

**Whatley and Westdown Quarries  
Community Liaison Group Meeting**  
17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 - 17:30  
Whatley Quarry and via Microsoft Teams

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**ATTENDEES:**

**Attended in person**

Philip Ham (PH)	Councillor Somerset County Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
Ian Strachan (IS)	Hanson Aggregates, Strategic Development Manager
Vince Pitt (VP)	Hanson Aggregates, Operations Manager
Trystan Mabbitt (TM)	Hanson UK Consenting and Development Manager
Samantha Stagg (SS)	James Reed PR, Communications for Hanson UK
Steve West (SW)	Mells parish Council (Part)
Richard King (RK)	Great Elm resident
Andrew Bramston (ABR)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Will Palmer (WP)	Whatley resident
Barry Clark (BC)	Somerset County Council
Lisa Ramsay (LR)	Nunney Parish Council
Jan Moore (JM)	Standing in for Ann Crowcombe - Cranmore Parish Council

**Joined on a Teams call**

Martyn Ford (MF)	Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers) Somerset County Council
Nienke Pengelly (NP)	WSP
Mark Evans (ME)	WSP
Josh Wilson (JW)	WSP

**APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:** Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council

- Francis Hayden (FH) Mendip District Council, Cranmore Doultling and Nunney
- Alan Townsend (AT) Coleford Parish Council
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Neil Crump (NC) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Paul Hooper (PHO) Downhead 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 (CA) SCC
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Hanson Aggregates, Senior Landscape Architect
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset County Council
- Alison Barkshire (AB) Mendip District Council for Ammerdown

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

### **1. Introduction – Philip Ham (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, Area Operations Manager Whatley Quarry, Hanson UK**

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

### **3. Whatley Noise Monitoring update – Josh Wilson /Nienke Pengelly, WSP**

### **4. Other sites and community update – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK**

- Westdown
- Community giving update

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

- Westdown progress
- Whatley ROMP

### **6. AOBs**

- Open day revised date

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

## MEETING MINUTES

### 1. Chair's introduction

#### Welcome & Apologies:

PH welcomed attendees to the meeting. Everyone around the table introduced themselves to the group and then those on the Teams call.

Apologies from: C Arnold, A Hemming, A Crowcombe and A Townsend.

#### Review of previous minutes:

- There was no feedback received from group members following draft minutes being circulated by email and posted to Community Website.
- Actions from previous meeting were all complete or addressed as agenda items in today's meeting.
- Matters arising from previous meeting:
  - Regional transport manager DB is taking steps to put ID numbers on the new fleet of Hanson lorries. However, a lot of the drivers DB deals with are not Hanson fleet and therefore having numbers is more difficult to carry out.
  - VP has arranged to have the hedges cut back on the verge and is happy to remove the bank to create the new footpath – though this needs to be checked with the council if ensure this is allowed. The road will need to be closed for half a day. SW mentioned the need to consider the wildlife in the hedges, which will start to return in the spring. This means that hedgework would need to be carried out before the end of Feb.  
**Action** - VP to check with council about moving the verge.
  - Whatley noise monitoring – To be discussed as an agenda item.

### 2. Whatley Quarry update

VP provided an update:

#### Operational overview:

- Production volumes 2022: actual volumes 98% of plan
- Sales volumes 2022: 96% of plan
- Distribution 2022: Rail – 3.9mt;
- 2023 Plan: production and sales targets are down on 2022, due to uncertainty in the market.

#### Logistics:

- Rail distribution levels are likely to be similar to last year. We were hit hard with the rail strikes in 2022 and are waiting to hear if any other strikes are happening soon.
- Road volumes will be similar to last year.

#### Roadworks:

- The road outside the quarry will be shut at night-time for resurfacing for a week starting 6th Feb.

PH mentioned there are also some bad parts near the Chantry turn off. ABR added that SCC won't do the road themselves down to an historical agreement, and it expects the quarry to take responsibility. PH explained there was an issue with the insurers, when the road was widened and altered, it wasn't signed off by SCC and now it needs repair, they won't take responsibility. TM said that the final draft is in place and the final documents will be passed to the Local authority.

