

Minerals Resource Information for Sustainable Communities within Central Scotland - Collation of stakeholder feedback at the Project Consultation Event

1 Introduction

In April 2007, the British Geological Survey was awarded an Aggregates Levy Project by the Scottish Executive to provide comprehensive, relevant and accessible information on the type and location of mineral resources in the Central Belt of Scotland. This information can be used to identify areas where mineral resources may conflict with other land-use and conservation interests, and thus help safeguard minerals from sterilisation by other types of development in accordance with key objectives of SPP4: Planning for Minerals.

The initial part of the project sought the views of stakeholders by inviting delegates to a half day consultation workshop held on the 6th June at the BGS office in Edinburgh. The purpose of the workshop was to obtain views on the type and detail of mineral information required and how this information should be disseminated to achieve the highest impact and uptake. Approximately 45 delegates attended the consultation from a wide variety of sectors, including local planners, government officers, environmental organisations, industry, trade associations and others.

This short document is the collation of the comments, feedback and questions raised at the event. The document will be used to guide the project and ensure that the delivery of a relevant product for stakeholders is achieved. A draft copy will be sent to each delegate electronically to ensure that their views are clearly represented.

1.1 WORKSHOP FORMAT

The workshop commenced with a series of short presentations from the project team focussing on Mineral information and Planning Policy for minerals in Scotland. Delegates were subsequently split into breakout groups comprising of approximately eight people from a broad range of organisations. The first workshop was designed to focus on the information 'inputs' to the project. This included discussing which information stakeholders would find useful and relevant to their needs. Pilot study mineral resource maps of North Lanarkshire, East Ayrshire and the Lothians were used to stimulate discussion.

The second workshop examined the possible 'outputs' for minerals information. Discussion was focussed around how minerals information could be presented and disseminated (map, digitally etc). The pilot study maps were used to stimulate discussion, but also a demonstration of a desktop Geographical Information System (GIS) and a web-based GIS were presented.

2 Collation of feedback

Feedback from each group has been collated into categories. The project team have tried to capture as many of the comments made at the event as possible and are very grateful for these. Some of the comments invariably contradict one another and some are beyond the scope of this project given time and resources. To this end it may not be possible to meet the requirements of all the feedback, but the comments will be used as a valuable source of information to help direct the project.

2.1 MINERAL RESOURCE DATA

2.1.1 Delineation of mineral resources

- Mineral resources shown should be all economic mineral resources or those thought to have potential to be economic in the future. The inclusion of metaliferous minerals was raised.
- It was thought that information for coal should be mapped but that there is no need to duplicate the level of information accompanying the data in the coal appraisal map on the mineral resources maps.
- There was a suggestion that old coal workings and deep coal should be shown on the maps.
- It would be useful to consult the industry about economic mineral resources in the Central Belt but that BGS impartiality is paramount.
- Groups of minerals could be refined so there are not so many e.g. use one colour for sand and gravel. On the other hand it was felt that igneous rocks should be sub divided. Subdivision gives an indication of potential end use.
- It would be useful to identify secondary sources of aggregate. For example, oil shale waste found in West Lothian, colliery waste.
- Sub surface resources on the paper map were often not clearly understood. It was suggested that a cross-section may be appropriate in complex areas. In some areas there is the potential for a superficial mineral resource to sit on top of a bedrock resource and where this occurs it should be clearly indicated.

2.2 SCALE AND EXTENT OF DATA

- There were mixed feelings about the scale of the data. Some thought the scale was appropriate others thought it was not. This was largely dependent on the stakeholder's affiliation. Planners generally thought that 1:100 000 scale met their needs, but industry require more site specific information.
- One scale should be chosen for the paper map and a grid and coordinates should be shown on the maps.
- It was suggested that a wider overview map would be useful to some, perhaps of the whole Central Belt. This would be useful for those who may require a strategic overview.
- It was suggested that it would also be useful for the maps to show data across the boundaries between local authorities. It was suggested that it would be helpful for a buffer to be applied to enable the user to see what is over boundaries.
- Some stakeholders were concerned at the omission of Stirling Council from the project area, pointing out that this local authority area is a major supplier of minerals (especially sand and gravel) to Central Scotland.
- It was felt that there was too much information on the paper maps and they were cluttered. The number of 'layers' on the maps made it confusing.
- It should be made very clear that the white/blank areas on the map indicate no mineral resource value.

2.2.1 Mineral resource textual information

- The role of, and information about, recycled materials in aggregates would be beneficial.
- The map needs to depict in some way that it is showing both sub surface and surface resources.
- Several stakeholders mentioned that it would be useful to be able to rank mineral resources in terms of quality or based on the merits of deposit compared to another.
- The likelihood of a particular resource actually being worked was also considered useful information.
- 'Importance' in terms of national, regional or local resources or scarcity of resources should be flagged up.
- Level of demand for the mineral should also be conveyed.
- Some stakeholders said that BGS should not make judgments on what is important or not. It was felt that the BGS could provide a good starting point about the importance of resources.
- In making judgements any assumptions should be listed, though these do not necessarily need to be shown in a GIS.
- Where possible, Polished Stone Value (PSV) data should be incorporated, this may be available in Scotland and should be sought to help refine resources. Relatively scarce resources that serve a particular end use should be highlighted (e.g. silica sand, high PSV).
- Stakeholders would like to see more information on uses, extraction method etc to aid the non-geologist.
- The legend and textual information should compliment each other a little better.
- Text should take account of policy set out in SPP4. Text boxes should also point to where further more detailed information can be found.
- Where possible, the size and thicknesses of deposits could be mentioned in the text boxes.
- The maps should be linked to and compliment the Minerals Factsheets about to be published by the Scottish Executive.
- It was felt that it should be the map itself that should be the focus and therefore text should be kept to a minimum. The text on the maps should be simplified and made easier to read, with a larger font.
- Concerns were raised over the long-term updating of minerals information.

