

**Whatley and Westdown Quarries  
Community Liaison Group Meeting  
5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 - 17:30  
Whatley Quarry and via Microsoft Teams**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Attended in person**

Ian Strachan (IS)	Hanson Aggregates, Strategic Development Manager (Chair)
Vince Pitt (VP)	Hanson Aggregates, Operations Manager
Trystan Mabbitt (TM)	Hanson UK Consenting and Development Manager
Alexandra Hemming (AH)	Hanson Aggregates, Senior Landscape Architect
Steve West (SW)	Mells parish Council (Part)
Andrew Bramston (ABR)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Richard Evans (RE)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Samantha Stagg (SS)	James Reed PR, Communications for Hanson UK

**Joined on a Teams call**

Ann Crowcombe (AC)	Cranmore Parish Council
Alex Galbraith (AG)	Monitoring and Enforcement Assistant SCC
Andrew Gunn (AGU)	Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset County Council
Martyn Ford (MF)	Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers) Somerset County Council
Alison Barkshire (AB)	Mendip District Council for Ammerdown

**APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:**

- Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset County Council, Mendip Central & East
- Will Palmer (WP) Whatley resident
- Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council
- Francis Hayden (FH) Mendip District Council, Cranmore Doulting and Nunney
- Alan Townsend (AT) Coleford Parish Council
- Neil Crump (NC) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm resident
- Paul Hooper (PHO) Downhead Parish Council
- Barry Clark (BC) Somerset County Council
- Lisa Ramsay (LR) Nunney Parish Council
- Dave Barton (DB) Regional Transport Manager
- Steven Morton (SM) Hanson UK Marketing and Communications Manager
- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police
- Colin Arnold SCC

## **AGENDA FOR WHATLEY AND WESTDOWN COMMUNITY LIAISON MEETING**

### **1. Introduction – Ian Strachan (Chair)**

- Welcome, apologies and Chair introductions
- Review of minutes from last meeting
- Matters arising from last minutes (issues relating to agenda items below will be covered as part of the meeting).

### **2. Whatley update – Vince Pitt, Unit Manager Whatley**

- Operational overview
- Logistics (including road and rail)
- Blasting
- Feedback

### **3. Other sites and community update – Ian Strachan,**

- Westdown
- Community giving update

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

- Westdown progress
- Whatley ROMP

### **5. Lands Update – Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect**

### **6. AOBs**

### **7. Date of next meeting**



## 2. Whatley Quarry update

VP provided an update:

### Operational overview:

- Production Volumes YTD 3.724M against a plan of 3.701M (23,000 ahead of plan)
- All new mobile plant has arrived. The dumpers are fully lined so they should help reduce noise.
- The new wheel wash will be installed on the 11th October.
- Viewing platform has been damaged. The fence was ripped down and the overview map was thrown into the quarry. We have repaired the damage and the perpetrators have been found by the Police.
- Fuel thefts –security measures in place are working.
- The open day on the **18<sup>th</sup> September** was cancelled due to it being the day before the Queen's funeral. It will be re-scheduled in the Spring 2023.

### Logistics:

- Rail volumes have been dropping due to the rail strikes, averaging 58-60 trains per week.
- New KEA wagons are operational and working well. RE said there were reports of the rolling stock still having squeaky brakes. Also freight noise is still bad.  
VP said the new rolling stock should have addressed the issue of noise. The old KEA wagons had noisy brakes, but the new ones which came in August should be better.  
Action – RE to find out specific times when people report noise so that the quarry can work out what movements might be making the noise.  
Action – VP to conduct a more detailed investigation into rail noise at night.
- ABR said that it seems the horns sounding at night has improved. SS mentioned sustainability due to idling instead of stop/start as starting sets off the horns. Hanson is liaising with Freightliner to prevent this.
- The fleet of 10 new HGVs are now in operation.

### Blasting Operations:

- Still building data for the site blasting grid, which is going well.
- 4 fixed monitor locations have been agreed and will arrive November. VP stated they are waiting for EPC to confirm the location of the monitor in Chantry church, possibly the basement, but need to know if they can get a signal.
- ABR mentioned he would be interested in getting the blasting data, as he experienced some really strong blasts recently. One reading was only 1.7 at his house when the air overpressure was high. It was suggested to check other readings in the village and to flag with the team to put a grid reference on where the blast was felt.

