

Save Tong Valley . Org

Report

Mining

The Tong and Fulneck Valley was rich in Coal and the minerals Ironstone and Fireclay. The area is no longer mined but there are mine shafts and bell pits dotted about all over the valley. Networks of mine tunnels extend under the whole valley and they were not infilled. The tunnels were not shored up to modern standards and as such, they are prone to collapse; a 'crown hole' (a hole in the ground created by a mine tunnel collapsing and the material above falling into it) opened up on Tong Street only a few years ago; this caused much disruption and required tonnes of concrete to be poured into the hole, to stabilise the ground. Crown holes such as this have opened up in the area (including Cockersdale) for decades, which just goes to show the seriousness of the situation.

- Insert newspaper article on the crown hole from the T&A, if we can gain their consent -
- Was there any coverage of this on 'Look North' or 'Calendar'? If so, we could also insert a video file. Again, only if we have their consent -

The Tong and Fulneck Valley is used for agriculture and as pasture for animals, which places relatively light loads upon the ground. However, if it was to turn into a giant construction site, it would be trafficked by heavy construction vehicles (some weighing several tonnes). The sheer weight of the vehicles would place stresses on the ground such that the mine tunnels could collapse, creating crown hole conditions; this would also put the construction workers at great personal risk.

Even heavier than construction vehicles would be the weight of buildings constructed on the ground; the potential for the ground to collapse under a whole housing estate would be significant. Even subsidence (that was on a smaller scale than a crown hole) from the collapse of mine workings would cause structural damage. There could therefore be much financial and personal loss from such an event; it might be difficult or at least very expensive for residents to obtain building insurance, and there are some things that no amount of insurance can replace.

The cost of remediating the ground under the whole of the valley, i.e. pouring tonnes of concrete into the ground to fill in the mining tunnels, would be prohibitive; it would almost be quite literally 'throwing money into a bottomless pit'. It is not an exact science and it is also likely that the grouting works would miss some of the mining tunnels.

Aquifers

There are several large aquifers under the Tong and Fulneck Valley. Aquifers are akin to underground reservoirs and can hold millions of cubic metres of water; the geology is such that the types of rock present are permeable to water. Therefore, there are high water tables across the valley; there are natural springs dotted about all over, which have formed where the water tables meet the ground surface on sloping terrain.

Building on an area where there is a high water table is difficult at the best of times and requires the ground to be constantly dewatered. The notion of somehow installing some system of piping to drain the water from the aquifers would be an expensive measure, not least because it would actually have to be pumped out from the valley. Again, the cost of remediating the ground under the whole of the valley in this way might also prove to be prohibitive.

There is ample brownfield land elsewhere in Bradford, some of which is nearer the City Centre, which would be much more cost – effective to remediate for construction use.