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INTRODUCTION

This document comprises an Environmental Statement ('ES') and has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited ('SLR') on behalf of Breedon Trading Limited (trading as Welsh Slate). The ES forms part of a package of documents being formally submitted to Gwynedd Council (as Mineral Planning Authority, 'MPA') in support of two planning applications relating to land at Penrhyn Quarry, near Bethesda.

- 1.1 Breedon Trading Limited (hereafter referred to as 'the applicant') is submitting two planning applications for Penrhyn Quarry. The first (and main) planning application seeks a small lateral extension to the working area of the quarry at its south-western corner. Land associated with the proposed extension lies wholly within the boundary of the current planning permission. The second planning application seeks to amend the provisions of the extant planning permission in so far as it relates to the duration of extraction operations.
- 1.2 These proposals have been amended from those previously consulted on between 11 December 2020 and 22 January 2021 as part of the formal Pre-Application Consultation process. In this respect, the extent of the proposed extension has been reduced to 1.6 hectares (ha)¹ so that it lies on the inside of the drainage leat that bounds the quarry. In view of the reduced extension, and in the light of being able to sell more of the quarry waste, the requirements for additional tip capacity has reduced. Accordingly, it is no longer proposed to amend the tipping arrangements from those approved as part of the Review of Old Mineral Permissions under the Environment Act 1995 (permission ref. C16/1164/16/MW). This is also discussed further in Volume 3 to this submission (refer to paragraphs 1.5 and 1.8 below).
- 1.3 In view of the interrelated nature of the developments, and to ensure that the whole scheme is assessed, this ES addresses both planning applications. It should be noted that development within the quarry has recently been assessed as part of a Review of Old Mineral Permissions (the Planning History for the quarry is set out in Chapter 2 of this volume). Where relevant, this ES has had regard to the previous Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 1.4 This ES provides an objective account of the possible environmental effects of the proposed development by setting out the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') which has been undertaken. It is intended to provide the MPA with sufficient information to determine the planning application having due regard to the protection of the local amenity and the environment as a whole. The ES has been prepared in line with the framework provided in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(Wales) Regulations 2017 with cognisance given to the guidance set out in Circular 11/99: *Environmental Impact Assessment*² and The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's "*Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment*".

¹ The application site measures 2.3 ha and includes peripheral land that will not be worked.

² This circular refers to the 1999 version of the EIA Regulations

It also has regard to a scoping opinion issued by the MPA in March 2018 (see Chapter 4 of this volume).

Application Submission Package

- 1.5 This ES comprises the second of three volumes submitted to the MPA to accompany the planning submission. In addition to the formal planning application forms and certificates, the full submission comprises:
- Volume 1 - Planning Statement;
 - Volume 2 - Environmental Statement;
 - Volume 2A – Environmental Statement Text;
 - Volume 2B – Environmental Statement Technical Appendices; and
 - Volume 2C – A Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement.
 - Volume 3 – Pre-application Consultation Statement.
- 1.6 The Planning Statement supports the planning submission and considers the proposals in the context of relevant planning policies in the Development Plan, and other material considerations, such as national planning policy.
- 1.7 The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) has been produced as a separate, standalone document in line with best practice prescribed by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) to accompany the planning submission, being a mandatory part of the ES. The purpose of the NTS is to provide, in non-technical language, a brief summary of the likely significant effects that the proposed development would have on the environment.
- 1.8 Finally, the Pre-application Consultation (PAC) Statement describes the consultation that has been carried out by the applicant prior to making the planning application to fulfil the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(Wales)(Amendment) Order 2016 (the ‘Development Management Procedure Order’ or DMPO). This consultation is required for all planning applications for *inter alia* “major” development (be it in full our outline).

