight of disused coal tips within the County Borough.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To scrutinise the work of the RCTCBC Tip Safety Team.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To be aware of the work undertaken by the Tip Safety team
- 3.2 To consider the different approaches for Tip Safety with RCTCBC under the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969, as landowner and with ongoing risk management and prioritisation of resources.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 This is an update to the previous report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in [February 2024](#).
- 4.2 Resources in the Tip Safety Team remain the same since the last report in February 2024 with 4 of the 6 established posts filled

permanently. Approval has very recently been granted to re-advertise the GR11 post with a market supplement.

- 4.3 Whilst the proposals to change the legislative framework are underway by the Welsh Government (RCT response to WG White Paper debated by Overview and Scrutiny Committee July 20th 2022 [Coal Tip Safety \(Wales\) White Paper](#)) this report outlines the continuing work being undertaken to manage and monitor tips until such time these proposals are enacted.
- 4.4 RCT have successfully applied for grant funding from Welsh Government for Coal Tip Safety work and this grant funding covers the costs for the work outlined in this report.
- 4.5 **DATA** - The establishment of the WG Tips Task Force and the desire to streamline and regulate all tips data across Wales, has required a series of lengthy exercises to align data held by individual Local Authorities and other public bodies. In general, this data includes information such as ownership, boundary and category.

As a result of ongoing inspections both by RCTCBC and the Coal Authority a number of differences to the previously collated data have arisen (as it is an iterative process) and are currently being discussed as part of the process to rationalise all of the data held in order to make it a single source of information (this includes such things as new tips, changes to category and changes to boundaries).

Changes to the condition, category and boundaries of tips will continue to change. The Tip Safety team are currently in the process of aligning RCTCBC held data with that of the WG and Tips Task Force following a new revision of the data issued on 25th October 2024 (Autumn 2024 National Disused Coal Tip Dataset Update). Some changes will not be made until categorisation of tips is rationalised between WG and local authorities.

- 4.6 **INSPECTIONS** - The category definitions and inspection intervals remain as per the RCT Policy and Procedure for Management of Disused Colliery and Quarry Spoil Tips 2012 – the inspection intervals are:
- D1 - monthly,
 - D3 - 3 monthly,
 - C - 6 monthly,
 - B - annually,
 - A2- 2 yearly,
 - A4- 4 yearly.

Inspections are scheduled, undertaken, written up and submitted for approval by the overseeing Tip Safety Officer. More inspections are now undertaken by the Tip Safety team with fewer inspections undertaken by the Council's Joint Venture Consultants, Redstart. The aim is that all inspections of tips, except where there is ongoing consultant involvement for specific reasons, will be undertaken by RCTCBC tip inspectors from April 2025.

- 4.7 **Internal Audit** - An internal audit on the Tip Inspection process gave a Scope for Improvement as a review of the 2012 policy. This has been undertaken and it was found that while the current legislative framework is still in use and that the powers under which the LA operate has not changed the day to day management, the formalisation and addition of processes and procedures undertaken with respect to Tip Safety Management since 2020 are not reflected by the 2012 Policy document.

The Tip Safety Team are drafting an updated policy document for wider consultation and approval that covers the current processes and Tips Team structure employed in managing the RCTCBC tips stock. This updated policy would cover the interim period between now and the introduction of new legislation and guidance documentation when the Policy will need to be rewritten to reflect the changes.

It is not currently proposed to alter the current categorisation of tips or the tip inspection interval, this will remain in the interim, different to the WG classification.

- 4.8 Tip inspections have been undertaken as below since January 2024:

2023/24 Qtr 4 Jan-Mar	101
2024/25 Qtr 1 Apr-Jun	108
2024/25 Qtr 2 Jul-Sep	121

In total 330 inspections have been undertaken in these 9 months.

These inspections have recorded:

Black Defects	0 number
Red Defects	131 number
Amber Defects	798 number
Green Defects	706 number

- 4.9 In addition to the planned inspections, ad hoc severe weather inspections are undertaken after sustained periods of heavy rainfall or

exceptional rainfall events. 4no. additional site visits were carried out in January 2024.

The Tip Safety Team have received and reviewed 92 no. inspection reports from the Coal Authority (CA). The CA do not categorise the defects recorded during the inspections.

4.10 **MAINTENANCE** - With Coal Tip Safety Grant funding the Council has been able to put in place a programme of work on tips including maintenance – minor and major maintenance, studies and investigations. Please see the list in Appendix 1 outlining the references of the tips and description of works covered for the Coal Tip Safety grant application for 2024/25.

4.11 For minor maintenance works identified from the inspection reports we have worked with Highways Streetcare to undertake the works. Once completed, the maintenance works are inspected on site and signed off by a member of the Tip Safety team. Due to the size and nature of many of the tips and the amount of ageing drainage infrastructure present on many, it is impossible and impractical to undertake all maintenance work immediately. As a result, there is a prioritised system in place to address the work that if left unmitigated could contribute towards increased risks.

