

**Whatley and Westdown Quarries  
Community Liaison Group Meeting  
18<sup>th</sup> July 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
Alexandra Hemming	Hanson Aggregates, Senior Landscape Architect
Samantha Stagg (SS)	James Reed PR, Communications for Hanson UK (Part)
Steve West (SW)	Mells Parish Council
Andrew Bramston (ABR)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Barry Clark (BC)	Somerset County Council
Martyn Ford (MF)	Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers) Somerset County Council
Alex Galbraith (AG)	Monitoring and Enforcement Assistant SCC
Richard King (RK) Great	Great Elm resident
Ian Kirby (IK)	Leigh On Mendip resident

**Joined on a Teams call**

Nienke Pengelly (NP)	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
- Will Palmer (WP) Whatley and Chantry parish council
- Dave Barton (DB) Hanson 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
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset County Council
- Alison Barkshire (AB) former Mendip District Council for Ammerdown
- Lisa Ramsay (LR) Nunney Parish Council

## **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)
- Blasting
- Feedback (SS)
- Environmental (AH)
- Community giving update (SS)

### **3. Whatley Open Day – Vincent Pitt, Area Operations Manager**

### **4. Update on forthcoming company rebrand – Ian Strachan, Strategic development manager, Hanson UK**

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

- Westdown progress
- Whatley ROMP

### **6. AOBs**

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

- 17<sup>th</sup> October

## **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 received from: Will Palmer and Richard Hill.

### **2. Whatley Quarry update**

VP provided an update:

#### Operational overview:

VP provided information on production and sales volumes year to date. Both are above plan. There has been a big increase in sales this past couple of months, mainly due to demand from HS2 plus local sales. Sales have exceeded production supported by de-stocking.

#### CAPEX:

- There has been some rail track improvements between the quarry and Great Elm tunnel. Damaged track has been replaced for better efficiency. One train has also been taken away for a refurbishment.

#### Logistics recap:

- New running times are now permanent 06.30 - 23.30.
- This voluntary move means that 0.5 hours of operations has been cut back in the morning and 2.5 hours at night since 2021.
- Lost Time Incidents (LTI): six years LTI free

#### Projects:

- Somerset Highways has given approval to level the bank outside the quarry, with work starting next week. There will be temporary traffic lights set up. It will be grass seeded once finished. This will create a safe pedestrian route past the entrance.
- We will be installing a picnic area at the viewing platform. Further details to follow in the next meeting.
- Some employees are interested in keeping bees on site and producing Whatley honey. We will investigate the possibility of placing them in unused pockets of land.

RK asked for further information about the rail improvements. VP responded that sections of line were replaced which should make the trains run smoother and quieter.

ACTION - VP agreed to pinpoint the areas where improvements were made on a map and share with the group.

Blasting Operations:

- Average highest PPV recorded YTD (to 07/07/23) **2.88 mm/s**
- Of the 64 blasts so far this year (up to 07/07/23), **86%** have been below 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry).
- 100% of blasts within permitted 9mm/s limit at 95% confidence.
- Offer to Whatley and Chantry PC to arrange residents' briefing on blasting from EPC – awaiting feedback on possible dates.

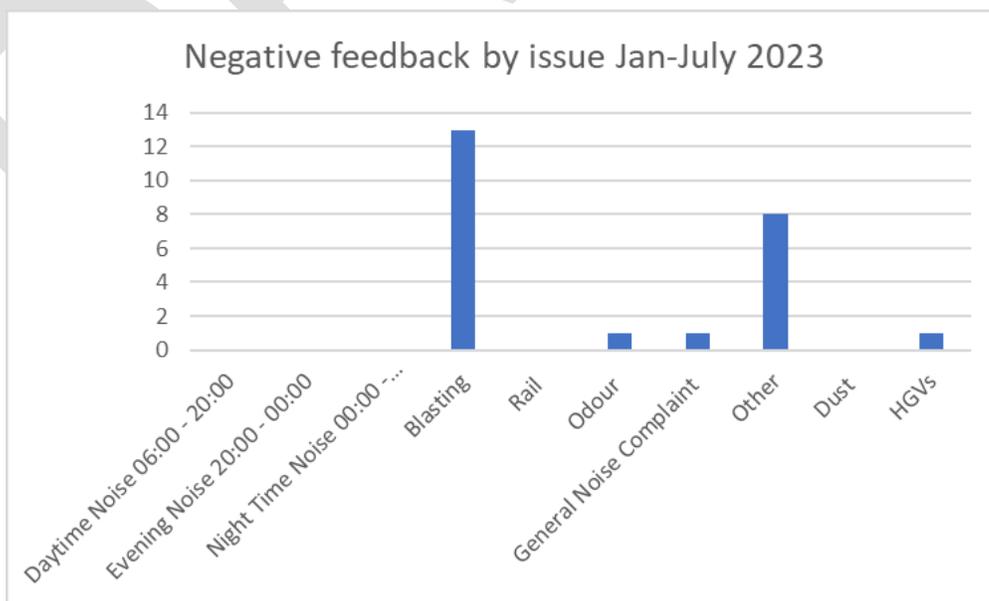
ABR said there was one complaint from today's blast. Could we explain the average highest PPV. SS explained that we take the highest reading from all 4 monitors for each blast and average it by the number of blasts.

