

WASTE HIERARCHY

The waste hierarchy set out by national and European legislation requires that the following priority apply in the development and implementation of waste management policy:

- (i) prevention
- (ii) re-use / preparation for re-use
- (iii) recycling
- (iv) recovery
- (v) disposal.

The proposed waste recovery facility at Usk provides for recovery of excavated inert, uncontaminated soil and stone waste through backfilling and restoration of the worked out pit.

Recovery is defined in the Waste Framework Directive as *'any operation, the principal result of which, is waste serving a useful purpose by replacing materials which would otherwise have been used to fulfil a particular function, or waste being prepared to fulfil that function, in the plant or in the wider economy'*.

The inert soil waste imported to the proposed waste recovery facility at Usk will be generated by construction activities at construction / development sites or by utilities installation / maintenance works. Given that excavation and handling of such materials incurs a cost, it can be implicitly assumed that engineering designers and/or works contractors will avoid or minimise, insofar as possible, the volume of excess soil material excavated in order to execute the planned development or maintenance works.

It can also be implicitly assumed that excess excavated soil material will only be exported off-site where it is not possible to re-use it within the development site or to backfill temporary excavations.

Where soil waste is inert, it can be re-used at off-site locations for practical and beneficial purposes without the need for treatment, processing or other form of recycling.

It is therefore evident that where excess inert soil is generated by development or utilities related works and requires to be exported off site, the highest tier activity on the waste hierarchy to which it may be assigned is a waste recovery activity.

The backfilling and restoration of the former, now exhausted, sand and gravel pit at Usk to former ground levels using inert waste soils will

- facilitate its long-term restoration to a grassland / natural habitat, similar to that which existed prior to sand and gravel extraction;
- better integrate the site into the surrounding natural landscape and will improve the overall visual quality and coherence of the surrounding rural landscape;
- provide for better protection of the underlying groundwater resource, which is currently assessed as vulnerable due to the absence of any protective soil cover.

In so doing, it will achieve a desirable outcome which would not otherwise be possible or would require extensive use of other natural soil resources.