August 2021

Deep Creek Quarry Project

Questions - online information sessions

Who is Ironstone Developments?

Ironstone Developments Pty Ltd is a locally owned family company, whose owners have a long history in quarrying and civil construction works in the Hunter region (through Woodbury Civil Pty Limited).

What's the structure of the company?

The proponent for the Deep Creek Quarry project is Ironstone Developments Pty Ltd. Ironstone Developments is owned by Mark Woodbury.

Where is the access road to the quarry?

Stakeholders highlighted concerns about using Forest Glen Road and Deep Creek Road as the haul road. Based on this feedback, the project team investigated alternatives and secured an agreement to create a new private access road, directly from The Bucketts Way to the quarry. The access road will be approximately 1.6 km north of the Forest Glen Road intersection.

It will be a two-lane sealed access road, with a new intersection to be constructed on The Bucketts Way which will include acceleration and deceleration lanes.

What impacts will there be on The Bucketts Way?

A Traffic Impact Assessment has been completed to review the potential impacts of the quarry operation on The Bucketts Way. This assessment used vehicle traffic data from 21 February 2019. An accredited road safety auditor has completed a road safety audit of the existing conditions of the Limeburners Creek Bridge, The Bucketts Way, the Pacific Highway intersection, and consideration of the proposed new intersection onto The Bucketts Way.

Can the Limeburners Creek Bridge cater to the extra number of trucks needed to service the quarry?

Yes. A Road Safety Auditor has reviewed the bridge and determined that it does meet the standard requirements, though noted minor maintenance of existing bridge delineation was required. The results of this audit have been supplied to Mid Coast Council.

What is the timeline for construction on the haul road and the associated road works of The Bucketts Way?

It is expected that progressive construction of the road and intersection will take approximately 12 weeks, pending weather.

When was the survey done on The Bucketts Way?

Traffic counts on The Bucketts Way were completed on 21 February 2019.

What are the expected truck movements per day?

At peak operation there will be an average of 55 laden trucks per day leaving the site. There will be a further 10 light vehicles and 6 other vehicles for deliveries, visitors, and services that access and leave the site each day.

How will the project manage truck movements and speed?

All drivers will go through a driver safety induction and Driver Code of Conduct that encourages safe driving practices. All drivers will be required to undertake the induction before coming onsite or on their first site arrival. This will specify the expected safe driving behaviours both within the site and when on public roads. The induction and code of conduct will include, but will not be limited to:

- speed management
- avoiding excessive throttle use
- avoiding the use of exhaust brakes near dwellings
- quarry opening times
- being aware that animals will be crossing the road.

If a driver does not adhere to the Code of Conduct, they will be suspended from undertaking further haulage from the quarry.

What would be the landscaping arrangements along the haul road?

A mix of native trees and shrubs will be positioned along portions of the haul road to improve visual screening from adjoining property. In some locations, where feasible, the vegetation will be planted into an earthen bund intended to reduce noise and increase the visual screening effect.

How would complaints be managed through the operation of the quarry?

As part of ongoing community liaison, the quarry will be required to have a complaints management system. This will include a phone number for community inquiries and complaints. All complaints will be required to be recorded on the quarry's website and reported to DPIE within each annual review. If the quarry is approved, it is expected that a Community Liaison Group will be formed. This group would meet on a regular basis to keep the communication open between the quarry and the community and ensure that the quarry is operating in line with its commitments.

Will there be any compensation?

Any conversations about compensation will be held directly with those stakeholders. This project will be subject to the requirements of the Voluntary Land Acquisition Policy. This includes compensation through to voluntary property acquisition if criteria are exceeded.

How would dust be managed?

If approved, an Air Quality Management Plan will be put in place to help meet the strict environmental conditions that are likely to be placed on the operation. Minmising dust has been a priority through the design of the quarry. This includes positioning the quarry below the ridgeline, sealing the main access road, and crushing to take place on the quarry floor. The air quality management plan is likely to include:

- setting limits to the speed of vehicles travelling on access roads
- dampening internal unsealed roads with water carts and using water sprays on the crushing plant during production
- keeping quarry stockpiles as low as possible
- avoiding high dust generating activities such as crushing, blasting, or even driving on unsealed roads during dry weather with high winds
- when working in exposed areas, dust suppression measures and monitoring will be in place to ensure that dust emissions are maintained within acceptable specified levels
- a program to monitor the dust levels surrounding the quarry operations to ensure emissions meet regulatory requirements. Regulatory requirements and criteria for air quality are set by DPIE.

Do the quarry developers have enough financial backing?

There are several measures to make sure the quarry has adequate financial backing to develop the project effectively and is included in the conditions of approval. The quarry must operate to the conditions of approval, if it cannot meet the conditions of approval, regulatory authorities can close the quarry down.

Prior to commencing the project, a rehabilitation bond will be submitted to the government. The bond is calculated by an approved quantity surveyor and normally covers the costs needed to rehabilitate the first three years of the quarry disturbance. This is then reviewed and updated as the quarry continues. Failure of the company, or closure due to lack of compliance with conditions, would allow the rehabilitation bond to be used by DPIE.

What's the economic benefit for the Lower Hunter?