- The re-scheduled open day will now be on the 23rd April. 10:30 am to 3pm.
- The original dewatering pumps will be replaced in 2023.

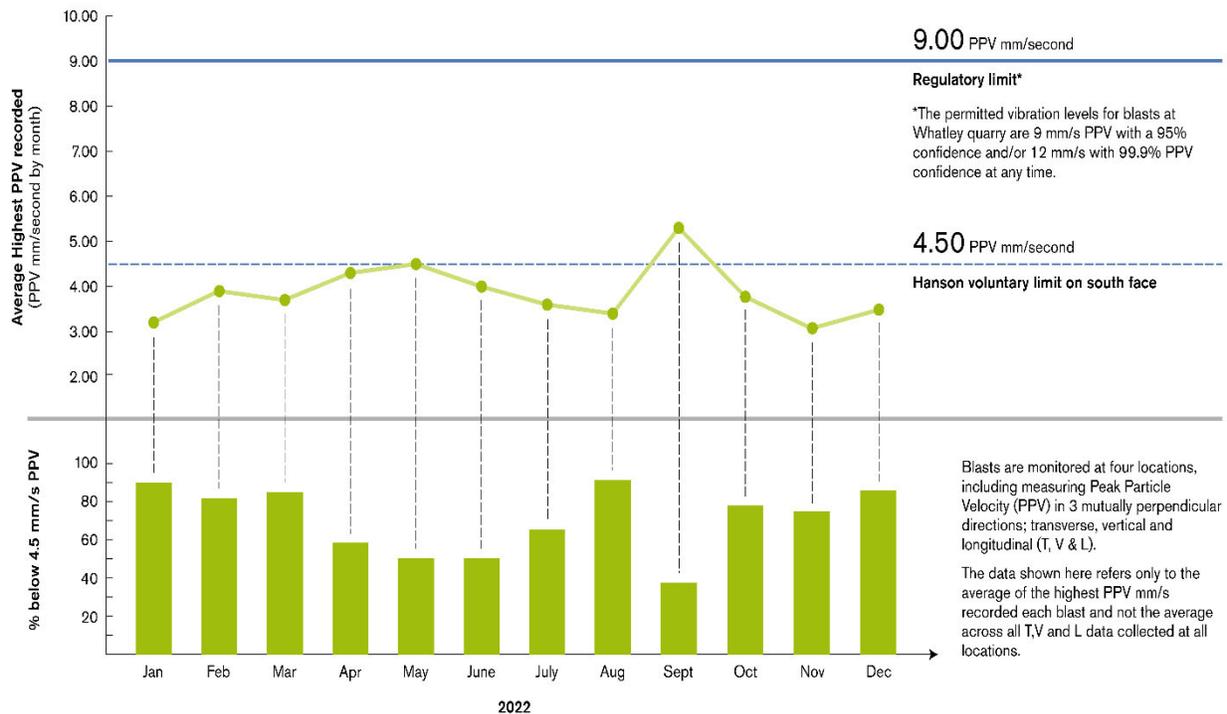
**Health & Safety:**

- At the end of the week, we will have achieved 6 years with no LTIs (Lost Time Incidents) this is a site record.

**Blasting Operations:**

- 4 fixed blasting monitors are in locations around Chantry and 1 portable is available. They are now able to provide as much useful data as they can to help with continuous improvement in reducing blast vibrations. Since they have been installed, all blasts have been under 4.5 mm/s Peak Particle Velocity (PPV).
- EPC and Hanson still working closely together to gather data to minimise vibration and Air Over Pressure (AOP) on every blast.

**Whatley quarry blasting record 2022**



ABR said that blast vibration levels have been good since December, with a significant change in vibration. Underground noise is still there but the vibration has gone. He asked if VP could explain today's double blast. VP answered that as the blast plan is behind schedule, we did two smaller 40t blasts rather than one larger 80t blast.