### Summary of mitigation measures implemented:

- Adaptation of operating hours (further detail to follow)
- Blast design modification.
- Cessation of weekend working.
- Repairs and on-going maintenance to doors.
- Repairs and maintenance to cladding on buildings.
- Crash points changed to ceramic linings (where material falls from a conveyor belt).
- Reception hopper being left always one quart full to prevent full height fall of material.
- Head drums on conveyor belt lagged to prevent possible slip and squeal.
- Staged delivery of new truck liners.

- Fan inserts fitted.
- Weekend working on tip restricted unless required for H&S.
- On-going training and communications with all drivers, restating key HGV driver protocols on required behaviour and need to use Somerset County Council's approved freight routes.
- Introduction of blast notification service.
- Rubber lining hoppers.
- Insulation on Komatsu dumpers.

VP went on to explain that in July 2021 the quarry stopped crushing between midnight and 6am. From July 2022 crushing has stopped from 11:30pm until 6:30am, as the plant has been able to run quicker whilst achieving the same tonnage. This self-imposed voluntary move means that in total, half an hour of operations has been cut from the morning and 2.5 hours at night. Demonstrating how Hanson has taken action to adapt its operations in light of feedback.

#### Noise Monitoring:

AB said there are still complaints from Mells residents who seem to feel it's the same as before, usually crashing noises around 11pm to midnight. However, she hasn't experienced the noises herself. SW asked why they are not getting reported to the parish council. AB said people are emailing her, as it seems noise carries to some of the properties in Mells. SW wondered if it was the same few people, as he doesn't consider it to be the general view based on feedback received.

MF asked if specific people are experiencing high noise levels, have we considered noise monitoring at their properties? TM advised will have to look at specific locations The noise monitoring report is being finalised so will be shared in due course.

IS added that the quarry team have been going to visit the complaint locations and have been doing noise monitoring to try and identify what the complaint was about. SW also mentioned if there is a problem, they need to report it to the parish council as soon as it happens, who can then address it as a representative of the individual.

TM concluded that if the general consensus is that the noise levels are not improving, we need to understand why. Going forward people need to be more specific when complaining, so we can go back to the data and find answers.

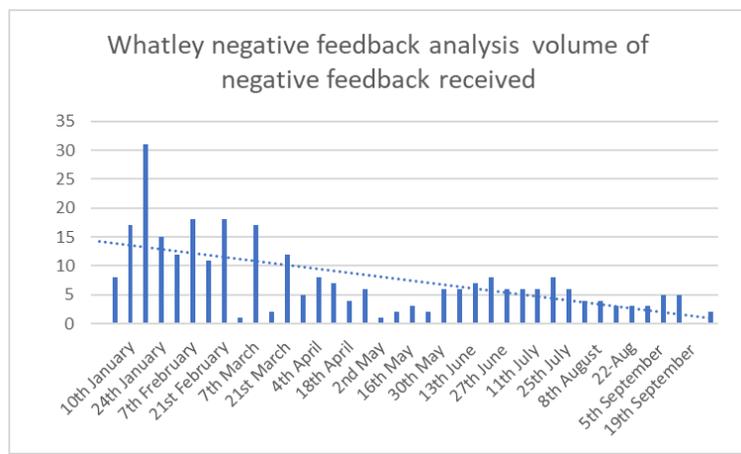
The noise monitoring report was recently submitted to MF and it will be discussed in the next liaison meeting.

(SW left the meeting)

