



Mr William Powell AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

8th November 2012

Your ref: P-04-417

cc: Richard Leonard, Environment Manager, Tata Steel

Dear Mr Powell,

Petition with respect to Public Access to Morfa Beach

I am writing in acknowledgement of your notice to us that the Petitions Committee has received a petition concerning access to Morfa Beach. We will be very pleased to offer the clarity you require and would be willing to meet members of the Committee to answer your questions.

You will be aware that Morfa Beach, between the mouth of the River Kenfig and the Port Talbot deep-water harbour, is private land. It forms part of Tata Steel's Port Talbot steelworks. While a public beach exists south of the Kenfig, the area in question is privately owned and there are no public rights of way of any kind on this beach. Visitors to the beach have entered with the tacit permission of the Company (in its existing or previous forms) and this does not affect our rights and obligations as private landowners.

The issues of the potential closure of Footpaths 92/93 and the request for access to the private Morfa Beach are not connected. The first has been mooted in order to provide a suitable new section (Footpath 94) to meet the needs of the Wales National Coastal Path (WNCP). This process has been led by the Welsh Government and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, and, as you may be aware, is subject to the deliberations of the Planning Inspectorate (PI). It is important to note that should the PI uphold objections to the closure of 92/93, it does not affect the matter of access to the private Morfa Beach.

Consequently, by arrangement with the local authority, the footpaths mentioned in the petition do not enter Morfa Beach area. Walkers are directed from the end of Longlands Lane on Footpath 92 to a point that takes them parallel to the beach on Footpath 93. This takes them to the public beach. The proposed Footpath 94 minimises the hazard of the existing footpaths' route over land that is part of a hazardous industrial landfill site. In addition it has the potential for further development as an amenity if the community wishes it.

Port Talbot steelworks is a major industrial site. This includes complex and hazardous operations and movement of materials using large and hazardous vehicles and conveyors. Health and safety is our priority and Morfa Beach is subject to the same standards as any other part of the steelworks site. We

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are supervised under the statutory Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Tier 1 Regulations, which have been in existence since 1999. To comply with these, we have to ensure that all visitors to the steelworks site are formally recorded, they are appropriately inducted and supervised, and finally, their exit is also recorded. The Welsh Government's former Deputy First Minister, Ieuan Wyn Jones opened the COMAH compliant visitor centre in 2008, and, owing to the Perimeter Distributor Road (PDR) development, you may be aware that a new £4 million visitor/training centre is currently being completed. It is essential to invest so many resources into the site in order to ensure the health, safety and security of all visitors to the site, however there would be significant flaws in our system if any parts of the steelworks affected by the COMAH regulations are not subject to these arrangements.

We are most conscientious about meeting our obligations to the local community with respect to health, safety and environmental care, and we have worked in partnership with the Welsh Government and the local authority with respect to finding positive solutions for the PDR and the WNC. With respect to the matter of public access to private land on which hazardous industrial operations are managed, we feel that we must place our responsibilities regarding health and safety first.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Dangerfield', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Robert Dangerfield
External Communications for Tata Steel in Wales