ABR added there was a meeting about the blasting and people are still concerned about the noise. If we could get some data together ABR would be happy to help people to understand the AOP and other aspects of blasting.

TM said he would be happy to get people together with EPC during a blast to see it all rather than just the data.

VP added there is understanding of the blast locations to reduce the impact around the site. Whatley is a big area. ABR appreciates the past 6 weeks have been better.

### **Landscape update**

- First phase of Ash Dieback (ADB) felling completed at Vallis Vale, but another hazardous tree survey has been carried out with further felling requirements on approval by Natural England/Forestry Commission.

WP asked for more details on this first point. This will be followed up with AH.

- The Vallis Vale management plan is still in the approval process, currently with Natural England. We are finalising our responses to some of NE's queries and hope it receives approved ASAP.
- The bat cave in Vallis Vale is due to have monitoring carried out in 2023 by First Ecology (Somerset Wildlife Trust's consultancy arm).
- Riparian (river) management plan received for Vallis Vale thanks to the Wild Trout Trust with some interesting feedback on the importance of dead wood in rivers.

WP commented about best management practice to clear debris and dead wood from the river, however there is the need to leave some in there.

SS suggested perhaps ask AH to talk it through in the next meeting.

- Heavy rain and river levels have eroded some of the footpaths so repairs will be required in liaison with SCC RoW and NE.
- Asham Wood ride management (access) has commenced in line with our agreement with NE to create rides with varied grass/shrub and tree layers and structures.

ABR asked about ride management and wanted to clarify it was just about access.

- 50 wildlife boxes have been ordered for Asham Wood for everything from robins to bats to barn owls and these will be going up when they have all arrived.
- Majority of anti-social activity warning signs have now been erected throughout Asham Wood in strategic locations e.g. entrances.
- The Asham conveyor tunnel is to be monitored for bat activity in 2023 by First Ecology.
- Coppicing work is ongoing in compartment 8 with work due to start in compartment 6. These compartments are very hazel dominated so felling work is being paid for rather than the timber covering costs.
- The draft veteran tree and deer management plans have also been received and commented on with a view to manage old trees appropriately and to inform a deer shooting license to manage deer populations that negatively impact ground flora and coppice regrowth (if not fenced).

- Whatley perimeter rights of way – AH walked with Ed and Vince before Christmas with a view to create a circular, advertised walk. Some improvements required along the Railford bottom stream path which has mostly disappeared in some places.

VP said they are looking at the rights of way for the Whatley walk around the outskirts of the quarry. It's approx. 4.5 miles.

ABR said that they would like more details on the Railford Bottom improvements.

- Perimeter plantations need reviewing in summer to assess ADB and any under planting or management works.
- Mineral Products Association continuing to liaise with and respond to consultations from NE and Defra regarding implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation for minerals applications.
- Whatley Western Extension details have been provided to NE as a 'real world' case study for national BNG guidance, to inform operators and planners on how to deal with minerals cases, as BNG metric and process was devised primarily for housing applications.
- Our parent company Heidelberg Materials Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) department is re-focusing some sustainability and biodiversity targets to work towards 'Nature Positive' outcomes from our operations and land management.

#### Summary of mitigation measures implemented:

- Adaptation of operating hours (further detail to follow).
- Blast design modification (further detail to follow).
- 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 quarter 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.
- Komatsu and Finning have noise reduction packs which include sound panels that can be purchased for the dumpers and loading shovels. We want to trial them and measure the DB levels.

There was a comment about the loading shovels still beeping the horn when ready to move.

**Action** - VP said they will look at different procedures for movements after 5pm, however there still needs to be a safe practice in place. If anything can be done, they will trial it and if it's successful, will consider the same during the daytime operations.

SW said that it seems to be the 992 horn that is heard mostly in the village, the others aren't too bad. It can be heard more in the summer.

#### Operational adaptations:

- Trial cessation of extraction activity at the primary between 00.00-06.00 introduced in July 2021 continues.