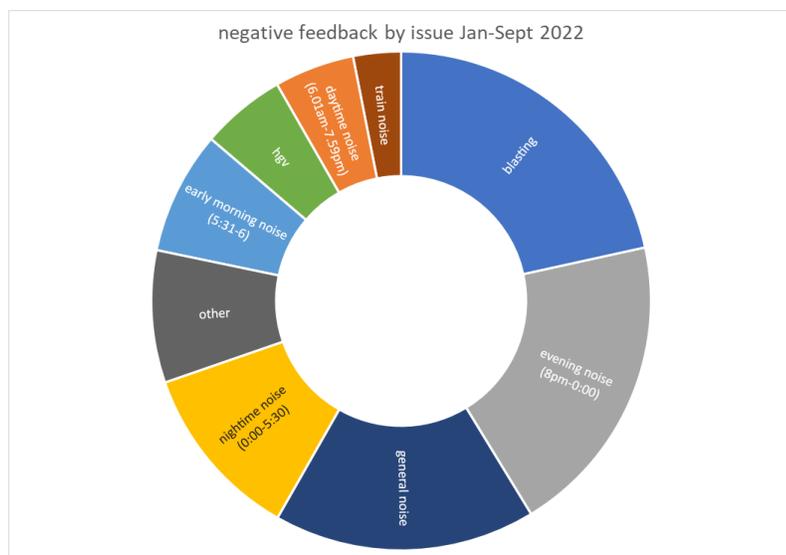
RE had a query about the lighting during primary operation times at night. VP advised it would be shut off in the quarry however the lights must remain on in the top plant areas.

Feedback:

SS shared the graph below which shows the complaints trend has reduced over the year.



The breakdown of issues is below.



ABR referred to the letter that has been sent to senior management, signed by residents, who feel frustrated by the lack of action following complaints. They are still very worried when a blast goes over 4.5 mm/s

SS stated that the average blast reading YTD shows 3.9 mm/s PPV\* (\*The permitted vibration levels for blasts at Whatley quarry are 9 mm/s PPV with a 95% confidence and /or 12 mm/s with 99.9% PPV confidence at any time. Since August 2021 Hanson has been working to a voluntary level of 4.5mm/s wherever possible on the south face of Whatley quarry).

ABR added that there are blasts that go over the 4.5mm/s PPV and these are the ones people are worried about. He explained that the letter sent recently by Chantry residents to Hanson senior management was reaching out to see if they can help. The vast majority agree there is some improvement in the general blasting. RE added that people don't have a problem with the blasting, it's when the big ones are felt it seems to re-focus the anger towards the quarry.

VP re-stated that by going through the complaints, the quarry can assess the geology.

RE said that the feedback is that the complaints are dropping because people have given up and feel nothing has changed. TM asked if nothing has changed given the adaptations made should we be re-focusing elsewhere

VP said 4.5 is a self-imposed level, they don't plan to make the blasts big. IS added air overpressure is contributing to the recent blasts that have felt bigger.

ABR said he recognised that many Chantry residents don't understand the complexities of blasting and even blasts at 1.5 mm/s may generate complaints due to air overpressure. He felt it was a good thing the church is getting a monitor. There are a lot of very old homes and buildings in Chantry and people don't know the construction of them.

### **3. Other sites and community update**

#### Community Giving initiatives

SS provided an update on donations made or pledged. Hanson have committed to 20 separate initiatives so far in 2022. Often there is a lag between when the commitment is made to support and the result of the contribution happening. The scale of support ranges from a few £ hundred to multiple £1000's

Recent commitments made:

- Coleford flower and craft show
- Vallis vale car park – resurfacing
- Doultling Parish Council – playground equipment
- Friends of Leigh Church – new boiler
- Promiseworks – mentoring for young people with mental health challenges
- Vobster Village Trust – tree planting

Our approach is to prioritise support for initiatives supporting:

- Education, skills, and wellbeing
- Protecting/enhancing the environment and
- Promoting the community and heritage of the East Mendips.

Assistance is prioritised to groups making applications from within the BA11 postcode, particularly those based within a 3km radius. Can include financial support, materials donation, or input from Hanson volunteers.

More details at: [www.hanson-communities.co.uk/en/whatley-and-westdown-quarry-community-page/supporting-the-community](http://www.hanson-communities.co.uk/en/whatley-and-westdown-quarry-community-page/supporting-the-community)

Hanson also has a volunteer initiative, where employees can take a day out to help in the community, so let us know if you have a project that needs people.

AC wanted to express thanks on behalf of Doultling – she will send pictures when they are available.

#### **4. Planning update: Whatley and Westdown**

##### Westdown progress

TM stated that information which has been collated from Natural England and the Environment Agency, is to be considered as part of the application.

