

**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
15 December 2021
Whatley Quarry –via Microsoft Teams**

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Philip Ham (PC) Councillor Somerset County Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
- Ian Strachan (IS) Hanson Aggregates Strategic Development Manager
- Justin Collis (JC) Hanson Aggregates Area Operations Manager
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Hanson UK Consenting and Development Manager
- Andy Duncan Hanson UK Principal Landscape Manager
- Alan Townsend (AT) Coleford Parish Council
- Alison Barkshire (AB) Mendip District Council for Ammerdown
- Andrew Bramstone (ABR) Chantry resident
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Colin Arnold Principal Planning Officer,
- David Mattick (DM) Leigh-on-Mendip Parish Council
- Francis Hayden (FH) Mendip District Council, Cranmore Doulting and Nunney
- John Henderson (JH) Mells Parish Council
- Martin Payne Chantry and Mells Parish Council
- Martyn Ford Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers), Somerset County Council

- Paul Hooper (PHO) Downhead Parish Council
- Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm resident (part)
- Samantha Stagg (SS) Communications for Hanson UK
- Will Palmer (WP) Whatley Resident

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Justin Collis (JC) Hanson Aggregates Area Operations Manager
- Lisa Ramsay (LR) Nunney Parish Council
- Nienke Pengelly NP Wood plc
- Steven Morton Hanson UK Marketing and Communications Manager
- Simon Stonehouse Natural England
- Lila Morris Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines Avon and Somerset Police
- Jason Black Mendip Rail Ltd

AGENDA

1. Introduction – Chair Philip Ham
 - Welcome and Chair introductions
 - Review of minutes from last meeting

- Matters arising from last minutes
2. Whatley update – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Operational overview
 - Logistics (including road and rail)
 - Feedback
 - Investment and mitigation measures
 - Blasting
 - Environmental – including update on ash dieback from Hanson UK, principal landscape manager Andy Duncan
 3. Other sites and community update – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Westdown
 - Community giving update
 4. Noise monitoring survey and next steps – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 5. Planning update: Whatley and Westdown – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Hanson UK
 6. AOBs
 - Email communication
 - ROMP
 7. Date of next meeting

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome:

- Philip Ham (PH) welcomed attendees and asked for apologies received to be provided to the group.

Review of previous minutes:

- PH asked the Group to validate the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and reflective account. This was agreed and the minutes accepted by the group.
- Will Palmer (WP) advised PH that he had yet to receive a response to his direct email/s to PH. PH confirmed he had responded. WP asked PH to resend the email.
Action PH

Actions from previous meeting:

Ian Strachan (IS) provided feedback on outstanding actions from the previous meeting:

- CA to confirm Somerset County Council (SCC) approach re Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP) process and whether local people will be consulted – *uncompleted action from October meeting.*
- Post signed copy of terms of reference to liaison group page of website – *complete.*
- Provide further update on noise study – *agenda item for today's meeting.*
- Hanson to provide update on revisiting biodiversity action plan – including impact of Ash dieback – *agenda item for today's meeting*
- Hanson to follow up with SCC re condition of road outside quarry – *complete. Hanson has written to Paula Hewitt Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure and a meeting between IS and Alyn Jones, SSC Director of Economic & Community Infrastructure Operations scheduled for January. Comment was made that the council is aware of the issue and action is planned.*
- HGVs/ Waterlip – Hanson team to follow up internally with its transport team – *complete.*
- WP to email to ask TM for clarification on ROMP situation – *complete. Plus, agenda item for today's meeting.*
- Provide AC with HGVs volumes for Hinkley-related community funding application – *complete*

Points raised:

- Colin Arnold (CA) advised that SCC would carry out public consultation as part of the ROMP.
- WP advised he had received conflicting information with regards to the progress of the ROMP and wanted to better understand which party – SCC or Hanson – was responsible for the next steps.
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) set out the steps pertaining to the ROMP, including the timescales required for the requested updated environmental studies – as detailed in the minutes of the last meeting.
- TM also outlined that Hanson, following liaison with the appropriate parties within SCC, was now in the process of developing a revised Scoping Report for review by SCC. This is expected to be completed by the end of January and will detail proposals for the updated environmental studies to be carried out as part of the process.
- Richard King (RK) asked what the likely timing was for the completion of the whole ROMP process.

- TM responded that Hanson hoped to have the revised ROMP submitted as soon as possible and expected that, it should be able to complete the necessary environmental surveys in 9-12 months following receipt of SCC's Scoping opinion to update the still unapproved scheme.
- There followed a general discussion about the changes to SCC's structure planned for 2022 and what impact the switch to Unitary Authority status may have on the council and on the progress of the ROMP.