The Site

- 1.9 Penrhyn Quarry is located immediately to the south of the town of Bethesda, to the west of the A5(T). The settlements of Mynydd Llandegai, Bryn Eglwys, Coed y Parc and Braichmelyn form an arc to the north of the quarry, with the Afon Ogwen lying to the east and the mountains of the Glyder Ridge to the south.
- 1.10 Penrhyn Quarry itself extends over an area of some 318 hectares (ha), the majority of which has been disturbed to some degree by quarrying or associated activities. The main elements of Penrhyn Quarry are the old North Quarry (now worked out and flooded); the existing permitted working

area in the South Quarry; the slate waste tips; the processing area, aggregate processing plant and the administration offices. The northern and eastern limits of the quarry are covered in the main by a series of slate waste tips, many of which are very old and reflect the primary means of slate waste disposal in the nineteenth century. The more recent slate waste tips are located on the north-western limits of the quarry and within the current quarry working area (at its northern end).

- 1.11 The application site encompasses around 2.26 ha of land which is wholly within the area of planning permission ref. C12/0874/16/MW granted in December 2012³ (see Chapter 2 below). Not all of this area would form the proposed extension as margins to the north-western and south-western boundaries would be maintained; the extraction area would be around 1.6 ha in extent.
- 1.12 Chapter 2 within this Volume provides further information on the application site and its environs.

The Proposed Development

- 1.13 As noted above, the applicant is submitting two planning applications relating to its Penrhyn Quarry. The planning applications seek permission for:
- a ‘full’ planning application to extend the quarry working area into around 1.6 ha of land lying adjacent and contiguous with the current working area. The proposed extension would release around 0.25 Mt (million tonnes) of high quality (purple) roofing slate and 1.9 Mt of red and blue slate for decorative aggregates (nett). In common with the extant scheme the proposals also incorporate the associated stockpiling of soils and overburden, landscaping works and restoration of the workings to a range of habitats. Notably, the extension would be wholly within the confines of the area covered by planning permission C12/0874/16/MW (dated 18 December 2012) but out with the extraction limits shown on the approved plans attached to that permission.
 - an application under s.73 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to extend the duration of slate extraction operations by up to three years to allow the additional reserves to be worked.
- 1.14 The proposed extension would be worked in an identical fashion to the current workings, for which a comprehensive working scheme was approved in 2017 as part of a review under the Environment Act 1995 (the ‘ROMP review’ ref. C16/1164/16/MW). The extension would form a logical progression from the previous extension to the workings (planning permission ref. C12/0874/16/MW) expanding the workings along the north-western side.
- 1.15 Further details of the proposed development are set out in Chapter 3 below.

³ This permission has been the subject of a “Review of Old Mineral Permissions” under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 (ref. C16/1164/MW).

The Applicant

- 1.16 The planning application is being submitted by Breedon Trading Limited (trading as Welsh Slate). Following the acquisition of assets from the Lagan Group in 2018 Welsh Slate forms part of Breedon Trading Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Breedon Group.
- 1.17 Welsh Slate is the world’s leading manufacturer of high-quality slate for an unparalleled range of design-led applications.
- 1.18 The business in its current format was acquired from Alfred McAlpine in December 2007 who had since the 1960s expanded the business from its headquarters at Penrhyn Quarry to include operations at Blaenau Ffestiniog, and Cwt-y-Bugail. In July 2010 Welsh Slate Ltd acquired the assets of Omya’s slate mineral processing business at Blaenau Ffestiniog.
- 1.19 Today, Welsh Slate continues to operate in the same three locations, producing roofing slate, architectural products and aggregates.
- 1.20 The applicant strives for continual improvement in its environmental performance, its environmental policy commits to meeting and where possible, exceeding applicable legal requirements across its operations. As part of the applicant’s commitment to environmental performance Penrhyn Quarry operates an extensive environmental management system that is accredited to ISO 14001.
- 1.21 Further information on the applicant can be found on its corporate web site at:

<http://www.welshslate.com/>

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 1.22 Environmental Impact Assessment (‘EIA’) is an important procedure for ensuring that the likely effects of a new development on the environment are fully understood and taken into account before the development is allowed to proceed. The term EIA describes a procedure that must be followed for certain types of development before they are given “*development consent*”, which in the UK includes the grant of a planning permission. The procedure is a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project’s likely significant environmental effects.
- 1.23 An ES is a report of an EIA that is required to be submitted with a planning application for major and other developments that are likely to have significant impacts on the environment. It evaluates the likely environmental impacts of the development, together with an assessment of how the severity of the impacts could be reduced.
- 1.24 Chapter 4 within this volume provides further information on the legislative requirements regarding EIA and in particular, how the scope of the EIA has been derived.