Areas that were concerns:

Working under the water table

Biodiversity – Bats/Woodland SSC/ Mells Valley SSC

Forestry Commission – Asham Woodland

Localised flooding – Asham Void and Fordbury water

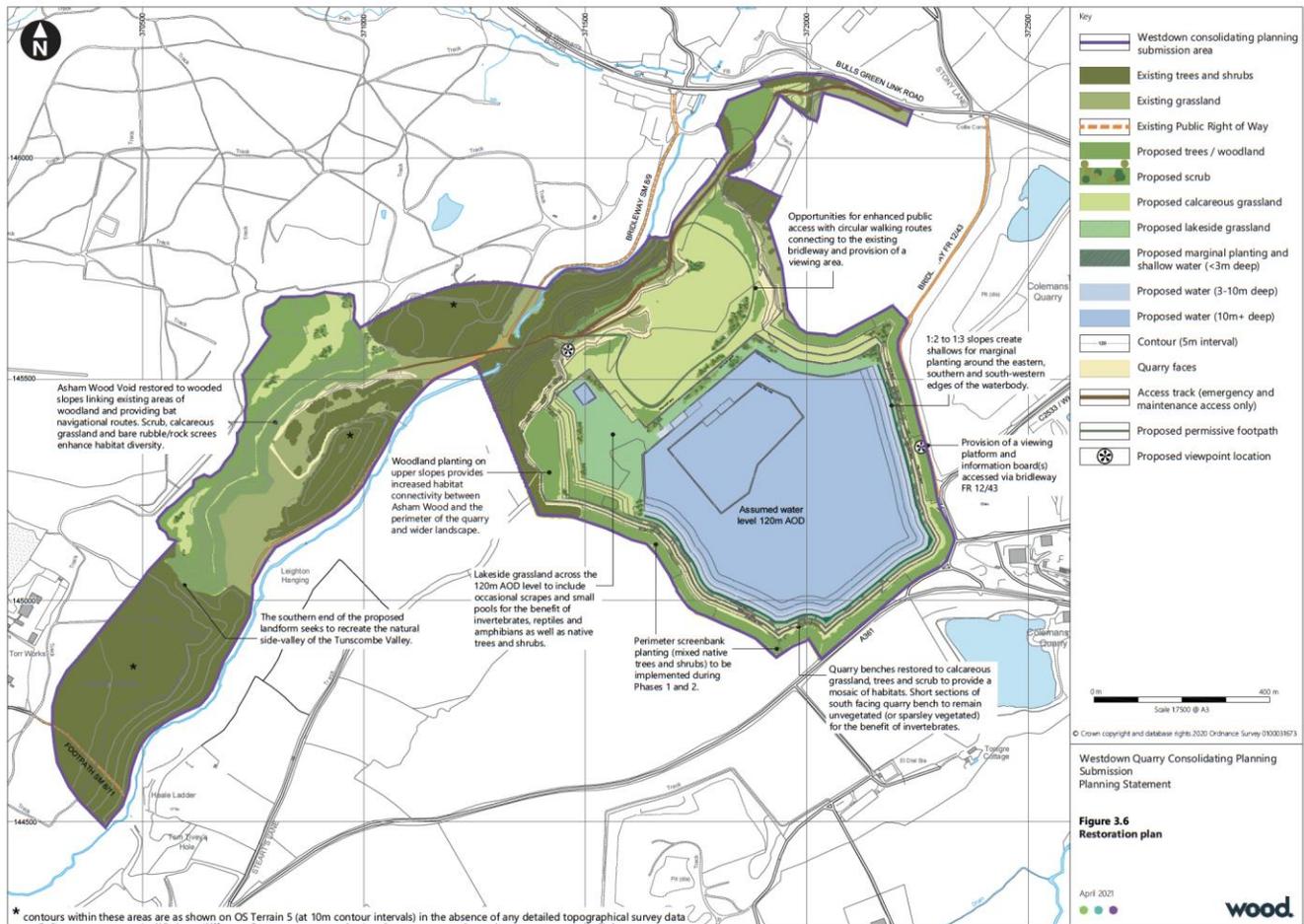
Ecology – Santec to advise – worked on Reg 25 mitigation and restoration strategy

AH added that she will be meeting with Somerset Wildlife Trust to advise the wider work in the area. Seems the Forestry commission potentially misunderstood the plans and were worried the SSC would be worked. She has clarified with them that it's not going to be.