2. Whatley quarry update

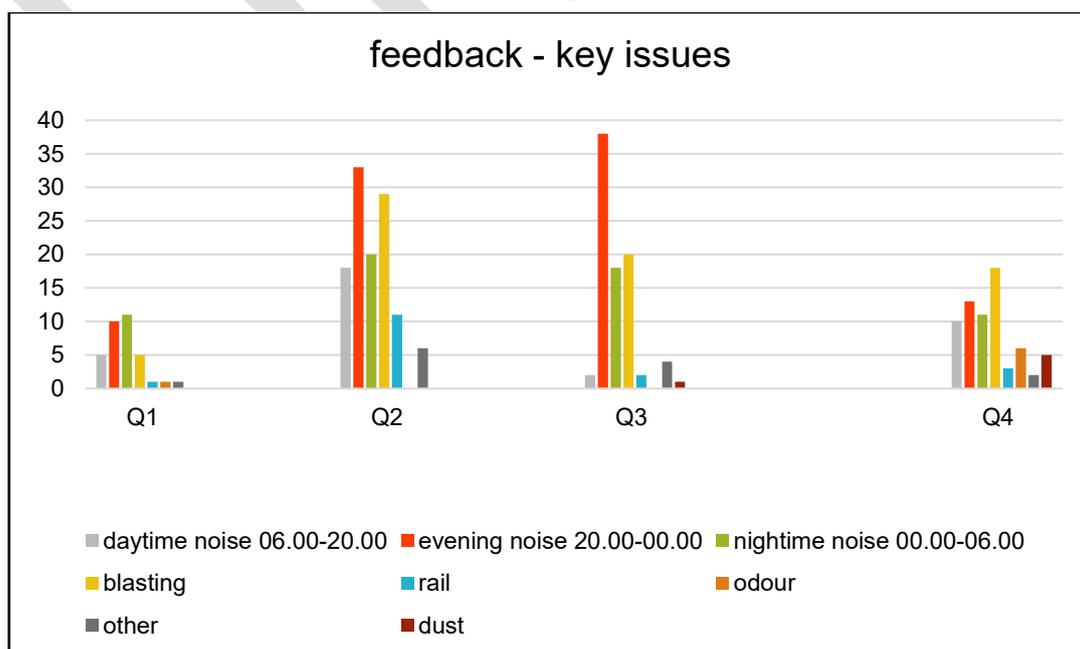
IS provided an update:

Operational overview

- Volumes YTD on target.
- Currently x2 team members out with Covid-19.
- Runner-up for Mineral Products Association (MPA) and British Precast H&S innovation.
- Extended Christmas shut down – from midnight on Friday 17th December to 05.00 on Tuesday 4th January (safety stand down day). Some maintenance work taking place during this time.
- Lighting on site to be reduced to that required for Health and Safety reasons and to support maintenance program.

Feedback

IS provided information on feedback, including complaints, received at Whatley.



- WP asked how this compared to last year.
- PH asked if the levels of feedback was seasonal.
- IS advised that comprehensive analysis of feedback/topics had not been in place prior to 2021 but that Hanson would see what level of information it had on file.
Action: Hanson to provide information on levels of feedback received prior to 2021.
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) said that there were still lots of complaints that he was aware of pertaining to blasting and that the quarry's new self-imposed lower blasting levels (re Peak Particle Velocity, PPV) was not alleviating the impact of blasts experienced by the residents of Chantry.
- IS advised that analysis by Hanson indicates that there is no obvious correlation between blast PPV and complaints received. He agreed that he would speak to ABR following the meeting re setting up further monitoring within Chantry at set distances from the quarry. *Action: Hanson to set up additional blast monitoring stations in Chantry.*
- Martin Payne (MP) commented that blasting and the impact of blasting remained a major concern for him and local residents.
- WP advised that people were reluctant to complain to Hanson as it was felt that the responses were 'cut and paste' in approach.
- IS advised that if people don't inform the quarry of their concerns the quarry can't investigate and take appropriate action.
- TM added that Hanson welcomes the engagement, with all feedback received responded to. In addition, Hanson appreciates the feedback it also receives via the liaison group – which has been expanded in 2021 to be a more effective conduit of communication between Hanson and local communities with the desired outcome to ensure a more consistent approach and form of communicating with the host communities.

Investment programme

IS provided an update on Hanson's investment programme at Whatley which will provide further mitigation of the quarry's activities:

Upgrades and mitigation measures – Steps completed re £10 million investment programme:

- Upgrades to roller drums and LED lighting.
- Repairs and maintenance to cladding on buildings.
- Crash points changed to ceramic linings (where material falls from a conveyor belt to the next in line.)
- Reception hopper being left always one quart full to prevent full height fall of material being tipped from the dumper.

