

# Hafod Quarry - some questions

*In an open letter, Hafod Environmental Group asks questions that need answers.*



**Is anybody singing from the same hymn sheet?**

For nearly two years the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has consistently assured the Hafod Environmental Group that Modification of the landfill plans for Hafod Quarry must be ratified by WAG. However, Wrexham County Borough Council has recently assured us that the modification plans took effect immediately and were being worked. WAG has now apologised for giving us 'incorrect information'. If the modifications took effect immediately, why were they ever sent to WAG? Why have lawyers been looking at them for nearly two years? This whole exercise has cost thousands to ratepayers and taxpayers.

We agreed with the Chief Planning Officer in 2003 when he requested that Mersey Waste Holdings (MWH) submit a new planning application. We have argued all along that the changes (modification) of the 1995 plans are so great that this was

necessary. However, MWH disagreed and refused. The Chief Planning Officer capitulated. Why? Who's in charge?

We believe that the modifications required a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for landfilling under European Law. Wrexham CBC and the Environment Agency are content to rely on an Environmental Statement from 1992 which pays scant regard to human health or the Special Area of Conservation.

Planning Authorities normally oversee the engineering of landfill. At Hafod Quarry it is the Environment Agency which holds the plans and oversees operations. Why?

Permission to damage a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) requires the Minister for the Environment to declare the works to be of national importance. He repeatedly said that this was a local issue. Nevertheless, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) agreed to allow 9 hectares of the SAC to be damaged (admitted by MWH's own engineers) and the construction of an earth bund on this protected site.

The Minister for the Environment sang from two different hymn sheets over whether or not he visited the site.

In the High Court, the WAG barrister refused to sing to any hymn sheet and appeared unable to answer any

questions or give any opinion. Therefore, he ceded our case and the Public Inquiry and 2003 plans were quashed, but the verbal judgment that the 1995 plans were unworkable was not published by the judge. Our daily morning vigil at the gates, since land filling started nearly two years ago, was to protest that MWH were using plans shown to be unworkable in the High Court and without an EIA. At the time of purchase, MWH could only legally start land filling phases A and B. We have requested and begged all concerned not to extend their permission. WAG has until now assured us that the matter was still being addressed.

We have been appallingly misled by the Planning Division of the Welsh Assembly Government. Is this gross incompetence or wilful ignorance?

## STATEMENT FROM HAFOD ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP

*We wish to correct an impression given in issue 24 of Wrexham Peace & Justice News that Hafod Environmental Group is affiliated to a political party.*

*For six years it has consistently been apolitical and has had members of all parties.*

# Prisoner Justice Day at Styal

*Joan Meredith*

Prisoners and their supporters around the world use this day for protesting against poor conditions in prisons and as a day of mourning and remembrance for those who have died in prisons. Forty activists gathered outside HMP Styal to show solidarity with the women inside and as a tribute to Pauline Campbell, whose only child Sarah died tragically inside Styal. Pauline died in May this year.

Since Sarah's death, Pauline had organised a compassionate campaign to raise government and public

awareness about the failure of prisons. For too long they have been used as a dustbin for the mentally ill, the poor and the most vulnerable in society. Pauline highlighted the total confusion of government policy – on the one hand expanding prison places by building Titan 'super' prisons, while at the same time urging magistrates to use other methods of sentencing.

The No More Prisons Campaign, supported by Fight Racism Fight Imperialism, Brighton ABC, Campaign against Prison Slavery and others will continue to take action so that

Pauline's work will be carried forward and not be forgotten.



# Army Clinic Health Warning

George Miller

Letter to the Oswestry Advertiser in response to an article about an Army Recruitment 'Clinic'.

I noticed in a recent Advertiser that an Army Recruitment Clinic has opened in Oswestry. A Clinic is a place you normally go to for the benefit of your health. This one could seriously damage your health, and even cost your life.

290 British service personnel have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The MOD gives the rate of serious injuries as three to every one fatality. American statistics give the rate as nine to one and this is likely to be closer to the truth.

What these figures don't show is the incidence of post traumatic stress and other psychiatric disorders among returning troops. MOD statistics do not cover this but the problem is now serious and visible enough for the popular TV agony aunt Tricia Goddard to have devoted an entire show to it (4th August). Recently the US Veterans Affairs Department revealed that veteran suicide rates there are running at 18 a day, more

than two Twin Towers a year and twice the number killed by insurgents or Taliban.

In the UK, the Army has criticised the level of care which physically and mentally wounded veterans receive. The last dedicated military hospital has been closed, and it takes up to 18 months to get psychiatric help on the NHS.

The reason for the high rates of mental illness among our troops has a lot to do with the nature of the so called "war on terror". Young people are not being asked to defend their country, but to take part in illegal acts of aggression and occupation that have claimed the lives of over a million civilians and caused untold suffering. It is not what happens to them but what they do and see done to others that will affect them for the rest of their lives. They should be warned, and their parents should be warned, about the 'clinic' in Oswald Road.

David Gee's recent report *Informed Choice, 2008, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust*, looks at army recruitment practices in Britain and concludes that the armed forces:

- largely fail to inform recruits about the risks of a forces career
- curtail recruits' rights to withdraw their consent from employment
- largely depend on the socially and economically vulnerable to enlist for negative reasons
- recruit minors without adequate safeguards

A new website has also been developed by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, to help potential recruits make properly informed choices. This can be found at:

[www.beforeyousignup.info](http://www.beforeyousignup.info)

## Talk on 'Missile Defence'

George Miller



Professor Dave Webb

Oswestry Coalition for Peace hosted a talk by Dave Webb, Professor of Engineering at Leeds Metropolitan University, on Missile Defence. Professor Webb formerly worked for the Ministry of Defence as a space scientist and is now convenor of the Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, and a member of Scientists for Global Responsibility.

The talk, illustrated by slides, lasted well over an hour and gave a detailed account of a range of scientific and technological developments being pursued by the American Government in space, and grouped under the

innocuous sounding heading of 'Missile Defence'. They go far beyond defending America from the unlikely event of an Iranian missile attack. What they amount to is the construction of an apparatus for global tyranny. If successful the Americans will be able to destroy any satellite or space vehicle they deem to be operating against their national interests, and by the use of missiles, lasers and pilotless aircraft controlled from space to destroy any target on the surface of the planet, or hidden beneath it, down to a single individual.

There is a story about the Manhattan Project, in World War II, to create the first atomic bomb. One of the scientists said to one of the military personnel involved: 'Thank God the Germans haven't got the atom bomb. Now we won't have to use ours.' The officer replied: 'You can be sure of one thing. If we've got it we'll use it.'

They did, and they will.

Professor Webb noted that various factors were working against the success of Missile Defence. Some were technological, but most important was the growing realisation of what it involved and the consequences for us all. The organisations he is working with are evidence of this, as are popular protests at Menwith Hill and Fylingdales, radar stations enthusiastically signed over to the Americans by our own government. Similarly in the Czech Republic and Poland, whose governments are hosting installations, there is vehement opposition, to the point of protesters going on hunger strike. They need our support. Then there is growing concern by the civil communications industry, whose operations will be affected by the quantities of space debris that are being generated. Finally there is the much hoped for possibility of regime change in America, and that more responsible leadership and wiser counsel will prevail.