TM stated that the quarry is planning a local drop-in session to see if they can get more points raised as part of the application. After a discussion in the meeting, it's initially looking like 22<sup>nd</sup> November 3pm until 8pm will work best. People involved in the planning process will be on hand to answer any questions.

ABR mentioned he is looking forward to the session. Interested to see plans for Asham Void, as a 15-year process is a long time to have disruption. AH replied that it's a phased approach and an amazing opportunity create habitats in new woodland, bat houses, dormice habitats, looking at so many enhancements to the landscape and woodland. It will be done in sections so the habitats can be moved.

ABR was encouraged by AH's enthusiasm about the work and wanted to ensure that the company will commit to follow the restoration through to the end. AH said that meeting people and discussing the plans is so important to get the vision across and explain what the pictures will become.



TM also mentioned that the Reg 25 document is available on the Community website along with extended FAQs.

### Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP)

TM advised they have submitted the scope pre-application to Somerset County Council and has spoken to the case office. There is one area waiting on feedback, which is being held up due to a phosphates issue. Consultancy is in place awaiting a response and feedback. AGU added there is no update from SCC perspective on ecology related matters

## **5. Lands Update – Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect**

### **Vallis Vale Update**

Works are now completed on extensive tree felling due to Ash dieback. These works were overseen by ecologists, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. Another survey will take place in October, and it's more than likely there will be some more felling in late 2022/early 2023. Hanson are hoping to work with the Somerset Earth Science Centre to prepare some information boards to help explain what's happening.

The footpath at Vallis vale is degraded and this is likely to need repair.

The woodland management plan needs sign off, the focus is on dealing with Ash dieback and managing the open spaces.

Also, looked at the bat cave which was grilled around 10 years ago. It's now been welded shut so hopefully they will start to come back.

ABR mentioned Chantry biodiversity and stated that 14 species of Bats have been found in the Westdown area. AH agreed that within the Mells Vale SCC there are lots in the area, and they are working alongside consultant ecologists to ensure no disruption at Westdown. TM added that this is primarily the reason that the access route was changed. AH said it was a no-go to cross the stream so access was found higher up. Also, when stripping, it will only be in daylight to help avoid lighting the area and disturbing the bats.

### **Asham management plan**

Hanson are working with Somerset Wildlife Trust to organise some volunteer coppicing days, hoping to do the first one in November.

AH is liaising with NC regarding the shooting. They think they know who it is and new signs will be going in to advise 'No Shooting' etc

30 wildlife boxes are due to go in, for everything from robins to kestrels and bats. AH is just waiting on Forestry Commission advice.

2 Piezometers will be installed to measure the ground water.

ABR mentioned that parish residents use the forest a lot and wanted to know if people could ask advice from AH about foraging etc. AH also clarified that there are only 3 official public rights of way through the wood and any access off these routes isn't authorised.

AH warned that it's an offence to forage in an SSSI.

ABR also mentioned that some of the elderly residents have asked about collecting firewood. AH stated that most of the felled wood will be taken away by a firewood contractor.

NC is interested in organising a litter pick day. There is a H&S issue to find out what type of litter might be there. Advised NC will need to Liaise with VP to organise this.

## **Westdown Update**

Dormice have been found, which were not expected in East Somerset. There will be a dormouse survey conducted to understand the population.

ABR mentioned the impressive bench at Westdown. Also asked if there can be walking route plans in the woods as part of the Mendip Way. AH said they don't generally encourage people to walk the routes around the woods. However, there may be circular routes as part of the westdown planning application but as above we don't encourage use of the woodland rides off the authorised rights of way.

ABR also asked if the pond in the middle of Asham could be signposted as not suitable for swimming due to it being a former landfill site. Locals might know this but some others are perhaps unaware.

## **AOBs**

None put forward

## **6. Next meeting date**

It was agreed to book the 2023 meetings in the calendar scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month. The dates agreed are as follows:

17<sup>th</sup> January

18<sup>th</sup> April

18<sup>th</sup> July

17<sup>th</sup> October

Meeting Ends 19:15