2.2.2 Statistical information

- Aggregate monitoring (AM) style statistics would be useful if possible. However the group realised that this would be difficult in Scotland because of information availability and (at local authority level) confidentiality issues.
- There was some support for displaying annual aggregate production in Scotland against the tonnage of reserves.
- Supply and demand figures would be useful to most stakeholders at the regional and national scale.

- Some felt that the statistics had limited use.
- The bar chart shown on the maps for coal were not thought to be very useful and were not very explanatory.

2.2.3 Language and technical level of information

- Most planning authorities in Scotland do not have a specialised mineral planner so any information provided should be aimed at a non-technical audience.
- Data and information needs to be easily understood by the general public.
- All stakeholders have to be able to understand the data without professional help.
- It was thought that information should be kept basic, with notes guiding users to sources of more detailed information.
- The information should be scientific and impartial, but easily understood by all stakeholders.
- The language used should mirror Scottish Planning Policy 4 (SPP4) so that the minerals information can be used effectively within the planning system.
- Terminology needs to be carefully explained and consistent e.g. the term 'resource' needs explaining to the non-expert.

2.2.4 References/contacts

- All sources of information used should be listed.
- In a similar vein all the information (metadata) pertaining to datasets should be shown for example date of geological mapping and scale that the mineral resource maps are based on.
- Contacts within administrative areas should be indicated so users know where to get more information.

2.3 COMPLIMENTARY DATA TO AID PLANNING FOR MINERALS

2.3.1 Quarry location information

- The display of active quarries was thought to be useful.
- There was some feelings that former quarries (e.g. for limestone) should also be shown.

2.3.2 Mineral planning permissions

- Most authorities already hold this information themselves.
- The value of mineral planning permission data was not always understood.
- The capture of mineral planning permission data was thought to be a difficult, timely and costly task, albeit potentially valuable.

2.3.3 Mineral safeguarding

- It was felt that defining mineral safeguarding areas should be determined by planners in the Strategic Development Plan.

- It was thought that information for planners about mineral resources was more important in the first instance as this would allow them to understand more fully minerals related information and formulate their own mineral safeguarding areas.
- Safeguarding should be related to significance of resource and scarcity. The industry are generally in favour of mineral safeguarding.

2.3.4 Environmental information

- There were mixed feelings on the value of displaying environmental designations on the maps.
- Some stakeholders felt that only statutory designations should be shown although others believed that local landscape designations should be shown e.g. Areas of Special Landscape Control
- A comment was raised about the potential for users to misinterpret the importance of environmental designations if they were shown on minerals maps. It was felt that this might affect issues surrounding their sustainability and devalue their importance.
- Another comment recognised a need to show environmental designations in order to highlight the scarcity of workable areas for minerals but that they needed to be shown in such a way that the maps don't become too complex to understand.
- Many thought that as designations are usually held by local authorities or clients this information is not necessary on the minerals maps.
- It was noted that the environmental designations were important for site finding.
- It was felt that water courses were an important environmental feature that should be displayed so that any potential sensitivities would be immediately apparent.
- The environmental sensitivity map was regarded by some stakeholders as 'dangerous' as it gives 'wrong' judgments. It was seen as having limited use as the authorities have the information and some 'sensitivities' are more crucial.
- Some stakeholders considered that environmental sensitivity mapping is only useful in so far as it gives the number of designations in an area. However, each designated area has its own special make up and there should be caveats that make this clear.
- Some stakeholders felt they did not require the environmental sensitivity information.

2.3.5 Topographical base layer

- The maps definitely need this to provide context.
- In the example maps the topography was too difficult to read.
- Settlements must be shown on maps to give the user geographical context.
- A clear OS base with co-ordinates and contours was desired.

2.4 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

- It was felt that paper maps were fixed and that when things change the maps would be out of date. This limits the use of paper maps and makes them quite inflexible.
- Local authorities generally preferred GIS layers over paper maps so that they could incorporate them with other spatial data that they have in their own GIS.

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- Industry, and NGOs generally, preferred to have access to a paper map as not everyone has access to a GIS.
- For many who didn't have access to GIS, the dissemination of the data through web GIS was deemed valuable. It was suggested this could be done alongside the borehole data index, that BGS hold, or through a Scottish Executive initiative.
- Seeing the data as layers within a GIS was thought to be really useful and the ability to hyperlink to textual information was well received.
- Comments were raised about the licensing of information. Paper maps could be provided at a very modest one-off cost, whereas digital data would incur an annual licence fee. To this end, paper maps would be more readily available to all.
- There was concern that there could be misuse of scale in the desktop GIS and this would need to be carefully thought out. It is possible in a desktop GIS to zoom in to 1:1 scale, but minerals information would be misrepresented at this scale.