Typical maintenance can comprise of vegetation clearance, clearing out and repairing drainage channels, repairing pipes and culverts, reinstating drains, scour infill and repair.

4.12 In addition to the minor maintenance work, there has been ongoing specific repairs of a larger nature undertaken or planned to the various tips concerned. This work typically requires more surveys, detailed design and consents such as Ordinary Watercourse Consent. At RH003 Wattstown National Tip, the mid berm drainage channel has been renewed to prevent surface water run-off and spring water from permeating into the body of the tip. Repairs to the existing masonry channel that the berm outfalls into have also been undertaken.

4.13 At RH077 Graig Ddu Dinas tip as previously reported, due to the toe of the tip showing signs of movement and causing disruption to Graig Ddu Road and locally at Vicarage Road in Penygraig, the Council have commissioned site investigation and analysis of the tip. There is a monitoring system installed that provides data on rainfall, waterflows, ground water levels and ground movement. The monitoring system has shown very minor movement so the temporary system that is in place demonstrates that permanent water management infrastructure would reduce the risk of movement in the tip and enable a replacement toe retaining wall to be built. RCT are continuing to work with consultants to create a works package and contract framework to

deliver this remediation within the current legal framework and will seek grant funding as appropriate.

- 4.14 Successful restoration of the scoured toe of tip CV128 at Penrhiwceiber has been completed in September 2024. The work included replacing a failed masonry retaining wall with blockstone and reinstating the riverside path along just under 100m section of the riverbank. The new wall protects the toe of the tip and removes the risk of tip material washing into the Afon Cynon and potentially the risk of a larger tip failure blocking the river. The overall project cost was circa £1.2M and the construction works were completed ahead of schedule.
- 4.15 Works are ongoing to formalise an existing access track to a culvert inlet on tip CV129 and to install a concrete plinth around the inlet. The works will improve the ease of maintenance to the culvert inlet and thus reduce the risk of blockages and flooding to the local area. The scheme is designed and managed by RCT's Strategic Projects department and RCT's Streetworks department is the main contractor. The overall project cost is anticipated to be circa £270,000.
- 4.16 Works have been ordered to install new drainage infrastructure on tip TE003. There is an existing low point on the tip that collects surface water runoff with no effective discharge from this location. The new infrastructure includes a short length of culvert beneath the existing access track and construction of a new length of concrete canvas lined channel to link to existing drainage. RCT's Streetworks department is the main contractor.
- 4.17 Major work at the site of the Tylorstown landslip is progressing. Since the landslip from Upper Llanwonno Tip in February 2020 (Storm Dennis), the Council has implemented a four-phase remediation plan for the site. Phase One included emergency clearance work in the weeks that followed, Phases Two and Three which was removal of the slipped material from the valley floor and reinstatement of the river channel were substantially completed in June 2021, followed by additional work in autumn 2021 to stabilise the slope.

Alongside Phase 4, permanent works to the Phase 2 and 3 Receptor Sites A1, A2 and B are being progressed this year. The permanent work at Receptor Site A2 has been completed with the planting of 285 trees and 100 shrubs. Quotes are being obtained for the permanent work at Receptor Site B and a planning application for a pump track at Receptor Site A1 is currently live (planning reference 24/1049/GREG).

The Phase 4 works are progressing (planning reference 22/0600/08). Works to the receptor site are practically complete with features established on the site to create biodiversity improvement

opportunities. Progress to install significant drainage infrastructure on the donor site continues but progress is hampered due to weather and ground conditions. When the donor site is completed, the contractor will work upwards off the hillside reinstating the final profiles to the haul road to create what will effectively be a walking route but will allow for access for future maintenance.

A working group of council officers has been created from cross cutting teams to consider and implement the long-term management of the hillside, including tip safety, ecology, land management and access. There is a specific problem on the hillside with damage caused by people riding scrambler bikes in the area.

- 4.18 **Off Roaders** - As part of the Phase 4 works the Council is working to progress the longer-term land management plan for the hillside. A press release regarding off roaders on tips in general and the damage that can be caused was issued in May 2024 ([press release](#)). There was further publicity with an officer interviewed by the BBC.

Engagement with internal and external stakeholders has taken place regarding this issue with a view to producing a workable strategy moving forward. There are ongoing problems faced by the tips team and new proactive approach is being considered whereby the most at risk tips from off roading activity (and which are also high risk category tips) will be overtly monitored using trail cams to identify hot spots of activity.

It is also considered important to highlight and educate off roaders to the damage they cause - not only the tip infrastructure but the ecology and public amenity that many of these sites provide. We are considering education through schools engagement and signage production which highlights these issues. This signage can then be used in conjunction with the overt camera surveillance.