ABR commented that some of the more recent complaints turn out to be for blasts that come in lower than the 4.5 PPV, not in the higher 14%. Speaking to residents, most people have said that 2023 has been much better than past years. VP mentioned that EPC are happy to use Whatley to test out new tech when blasting. ABR also asked if the blasting has moved deeper down. VP confirmed that they are down a few levels so there should be less disruption.

TM asked where we are with organising a meeting with EPC and the residents of Whatley and Chantry. ABR said that they don't have a venue, they can't meet at the church. TM offered the use of Whatley for this however ABR wasn't sure how many would come to the quarry for a meeting.

Feedback

SS – April to July (07/07/23) 9 separate pieces of negative feedback received from 5 individuals.

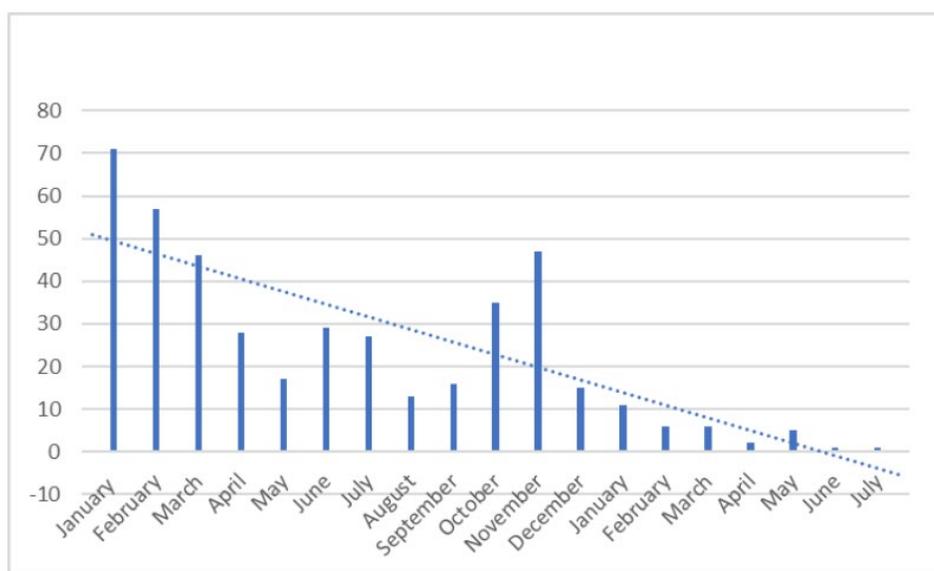


Issues cover Motorbikes in the woods and blasting.

There will be a meeting with a resident at Great Elm tomorrow to discuss the motorbikes. RK said that it was very bad 2-3 weeks ago. AH said we could look to reinstate some of the fencing taken down. We are allowed to only replace what was already there though, we can't add new fencing to block access as it would be a barrier against disabilities.

AH added that she had seen cyclists dragging their bikes over the gate, into the SSSI. This is not allowed and we need to get some signs up. ABR asked if there is less motorcycle traffic at Asham and Westdown, as it's noticeably quieter. AH explained that whilst there is someone there felling trees and clearing up, it is likely to discourage bikers for now.

**Negative feedback received January 2022 – July 2023**



This graph shows the total number of individual feedback received per month. The spike in Oct/Nov 2022 appears to have been due to a number of noise complaints to do with the rail-link. AH suggested that people aren't happy with the rail noise but don't report it because they think we don't do anything, however if we don't know about it, we can't fix it. VP added that the complaints from Mells residents have resulted in action.

RK agreed there was a definite improvement in rail noise. One complaint he has received was about the trains at the bottom of the hill. The worst noise is the braking and subsequently causing the wagons to concertina together as they get closer to the tunnel. If they slowed down before the bottom of the hill this would be less likely to happen.

RK also suggested that they could do with some landscape screening. AH advised that we need to understand how the noise travels. Acoustic fencing is only effective under 3 metres, and trees or vegetation don't mask any noise. SW suggested an acoustic wall. AH responded that it would still go over at 3 Metres. If we installed it on our land, we would still have to apply for planning.

TM remarked that there are two noise specialists on the Teams call. They were actioned to do more noise monitoring which has happened, and the results could be used to work out how we go forward with this.

TM advised it was just Forty Winks that was monitored for now, and we will go into detail at the next meeting having only recently provided MF with the report on the latest noise monitoring results.

### Landscape update

#### Whatley

Looking at duck boards at the flooded part in Chantry footpath.  
Felling large ash trees in the dip at Chantry.

#### Asham Wood

Will be getting the wildlife boxes up in Asham – around 50 of them – for both bats and birds.

Natural England have downgraded the condition of the SSSI from 'favourable' to a combination of 'unfavourable no change' and 'unfavourable improving'. This is because of ash die back and high levels of deer browsing that threatens the regeneration of trees on the woodland floor – a professional deer stalker has been engaged to manage the population at a sustainable level.

