

Train takes the strain as huge aggregate haul avoids village roads

LLWR has completed the importation of a mammoth 42,000 tonnes of aggregate material for its Repository Development Programme (RDP), without a single stone chipping passing through nearby Drigg village by road.

Deliveries were made by rail and the operation was judged such a success that Sellafield are studying it to see if they can learn from the process.

Lisa O'Neil, LLWR Project Engineer, said: "Members of the Sellafield rail infrastructure team reached out to us as they are looking to install some new rail infrastructure to support large upcoming projects, one of which is an opportunity for LLWR to take acceptable material for use in RDP.

"They want to look at our operations to see if they can take any learning from it. It's good to share what we are doing well."

Sellafield have been sent video, photos and even drone footage of the operation, which was managed by Graham Construction, utilising West Cumbrian groundwork sub contractor Phillip Carruthers Ltd, who supplied local labour and plant.

The spoil material is being stockpiled on the LLWR site for ongoing use in construction of a haul road to the RDP workface. The first phase of RDP will lead to the construction of an engineered cap over Vault 8 and adjacent trenches, and subject to regulatory agreement, clean spoil material stored at Sellafield could be utilised in the Programme.

"The completion of deliveries is a really good milestone for us. It was crucial to the rest of our minor civils work scope that we got these deliveries in, so we can complete enabling works, taking us to October 2021," Lisa added.

"Using rail means we've kept 2,100 wagons off village roads, equating to 4,200 trips in and out of our site. We are working closely with the local community."

Only one delivery was completed before lockdown led to their suspension until mid summer, when a limited return to work was possible, under social distancing guidelines.

When similar rail deliveries were made to site in 2018, also via Graham Construction, train turnaround time was around 8 hours. However, Learning from Experience (LfE) during the latest delivery schedule saw this halved.

Paul Burns, Works Manager for enabling works contractor Graham Construction, said of the delivery operation: "It was a real success. We did 10 weeks of offloading with no accidents, incidents or breakdowns."