A camera surveillance strategy policy has been drafted and will require verification from Senior management prior to any physical cameras being installed to ensure the council is not infringing GDPR protocols.

- 4.19 **STUDIES** - The outcome of the WG's proposed legislative change will formalise how tips are to be managed in the longer term and where responsibility will lie for tips under different ownership. In the interim, the Tip Safety team are proactively taking forward studies and information gathering on tips on a prioritised basis to inform decisions on these tips in the future and to consider options to maintain, monitor or remediate. An outcome of the desk study on the privately owned tip RH072 Ynyshir, with permission of the landowner, has been to restore

the boreholes on the tip and monitor ground water levels so these can be reviewed against historical data and stability analysis. With respect to CV063 Cwmbach tip – now owned by RCTCBC – ground investigation has been undertaken and a stability analysis completed. Ground water monitoring continues here, the information from which will feed into a longer term strategy. Due for completion by March 2025 are studies on TE064 Cwm Colliery, CV129 Cefnpennar, RH002 Tylorstown (Old Smokey), RH105 Abergorki and RH036 Pentre.

4.20 **MONITORING** - Examples of monitoring of tips in the longer term is the current system in operation on TE003 Lower Cilfynydd Tip since major works were completed there to drain the strata below the tip. There are boreholes at several locations on the tip and ground water levels are monitored periodically, the enhanced winter monitoring regime has been commissioned. There are several systems in place on RH03 Wattstown National Tip, including tiltmeters, flow meters and a camera at a critical culvert inlet. Currently, Joint Venture consultant Redstart reviews and provides quarterly monitoring reports on RH03 data and interim updates as required due to specific results. RH077 Graig Ddu Dinas – increased rainfall has triggered more checks on the system in accordance with the monitoring protocols.

4.21 Challenges continue with the management of tips to ensure the ongoing safety within RCTCBC. Many major tip reclamation and remediation schemes were undertaken on tips from the 1970's onwards. Designed and installed infrastructure is now reaching the end of its design and material life which is presenting a new set of challenges to the structural integrity of the tips. Although the drainage infrastructure on tips is still currently functioning, it may not have sufficient capacity to comply with current drainage standards and the effects of climate change.

4.22 Establishing the Tip Safety Team has focussed monitoring, maintenance and management of tips within one team and established processes for tips dependant on the ownership and liability. This enables a risk prioritisation approach for resources, funding and programme.

5 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

6 **WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

7.1 The cost of the Tip Safety Team is currently covered by Welsh Government Coal Tip Safety Funding.

7.2 In 2023/24 the Council was successful in obtaining £11,554,375 of Coal Tip Safety grant funding with a further £4,514,450 obtained for 2024/25 with the claim window until March 2025. Claims have been submitted and approved for £8,241,780.38 to date the which includes the cost attributed to Tylorstown landslip remediation. The Council will submit the funding claim for 2024/25 in due course.

7.3 The Tip inspection regime cost just under £250,000 in 2023/24. It is anticipated spend might be slightly less in 2024/25 due to bringing more inspections in-house.

7.4 Minor maintenance spend is currently in the region of £0.75million per year over all the tips but does depend on the level of grant funding. Maintenance is currently still reactive. The aim would be to develop a planned maintenance regime.

7.5 Major maintenance can be in the region of £100k - £1million+ per tip, dependent upon the requirement of the remediation works.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

8.1 Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969

9 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

9.1 There is no consultation with respect to this paper. Consultation may be required on each respective tip should there be major works requiring planning approval.

10 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

10.1 A Resilient Wales - Management and maintenance of tips helps to reduce any risk posed by them to infrastructure, biodiversity and the public. The tips will provide a biodiverse natural environment with

healthy functioning ecosystems with the ability to deal with climate change.

- 10.2 A Wales of Cohesive Communities - Monitoring and inspection of tips allows those societies living in close proximity to tips to have confidence and peace of mind that risks are being managed which will benefit the communities' well-being, making the area safe, viable and attractive.
- 10.3 A Globally Responsible Wales - Management and monitoring will also benefit biodiversity and demonstrate our global responsibility.
- 10.4 The works are in accord with the Council's Corporate Plan – Working with Our Communities – Nature and the Environment; Priority 2 - Clean Safe and Sustainable RCT.
- 10.5 This work also meets some of the objectives of the Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan 2023-2028.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Tip Safety Team are continuing and building on the work of maintaining, monitoring and managing tips and tip safety within RCTCBC.
- 11.2 Processes have been developed from inspections to defect recording and prioritising maintenance, an updated Policy document will be drafted to capture these until such time future WG legislation is implemented.
- 11.3 A recruitment exercise to fill the GR11 vacant post within the team has been approved and will be taken forward.
- 11.4 The work relies on Coal Tip Safety grant funding. This also pays for a significant amount of minor and major maintenance on tips.
- 11.5 Tylorstown Landslip Remediation continues, the major project to remediate the scour to the toe of CV128 Penrhiwceiber has been successfully completed; larger maintenance projects at CV129 and TE03 are progressing or due to commence shortly. Focus is on a review of procurement routes and review of a feasible programme for stabilisation work at RH077 Graig Ddu, Dinas to enable application for funding.
- 11.6 The work, resource allocation and funding is undertaken on a prioritised basis according to risk. Desk studies, site investigations and

monitoring will feed into the longer term management of tips. Monitoring strategies may be considered alongside remediation and reclamation depending on the location and risks from a particular tip.