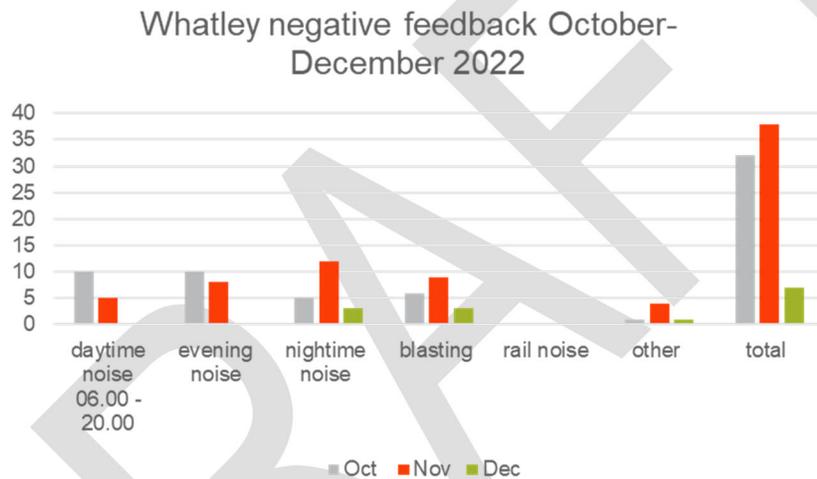
- In recent weeks we have extended this further due to operational efficiencies, so that no activity is taking place, whenever possible, between 23.30 – 06.30 hoping to produce the same output in less hours.
- This self-imposed voluntary move means that 0.5 hour of operations has been cut back in the morning and 2.5 hours at night. 3 hours in total.

VP explained there has been no primary crushing at the weekend since May 21. Ceramic liners have been installed and implemented in the past 2 years.

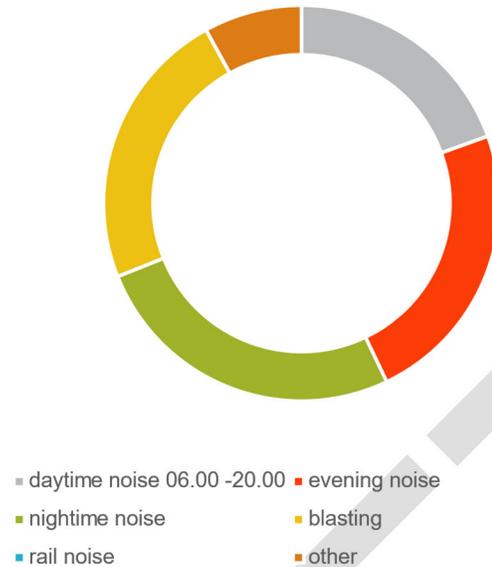
WP asked if there was scope for further improvements. VP responded that they could possibly drop 1 hour currently and with Westdown open, could drop to 14 hours total.

Feedback:

SS shared the graphs below which shows the negative feedback received between October and December 22 from 32 people. There were 92 different items of correspondence from 32 people. There was a spike in November about blasting and evening noise.



The breakdown of issues is below.



ABR agreed November was a bad month for complaints but December has been much better. RK commented that the rail noise has improved, however last night (16<sup>th</sup> Jan) a screeching noise was heard around 2-3-4am (not sure exactly). Wanted to know why it would be so bad. Thought the new rolling stock would help improve the situation but not sure it has. ABR added that Frome had issues too, not sure why

**Action** - VP to find out what the issue was on 16<sup>th</sup> Jan at these times.

PH asked if temperature could have affected the noise, VP thought it might, as it was the first really cold night for a while. ABR also said it was a very clear night too. MF asked if an action to undertake an investigation on rail noise at night had happened yet.

VP said not yet however will take the **Action** and feedback at the next meeting.

### **3. Whatley Noise Monitoring update** – Josh Wilson /Nienke Pengelly, WSP

NP explained that they were asked to give feedback on the noise monitoring that took place between 30<sup>th</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at Whatley quarry. JW led the monitoring campaign.