For a small operation, the quarry will have a positive economic impact on the surrounding area. Through construction, approximately $5.8 million will be injected into the catchment. During operations, the project is estimated to generate $7.6 million per year, creating 10 full-time equivalent jobs through the expected life of the quarry of up to 30 years. As the project is in the early stages of seeking approval, there are no plans to fill these positions currently. Employment will be based on experience and the ability to fill the role.

What area was included in the economic assessment?

The study area used in the economic assessment is defined as the aggregation of the Statistical Analysis Areas of Great Lakes (the project is located within the Mid Coast Local Government Area), Taree-Gloucester, Lower Hunter, Port Stephens, Maitland, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie – East, Lake Macquarie – West. This catchment was chosen as it encompasses the project location as well as the key source markets for goods and labour that are represented by a 100-kilometre radius.

What are the environmental impacts?

The environmental studies show that the project can operate within the expected guidelines and health and amenity criteria for surrounding dwellings. As part of the Environmental Impact Statement, extensive surveys have been done to identify the different animals and plants found on the site and understand the potential impacts on them by the proposed quarry. No serious and irreversible impacts, as defined within the legislation, have been identified. The full studies for each of those listed in the presentation will be available on the DPIE website once it is lodged.

How will noise be managed?

The noise assessment shows the project will be able to operate in compliance with the guidelines. Care has been taken to design the quarry and consider its extraction methods to reduce impacts from noise and vibration on surrounding properties. The hillside will be progressively extracted, using the ridgeline to shield potential noise from surrounding properties. Crushing of the rock will occur on the floor of quarry to again minimise noise.

In line with strict planning requirements, an acoustic engineer has assessed the potential noise from the proposed quarry. Noise levels will be monitored during construction and operations to measure actual noise levels against the required noise criteria, with compliance monitored by DPIE and the EPA. Minimising noise impacts will be an ongoing part of the operation, and where needed, may include additional shielding or restrictions during certain weather conditions.

How will the vibration from blasting affect homes in the area?

The quarry will use approximately two blasts per month along with excavators and dump trucks to excavate the rock from the hillside. Strict measures will be put in place to manage any blasting activity and specialist contractors will be used to undertake the work as required. Blast design will be an interactive process that ensures the geology of the site and surrounding area is considered to avoid blast-related impacts on surrounding properties. A vibration monitor will be used for each blast to assess the vibration levels at the closest dwelling surrounding the quarry.

A Blast Management Plan will contain measures to avoid or minimise any potential effects from the operation. Vibration assessments have concluded that there is no risk to any private dwelling or public infrastructure from blast vibration. It is unlikely that any dwelling will be impacted. However, in the unlikely event that there is, DPIE routinely require independent assessments, and rectification of any identified blast impacts at full cost to Quarry operator.

Will the community receive notifications about noise impacts, such as crushing and blasting?

Interested neighbouring property owners and/or residents on a list for the Quarry Manager to notify by phone or email prior to a scheduled blast. The notification would advise the day, date, and time of the blast.

Will there be an impact on koala habitat?

Extensive surveys have been done to identify the different animals and plants found on the site and understand the potential impacts on them by the proposed quarry. This includes koalas.

The assessment determined that the quarry will impact on 29.02 hectares of koala habitat (within the 308 ha property). There will be specific management measures during construction and operations in addition to the retirement of 736 Koala species credits to offset quarry impacts. Measures are likely to include pre-clearing surveys, supervised clearing, vehicle speed management and inductions for all staff, truck drivers and contractors. Offsets will include both long term protection of adjacent quarry-owned land and purchase of offset credits from the local area. The assessment concluded that the impacts are manageable and will not result in serious or irreversible impacts on Koalas.

Will there be an visual impacts?

The visual impact assessment shows the quarry would not be visible from any residence and will be completely shielded by the surrounding vegetated ridgelines. There are some visual impacts from the new road to The Bucketts Way.

How will the silica dust be managed during the quarry's construction and operation?

The quarry manager will be responsible for ensuring that the silica dust levels are in line with the WHS regulations. The mandatory limit for silica dust exposure in Australia is 0.05mg/m3 averaged over an eight-hour day (except in Tasmania where it is 0.1mg/m3). Under WHS regulations, employers must provide health monitoring for workers if they carry out ongoing work using, handling, generating, and storing crystalline silica. The quarry will also have a duty to ensure the workplace exposure standard for crystalline silica is not exceeded and to provide health monitoring air monitoring to workers.

Are there any plans for further expansions to the quarry for the future?

There are no current plans to expand the footprint of the proposed Deep Creek Quarry.

Who monitors the tonnage of product extracted over quarry life?

The NSW EPA and the NSW DPIE monitor the extraction levels from the quarry. As the proposal is seeking to extract 500,000 tonnes of hard rock products per annum, the operators need to apply for an Environmental Protection Licence (EPL) issued by the NSW EPA. An annual extraction limit will be a condition of any approval issued by DPIE. Annual reports regarding the quarries production are provided to DPIE and the EPA and are available on the website for public access. Breaches of EPL licence conditions or the conditions of consent are subject to regulatory disciplinary actions. Disciplinary actions can vary from improvement programs, fines, and enforceable undertakings, through to suspension of the EPL and right to operate the quarry.