- Head drums on conveyor belt lagged to prevent possible slip and squeal – ongoing.
- Older Hitachi rigid dump trucks swapped to newer Komatsu models.
- One of three extractor fans turned off.
- Hanson has also suspended excavation/working the primary at weekends since the *middle of May* and this continues.
- Plus, since July, Hanson continues to trial the cessation of quarry extraction, wherever feasible, including at the primary hopper, between 00.00 – and 06.00.

Next steps:

- New liners for existing trucks being installed from December 13th
- First new 777 trucks arrive December 21st with others to follow.
- x2 fan silencers being installed to the processing plant over the Christmas break
- x75 new KEA rail wagons – delivery from April.

Further mitigation measures in response to feedback

- Haulier drivers – communication with all HGV drivers on reiterating Hanson's protocols, including need to avoid routes through the villages of Mells and Waterlip, unless for access.
 - Looking to instigate spot HGV monitoring in the new year – at other sites this has helped reinforce driver behaviour and in some instances has led to 'repeat offenders' being banned from site.
 - Liaison with asphalt team, MPA and bitumen industry contacts re possible causes of odour.
 - Reconfiguration of KEA wagons wherever possible and liaison with ORR re night-time horn requirement.
 - Increased road sweeping. Investment in new wheel washing system.
 - CCTV and parking 'inhibitors' installed at Westdown to prevent anti-social behaviour.
- IS advised that the new truck liners are expected to have a significant role in reducing noise.

- IS advised that the older KEA wagons are being withdrawn from service in April 2022.
- IS advised that from all trucks leaving Whatley are required to travel through a wheel wash and that Hanson is reinforcing its messages to HGV drivers on this. In addition, the installation of a new wheel wash is planned for 2022.
- IS advised that all hauliers had been advised to avoid using the rat runs and stick to the SCC freight designated routes. He asked for feedback of any offenders so that action could be taken. He also advised that Hanson would be doing its own monitoring.
- AC advised that she was aware that hauliers were still using Waterlip as a rat run.
- Martyn Ford (MF) asked how Hanson was responding to the findings of its noise survey and what it was doing right now to mitigate noise.
- TM advised that the findings of recent noise studies had been shared with local residents whose properties had participated in the survey carried out last Spring. The findings were now being used as useful baseline information for further studies which will allow for sense checking against mitigation measures. Scoping details re future noise studies were being shared with SCC to ensure a consistent approach.
- TM added that Hanson also would like to pursue further dialogue with SCC re monitoring with a view to Hanson voluntarily bringing its monitoring regime up to modern standards and had also written to MF to that effect. A meeting is to be held early in the new year between Hanson and SCC in order to discuss both topics to help address matters wherever possible.

Blasting

IS provided a recap on steps taken at Whatley to mitigate the impact of blasting:

- Blasting mobile phone notification alerts – commenced w/c 8th November. Residents living within 1.5km from Whatley can sign up.
- Continue to trial blasts to voluntary Peak Particle velocity (PPV) of 4.5mm/s on south face wherever possible. (The permitted levels for vibration as a result of quarry blasts are: PPV of 9 mm/s with a 95% confidence, and/or 12 mm/s with 99.9% confidence at any time.)
- x13 blasts between 1/11- 3/12. PPV recorded for x12 blasts below 3.6mm/s, with x1 blast registering 4.7mm/s at monitoring location.

IS advised that Hanson's specialist blasting contractor was still unsure as to why complaints were still being received at such low level of blasts and analysis was continuing.

- Paul Hopper (PHO) Advised that, due to mobile phone signals being poor in Downhead, a Whatsapp notification would be more useful. *Action: Hanson to investigate*
- ABR and WP asked to be added to the notification service.

- PH asked if Hanson could provide details on blast levels at the next meeting. *Action Hanson to provide information.*

Environmental plus

3: Other sites update

Andy Duncan (AD), Hanson Principal Landscape Manager set out the context for Ash dieback disease (ADB) in the UK, with information based on a presentation prepared and delivered initially by First Ecology:

- 17 million ash trees in the UK
- 85-90% will likely die
- Only 5% of Ash population has resistance, 1% has a heritable resistance
- Six times greater than the Dutch elm disease outbreak of the 1960s and 70s
- Almost 1,000 species are known to be associated with ash trees in the UK alone: 12 birds, 28 mammals, 58 bryophytes, 68 fungi, 239 invertebrates and 548 lichens.
- Lots of guidance on-line from Forestry Commission, gov.uk and Tree Council etc.

AD explained that locally, signs of the disease first appeared in 2016 and by 2021 there were increasing numbers of areas and trees at advanced stages of ADB. The disease makes trees sensitive to secondary infections as well as making the timber very brittle – which impacts on the ways in which they can be managed without posing a safety risk to tree surgeons.