THE SUBMISSION AND ITS STRUCTURE

- 1.25 The first chapter of this ES provides an overview of the submission. Subsequent chapters of the ES provide a description of the application site; set out its planning history; describe the development proposals and alternatives considered; set out the regulatory framework relating to EIA; set out the planning policy considerations relevant to the EIA; and then provide individual and cumulative analysis and evaluation of the likely significant effects of the development on the human and natural environment. Where potential environmental effects are identified, mitigation strategies are secured against the impact and residual effects are assessed. As such, the ES is intended to provide the MPA with sufficient information to determine the planning application having due regard to the protection of local amenity and the environment as a whole.
- 1.26 This document is organised and presented in the following way:

Background Information (Chapters 1 - 5) – This part of the ES is descriptive in nature. It provides the reader with an overview of the application site and its surrounding environs alongside a description of the development for which planning permission is being sought, including any alternatives to the proposed development that have been considered as part of the EIA. It also provides an overview of the legislative requirements relating to EIA. Finally, the relevant planning policies at both a local and national level are outlined.

Environmental Assessments (Chapters 6 - 15) – For each environmental topic, a package of relevant background information and data is provided, and the potential effects are considered. Where appropriate, mitigation measures are suggested and any residual effects are considered. Taking into consideration the results of the scoping exercise, the following environmental assessments have been undertaken;

- Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual
- Chapter 7 – Ecology
- Chapter 8 – Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 9 – Water Environment
- Chapter 10 – Noise
- Chapter 11 – Air Quality
- Chapter 12 – Vibration
- Chapter 13 – Wellbeing
- Chapter 14 – Cumulative Effects

Project Team

- 1.27 SLR is a multi-disciplinary environmental consultancy to *inter alia* the minerals, energy and waste management industries, and also provides advice to local authorities and the Environment Agency on strategic issues. SLR is a registered Environmental Impact Assessor Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and has secured the EIA Quality Mark awarded by IEMA.
- 1.28 In preparing this submission package, SLR has drawn upon the expertise of an in-house team of specialists comprising planners, landscape architects and environmental scientists for the technical assessments. SLR has also worked with the following experts:
- Andrew Josephs Associates in connection with the assessment on archaeology and cultural heritage;
 - GWP Consultants LLP in relation to geology and geotechnical considerations; and
 - Envireau Water Limited in relation to the assessment on the water environment (the collective term for the hydrological and hydrogeological assessments).
- 1.29 Throughout the EIA process SLR has worked with the management teams and technical staff of Breendon Trading Limited, as part of an iterative process, to ensure that the proposed development is practical, feasible and optimises environmental protection.

Publication

- 1.30 Paper copies of the ES can be obtained from SLR Consulting Ltd at the following address so long as stocks are available:
- 15 Middle Pavement
Nottingham
NG1 7DX
- 1.31 The ES, along with the other Volumes which comprise the planning submission, are available in both paper and CD-ROM format, for which charges of £300 and £25 are applicable respectively⁴. A copy of the NTS is available free of charge on request subject to the provision of a valid email address. In addition, the application documents will be available to download from the Gwynedd Council website.

STATEMENT OF COMPETENCE

- 1.32 The EIA Regulations introduces a new requirement for the ES to “*be prepared by persons who in the opinion of the relevant planning authority or the Welsh Ministers, as appropriate, have sufficient*

⁴ A hard copy of the ES can be purchased on its own for a fee of £250 whilst stocks last.

expertise to ensure the completeness and quality of the statement”, with the environmental statement to be “accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant experience and qualifications of such experts” [refer to Regulation 17 (4) (a) and (b)].

1.33 The EIA Report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd which has a specialist capability in mineral and waste planning. SLR is a member of the ‘Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment’ (IEMA) with an awarded EIA ‘Quality Mark’. The EIA Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, operated by IEMA through which EIA activity is independently reviewed, on an annual basis, to ensure it delivers excellence in the following areas:

- EIA Management
- EIA Team Capabilities
- EIA Regulatory Compliance
- EIA Context & Influence
- EIA Content
- EIA Presentation
- Improving EIA practice