#### **Objectives:**

- Characterise the noise environment at the nearest Noise Sensitive Receptors (NSRs) to the quarry;
- Undertake an assessment to identify exceedances of extant noise limits at the relevant NSRs; and
- Undertake an assessment to identify whether noise limit exceedances may have been due to operational noise emissions from the quarry.

#### **Approach:**

- Undertake noise monitoring at NSRs;
- Record audio at each monitoring location during the most sensitive time periods (20:00 – 02:00) each day. Audio was recorded when pertinent noise limits were breached;
- Review, process and screen the data;

- Manually listen to audio to determine the dominance of operational noise emissions from the quarry over the baseline noise environment; and
- Undertake a wind direction sensitivity exercise.

NB: Noise levels are expressed as  $L_{Aeq,1hr}$  – a measurement parameter designed to represent a varying sound source over a given time as a single number.

If there is an exceedance of the limit, it does not necessarily mean that the noise level was consistently above the limit for that hour period. However, it does mean that there were enough instantaneous, or sudden, exceedances of that limit across the hour period so that the averaged level exceeds the limit.

### **Findings**

- There were 38 exceedances of the  $L_{Aeq,1hr}$  *noise* planning condition noise limit during the most sensitive period at one NSR location (NML5) that are likely to be associated with the operational noise emissions associated with the quarry.
- There were no exceedances due to operational quarry noise emissions at all other receptors/monitored locations.

### **Conclusions:**

- Exceedances may be due to operational quarry noise emissions at location NML5
- Although there were no exceedances due to quarry noise emissions at all other receptors, quarry noise is still occasionally audible against the baseline noise environment.

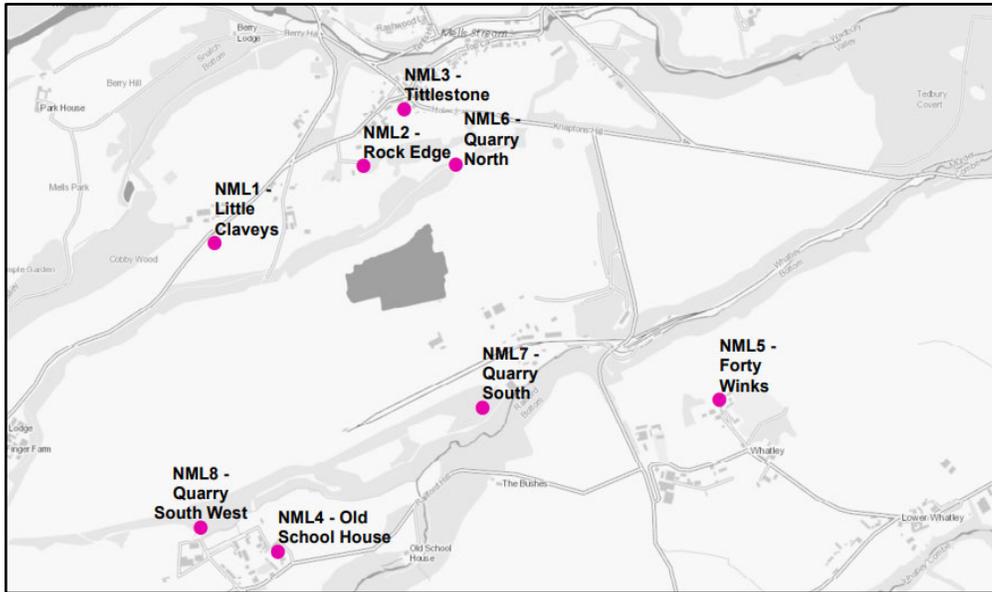
### **Next Steps:**

- Undertake *attended* (with a member of Hanson Staff) night-time measurements at NML5 or pertinent receptor in this area to accurately identify noise sources in order to recommend focused mitigation measures.