AD outlined case law also impacting on the way in which landowners must address the issue of ADB. He set out that Hanson is outsourcing the management of its trees to specialists, such as First Ecology and is unapologetic in taking a safety- first approach.

AD provided an update on ADB-related work at Hanson sites in the East Mendips:

- Vallis Vale
First Ecology survey 300+ marked
Ecological Assessment esp. re bats
Methodology, restocking etc
- Whatley
Pryor&Rickett survey underway
- Asham Wood
P&R survey underway
FC/NE management plan update taking into account ADB and regeneration

He advised that Hanson is working at Asham Wood to balance the demands of maintaining/protecting a SSSI and safety concerns. It is liaising closely with Natural England and the Forestry Commission and is seeking the necessary felling licence.

While works are being carried out across all sites there may be a need to temporarily close some footpaths.

Looking ahead, AD explained that Hanson will be seeking to 'fill the gaps' left by ADB – but that this could involve other native species including sycamore and/or maple as it is anticipated that Ash trees will be susceptible to ADB for many years to come.

The development of a tree nursery at Whatley to support replanting is also taking place.

- PH asked about balancing safety with environmental concerns and if licences requirements could mean unsafe trees could be left in a dangerous/unsafe state. AD explained that this was increasingly an issue for landowners but that trees that posed an imminent threat or were considered dangerous could be taken down without the need to wait for the appropriate licenses.
- RK asked – as he had to depart the meeting – if further information on the biodiversity action plan could be shared. *Action: Hanson to follow up.*

Community giving / initiatives

IS provided an update on recent Hanson community giving, detailing local beneficiaries:

- Coleford U7s football team
 - Cranmore Cricket club
 - Bell Inn - Leigh on Mendip community event
 - St Aldhem's VA Church Primary School, Doulting
- David Mattick (DM) said that the contribution to the Leigh on Mendip event had been very well received.
 - AC also thanked Hanson for its support of St Aldhem's VA Church Primary School.

4. Noise survey

IS advised that, in addition to planning further noise surveys (as detailed by TM above) findings and raw data from the Socoteq survey has been shared with MF at SCC.

- WP said that he did not think that Hanson was being open about the findings. He asked MF if SCC were picking up on this and would be addressing the issue.
- IS reiterated the points made earlier in the meeting about Hanson's transparent approach on this and all issues pertaining to its operations. He

recapped that TM and IS had met with the residents of specific properties involved in the studies and shared findings with the owners.

- MF advised that SCC would be meeting Hanson in the new year and that the council's noise specialist would be across the issue "in a big way".
- TM refuted the insinuation that Hanson was not being open and said that future survey findings would be shared with the liaison group in due course but it was important for the specialists to agree the approach with SCC's specialists first.

Action: Hanson to provide an update on future noise studies to be provided at the next meeting.

5. Planning update: Whatley and Westdown – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Hanson UK

TM recapped the points made earlier about the ROMP:

- Hanson is currently developing revised scoping opinion in order to agree and update environmental information to progress the determination of the outstanding ROMP.
- Scoping planned to be submitted to SCC for review in January.

IS said that Hanson has prepared a short video to explain the company's overarching approach for the East Mendips and help answer questions raised at previous meetings about volumes (to view the video go to [link]).

- ABR queried the source of the reference in the video to future national demand for limestone. *Action: Hanson to provide details of source from the MPA*
- ABR queried if Hanson was intending to put an additional two million tonnes of aggregate on the road.

IS advised that this is not the case. Hanson's approach is to:

Cut carbon by reducing HGV transport/maximising the use of the railhead at Whatley AND

Extend the operational life of Whatley (which has depleting volumes) by supplementing volumes from Westdown.

- ABR said that he appreciated Hanson was not seeking to exceed its current permissions but questioned if it could. PH said that if all permitted volumes from Whatley were taken now it would mean the quarry would quickly be depleted which doesn't make sense. IS added that it would not be in Hanson's interest to deplete the rail-available mineral at Whatley by sending it by road, even it was permitted to.
- ABR added that reopening Westdown was not compatible with the climate emergency.

Next meeting: 2nd March at 17.30.

(TEAMS or in person to be confirmed, subject to Covid restrictions.)

Summary of actions

- PH to resend email communication to WP
- Hanson to provide information on levels of feedback/complaints received prior to 2021.
- Hanson to set up additional blast monitoring stations in Chantry.
- Hanson to investigate feasibility of a Whatsapp group re blasting notifications
- Hanson to provide information on blasting levels at the next meeting
- Hanson to set up a TEAMS meeting between RK and the ecology team
- Hanson to provide an update on future noise studies to be provided at the next meeting.
- Hanson to provide source of demand for limestone included in Whatley/Westdown video.

(ENDS)