- 11.7 The future legislative framework will change the responsibilities for Tip Safety and the team will develop accordingly.



Table 1: Summary of Maintenance Undertaken and Planned February 2024 – March 2025

Tip ID	Ownership	Works Description	Work Status
RH058	RCT (part)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance surrounding drainage assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed March 2024 (additional works are required subject to funding)
RH095	RCT / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage channel maintenance including desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed February 2024
RH016 / RH017	RCT / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance works including vegetation clearance, erosion repair, desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed* April 2024 *1 no. item still outstanding, programmed for November 2024
RH072	Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage channel maintenance including desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts. Groundwater monitoring within existing boreholes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed March 2024 On-going
CV128	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance along lined and unlined drainage channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed April 2024
RH081	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance works including vegetation clearance, desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed April 2024
CV129	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine erosion maintenance (yearly) to reinstate works from last year damaged by illegal vehicle use. Major works to a large culvert inlet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed May 2024 Forecast completion November 2024
TE004	RCT / Private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repair of a breach in an unlined channel and associated erosion. Erosion was repair on private land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed June 2024
	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desilting of lined channel, erosion repair, vegetation clearance, and masonry work to catchpits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed September 2024
CV122	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance surrounding drainage assets Maintenance to repair a large erosion channel (Ffynnon Dwym). Drainage surveys of culverts below Pentwyn Avenue (Pentwyn). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed March 2024 Completed July 2024 TBC
CV063	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of new access stairway Routine vegetation clearance along the perimeter drainage. Groundwater monitoring within existing boreholes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed July 2024 Completed August 2024 On-going
RH113 / TE047	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine erosion maintenance (yearly) to reinstate works from last year damaged by illegal vehicle use. Routine and new vegetation clearance to manage regrowth around assets and uncover existing assets for inspection. Maintenance of assets following vegetation clearance and inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed July 2024 Programmed for mid-November 2024 Programmed for mid-January 2025
CV056	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desilting of an unlined channel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed July 2024

CV115	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desilting of lined channel and associated culverts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed July 2024
CV052	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage channels works (desilting of lined / unlined channels), desilting of culverts. Routine vegetation clearance maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed September 2024 Programmed for November 2024
RH101 / RH013	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erosion channel repair, drainage channel works (includes reinstatement of unlined channels and desilting of both lined and unlined channels), and desilting culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed October 2024
RH004 / RH005	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routine erosion maintenance (yearly) to reinstate works from last year damaged by illegal vehicle use. New vegetation clearance and channel works uncover existing assets for inspection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed May 2024 Completed November 2024
RH003	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance to allow for inspection of assets. Vegetation clearance enabling works for major drainage scheme. Major drainage scheme - redesign of berm drainage in area of known instability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed July 2024 Completed October 2024
TE003	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance works to maintain monitoring locations and enabling work for upcoming drainage scheme. Construction of major drainage scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed October 2024 Programmed for November 2024
RH030	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance around known drainage assets and uncovering other existing assets. Desilting of lined and unlined channels Drainage surveys on uncovered culverts Drainage works: desilting / reinstating existing drainage channels to dewater large erosion channel. Erosion channel works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed November 2024 Completed October 2024 Forecast completion November 2024 To follow drainage survey works TBC
TE064	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance along lined/unlined drainage channels. Drainage channel maintenance, including desilting lined/unlined channels, and reinstatement of unlined drainage channel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed October 2024 Forecast completion Winter 2024
TE001	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance on berms and surrounding drainage assets for inspection and maintenance works. Maintenance works including erosion repair, desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forecast completion November 2024 Programmed for November 2024
CV121	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance on berms and surrounding drainage assets for inspection and maintenance works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed for January 2024

CV116	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance on berms and surrounding drainage assets for inspection and maintenance works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed for November 2024
CV055 / CV056	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegetation clearance surrounding drainage assets for inspection and maintenance works. Maintenance works including erosion repair, desilting of unlined / lined channels and culverts, and reinstating unlined channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed for February 2025 Programmed for March 2025
RH077	RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintenance (holding works) to ensure the emergency drainage used to dewater the landslip is functioning over the winter months until funds are made available to remediate the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programmed for December 2024