JW commented audio was recorded during the most sensitive time periods and any noise recordings that were triggered above the noise limits were then analysed. They then worked to identify noise sources against the baseline environment, to see if any were associated with quarry operations. It was also mentioned that wind direction will affect the results.

JW explained that 8 different locations were monitored, 3 at the edge of the quarry and 5 at various other properties. It was discovered that there were some exceedances but only at the NML5 location, were they considered associated with quarry operations. JW also acknowledged that quarry noise is evident against the baseline levels at all locations.

## Noise recording locations



TM asked if JW was able to explain the exceedances at Forty Winks. JW replied that some council noise limits have been exceeded a number of times, and it looks like they are associated with operational noise.

JW added that the next steps, subject to discussions with SCC, are that they will try to more accurately identify exceedances working with a member of Hanson staff to help identify the noise.

RK asked if there was a figure for the level exceeded. JW said it was in the region of approx. 5db. MF asked if they could share the source of the noises that are exceeding the limits. JW replied they can only really do this with attended monitoring if someone from Hanson can help. The audio had reverse alarm, train movement, aggregate noise, and only attended monitoring can accurately understand/identify the noises.

IS added this will be going ahead but no date is set yet.

ABR asked how frequently the noise exceeded the limits. JW replied that across the 2 weeks, there were 35-40 instances in the higher range associated with quarry operations.

ABR and WP asked if JW could explain what the baseline noise environment is. JW replied it is the noise environment without ANY quarry noise, passing cars, wind, wildlife near the mic etc. At all the locations when a spike shows on the monitoring, they will listen and if it's obviously a car, it won't be classed as associated with the quarry. JW added that occasionally, but don't have exact numbers, they observed quarry noise that was audible but not responsible for the exceedances. TM added if we can put any additional measures in place to mitigate this, we will.

ABR asked if the exceedances were measured over a period of time rather than each short jolt. JW acknowledged that the planning condition noise limits are based on a 1-hour average noise level. For every hour that is high, they would identify what's happening during that hour. ABR queried tipping noises. If it's a strong noise over a short period, is this factored in? JW said it depends on the magnitude and how long it happens. It's the total noise levels over that 1-hour period.

BC commented looking at the baseline levels + additional noise, what is the difference above the baseline that they have made?

JW responded that noise above the planning conditions were approx. 5db. NP added that the condition is 42db at night and 55db during the day.

MF wanted to clarify that the 5db is an estimation. They will go back to the data for more accurate results. With an hour limit, they will look at a spike and see if it is traffic, birds etc. taking a precautionary approach to identify quarry noise they were more likely to assume it was the quarry. At NML5 the exceedances were linked to the quarry.

NP added that they have a fairly good understanding of what the noise is but it's better with someone there (attended monitoring) to better understand how to mitigate it further.

TM asked if he could explain how the noise monitoring could help with the complaints received on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> July.

JW replied they had investigated this and looked at the audio files at 2 locations closest to the complainants' locations. At the first location in Mells they acknowledge that quarry noise emissions were audible but it didn't dominate the baseline and there were no exceedances. The second location in Whatley did show exceedances that were associated with quarry operations.

TM said we will investigate as part of the onsite visits and interpretation with WSP to establish the source of the issues and he will report back in a few weeks

MF added to clarify. There were 2 complaints and, after further digging, one of the complaints was backed up by the monitoring, and one was noticeable but not a breach of conditions. People will usually assume all audible quarry noise is a breach of the limits.

RK asked if attended monitoring will take place at all locations. IS confirmed only at Forty Winks.

PH added that when checking the recordings, do they take into consideration the wind speeds as the 2 complaints were in opposite directions. JW said they were aware the wind direction was mentioned, however even with heavy wind at all locations it would not have caused the exceedances.

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

##### Community Giving initiatives

SS provided an update on Donations made or pledged to 29 separate initiatives 2022. With a total contribution in excess of £40,000.