Deer fencing has also been installed temporarily around coppice blocks and will be removed when the growth is above where deer will browse.

PH asked what percentage of trees in Asham are ash. AH replied about 80%.

#### Vallis Vale

AH advised that Natural England (NE) and The Forestry Commission are finally happy with the tree management plan for Vallis. We just need to submit it.

Some trees have fallen in bad weather, however it's heavily used in the summer so will start to clear them in September to ensure that the footpaths are left open to the public.

Clearance of debris and dead wood in the river is ongoing.

Some issues with giant hogweed but these have been removed.

About 10 Great Elm residents took a wander through the woods with AH who explained what's happening with future plans and current management. Useful to understand the resident's point of view.

Footpath repairs will be started on the southern section next year. Working with Environment Agency and Trout trust to also look at bank repairs and improving the river habitat for fish and invertebrates. Will be felling trees into the river upstream from Great Elm to prevent flooding and assist against bank erosion.

RK asked if AH could share a copy of the woodland management plan. AH said this was ok.  
(ACTION)

She also mentioned they will be collecting acorns to restock Vallis. PH suggested asking the schools if they might be interested in helping grow them. BC queried if the managed planting will be further apart. AH explained that natural growth will thin the planting.

MF asked if the SSSI management plan will be on the website. AH is happy to do this.

## Community Giving initiatives

SS provided an update on donations made or pledged to 9 separate initiatives so far in 2023. With a total contribution in excess of £40,000.

### Recent commitments made:

- Beckington
- Branch of the Royal British Legion
- Leigh on Mendip School

Funds have been given to create a pond for forest school activities.

### Other previous commitments made to projects now coming to fruition including:

- Whatley Parish Council playground  
IS handed over a cheque to WP (see photo)

RK mentioned a car has crashed into the Great Elm village hall. SS suggested he make an application for funding. PH mentioned there is also a tree down in a separate incident.

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)

### **3. Whatley quarry Open Day 23/04/23**

VP said it was a very successful day for all concerned, and whilst we were expecting around 2,000 visitors, it ended up being almost 5,000 which is more than five times the number of attendees at similar events at other Hanson sites. We were planning to open the gates around 10:30 however as people were starting to queue at 9:45, we opened at 10am. There was a lot of engagement on the day, people were so interested in all aspects of the open day. A lot of people came from the local area, we had advertised in Frome, Radstock and Shepton Mallett, however some came from as far as Birmingham and Maidenhead. We also had people asking us if there were any jobs available.



RK asked if we knew why it was such a popular event, SS suggested it seems there was a pent-up demand for something like this, and nobody has done one in the area in a long time. We have decided that any future events will be ticketed, so that we know expected numbers of attendees.

A video of the day can be found here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmbHdbTWOSk>

PH said it was superb publicity for the quarry, well done.

#### **4. Company re-Brand**

IS explained that last year Heidelberg announced a global re-brand to Heidelberg Materials. As the company is now offering more sustainable materials as it works to achieve its net zero targets, it was decided that the brand should better reflect this. BC asked about the decision behind the new logo. IS replied he didn't know, however it's assumed it represents an HM.



Everything will be changing, PPE, signs, lorries for the whole company, and every subsidiary will be re-branded. All emails and our web presence will be changed too. This will be phased over a two-year period.

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

##### Westdown progress

TM set out that Westdown application is still pending and that Hanson are awaiting some final comments from the council to move forward. Hanson should know a date for the committee in the coming months. MF suggested it's likely to be September at the earliest, now there's a unitary council with new planning committees in place.

##### Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP)

TM advised that the ROMP at Whatley is still outstanding, with determination of Westdown currently remaining Hanson's focus. MF asked if they were both reviews of existing permissions. TM replied yes – with Hanson submitting in addition, a separate application for new access at Westdown and additional reserves for Whatley looking towards future years.

The latest ROMP was submitted in 2012, with Hanson submitting a revised scoping opinion as requested in June 2021.

AH added that since the ROMP was submitted a significant amount of quarrying has taken place and hence the need for the review and determination of the scheme is well overdue, given how the company as a business needs to be able to plan for the future in line with the latest prevailing guidance. . RK said 11 years to process an application seems a long time. Any idea why? MF replied that there have been resource issues over the past 8 years. MF added that as a planning department it's not good and shouldn't take this long, however they will get there. Resources have improved recently, and people are doing their own jobs again.

## **6. AOBs**

MF said he and AG did a monitoring visit around Whatley today and all was good.

ABR mentioned the road improvements happening from Bulls Green to Nunney. There will be road closures, and there is a need to re-plan for the HGV route. ACTION - PH said he will check out the diversion. IS suggested it could possibly be closed evenings only? PH said he wasn't sure how HGVs could get out with that road closed completely.

### **Next meeting date**

The 2023 meetings in the calendar are scheduled.

The upcoming dates agreed are as follows:

17<sup>th</sup> October at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices

Meeting Ends 18:56

DRAFT