##### Recent commitments made:

- 5 Alive magazine
- Olga's Wood
- Vallis Vale car park – Made a monetary donation + materials

There have been a number of applications for 2023, and they are reviewed in the monthly meeting based against the stated criteria. There have been some secondary requests following an earlier donation. Hanson don't want to encourage groups to rely on regular donations, they would prefer to support one-off capital projects. In 2022 Hanson only turned down two requests for funding down to the location being out of area, or the fact they came from commercial operations which they couldn't support.

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)

### Westdown Local drop in Session

The quarry held a local drop-in event on the 12<sup>th</sup> January at Whatley quarry top offices with the aim to set out up-to-date information on Westdown and our approach to mitigation and restoration. FAQ handouts were available and will be posted to the website.

TM was disappointed that only 25 people turned up to this event. There were leaflet drops to over 2000 homes, it was advertised in the press and local committees. They spent a lot of time organising it all, trying to share plans for Westdown and put them into context, at this important stage of planning.

ABR answered that as he was representing people from Chantry, some didn't feel comfortable coming knowing that local councillors were coming and they picked up information and shared it. Plenty of people were concerned about plans and mitigation measures. People were impressed with the environmental approach. Many are still worried about the noise and dust from the quarry. There was a very encouraging diagram talking about 8mt (million tonnes) condition, and the quarry's own plans for 4.9mt. We understand that you are expecting 6mt and wanting to protect reserves. Logic says keeping rail at Whatley and scaling back lorries is good news but there were concerns for the new quarry. Feedback asked what can be done for the village between two beasts! If the wind comes across, the dust and noise will affect the village.

ABR added not to be disappointed by only 25 people coming, see it as 25 people appreciated the offer to come and see what was going on.

TM said they were there looking to alleviate concerns, and if there is something, it would be good to know. ABR responded that the materials that were presented were very good. SS mentioned that if the exhibition boards will be available to view on the next open day.

ABR said there is a meeting in March for Chantry and it will be a good opportunity to discuss again. It's reassuring to know they are scaling back operations at Whatley, but how do we know this won't change? Also worried about light pollution.

TM said the commitments are 8mt combined across both sites. This can be found on the website.

ABR acknowledged demand is a factor. Infrastructure projects will send everything by rail. As Hanson are aiming to be carbon neutral by 2030, how will the new quarry impact this?

WP also stated that leaflets through doors will reach more people than sharing info on the website. People would have to find the site first if they are interested. SS responded that they are talking to 5 Alive to have a slot in every edition so they can share info. WP said they appreciate the contribution.

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

### Westdown progress

TM mentioned they have submitted further points of clarity to fix the 2020 application for Westdown permissions and are waiting for SCC to process it. It has been signed off by Natural England and the Environment Agency. It includes lots of schemes for restoration and breaking ground. It's a long process and will update when the date is given. Will push for info in Q1 2023.

### Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP)

TM advised they have sought to update the ROMP – since 2012. As requested new environmental scoping was submitted in July 2021 to SCC to allow for updated studies to be completed. Once the scope for this work is agreed the studies, likely to take many months to complete can start.

ABR asked if noise conditions would be tightened as a consequence of the update to the consent, and will they be applied. TM responded that these lower limits were self-imposed and they'll certainly be considered against the latest updated legislation, however whether they'd be officially reduced as part of the updated consent is something we'll need to discuss throughout the process.

WP suggested it's taken an extraordinarily long time from SCC and asked how many quarries they deal with. IS said they don't just deal with quarries and it can sometimes take years. PH responded they have no excuses for why it takes so long. They are always struggling for planners, even going into the new council format, admits this part won't change. They are hoping to recruit new planners as there are very low levels of planning staff. It's taken 20 years to sort out the road problem, it's not just Hanson who has experienced delays.

## **6. AOBs**

None put forward

### **Next meeting date**

The 2023 meetings in the calendar are scheduled for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month.

The upcoming dates agreed are as follows:

18<sup>th</sup> April

18<sup>th</sup> July

17<sup>th</sup> October

Meeting Ends 19:22

DRAFT