

**Batts Combe Quarry**  
**Community Liaison Group Meeting**  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
Meeting Room at Batts Combe Quarry

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDEES:**

- Cllr Ben Ferguson (BF) CHAIR Somerset County Council
- Cllr Mike Taylor (MT) Axbridge Town Council
- Nicola Haynes (NH) Resident
- Nathan Chard Avon & Somerset Police
- Simon Parkes (SP) Heidelberg Materials, Batts Combe quarry unit manager
- Michelle Beasley (MB) Heidelberg Materials, secretariat
- Ben Ayers (BA) Heidelberg Materials, Land & Mineral Resource Manager
- Alex Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- James Hynes (JRH) Heidelberg Materials, Land & Mineral Estates Surveyor
- Cllr Pauline Ham (PH) Somerset Council
- Cllr Barry Carter (BC) Cheddar Parish Council

**APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:**

- Jim Hardcastle (JH) Mendip Hills AONB
- Martin Stoyles (MS) EHO Somerset Council
- Ruth Amundson (RA) Somerset Council Planning
- Sally Devlin (SD) Careers – Kings of Wessex Academy
- Nick Hoof Resident

## **AGENDA FOR BATTS COMBE QUARRY COMMUNITY LIAISON MEETING**

1. Welcome and Chair introductions (BF)
  - Membership update
  - Review of minutes and actions from last meeting
  
2. Local resident update (NH)
  
3. Hanson site update (SP)
  - Blasting
  - Speed Monitoring
  - Community
  - Feedback and complaints
  
4. Land and mineral Planning update (BA)
  
5. Landscape and biodiversity update (AH)
  
6. Environmental health update
  
7. Council update
  
8. AOB

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **1. Welcome and Chair introduction**

- BF welcomed attendees to the meeting
- Membership update – BF and each member introduced themselves.
- BF asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting, and if they were happy for the draft to be finalised.
- NH said there had been a comment from a resident regarding an altercation with a lorry driver in September's minutes. NH read out the email from the resident. She said "With regard to the draft minutes for the Sept meeting, the only point that needs raising from the resident's perspective is the accuracy of the description around the swearing driver and the resident supposedly acting aggressively toward him. The resident strongly disputes the way the incident was described, and this should be noted either with an amendment to the Sept minutes or something in those for December to record her view.
- MB said September's minutes would be published and the amendments would be noted in the minutes of this meeting.
- All other members were happy with September's minutes.
- Due to some members of the liaison committee needing to leave by 6pm, the order of the agenda was changed to accommodate.

### **2. Local Resident update**

- NH read an email with matters to be raised on behalf of the residents.
- NH said speed monitoring has been much reduced at around 40 per month and just 37 in Sept. It was previously over 100 per month. The data shows no breakdown of how many locations, days, or times when the 40 recordings were made. For example, 1 day, 1 location at 1 time or many locations, days and times? The number of speed checks needs to increase as drivers seem to be lacking the restraint that was happening when testing was more regular. The HM staffing issues at the quarry are noted but there still needs to be a solution to the speeds being seen. Covert camera use, greater number of camera use events, cameras being used at the times and locations where speeding is the worst. Simon promised a push last time. Is this happening?
- SP said he had had a push on speed monitoring, but not near the 100 mark as previously recorded, due to resource. Reference a covert camera, when the staff are sitting in their car, they go unnoticed, but I have a duty of care to my staff to ensure they are wearing PPE if speed monitoring in the road.
- NH said Sept data - 1 in 4 speed checks showed trucks going over 15mph. Quite a high number. 100 truck movements a day would mean 25 speeding events and that's just

those that were checked. What were the speeds on those 9 or so 15mph+ checks in Sept and what was done about the speeding drivers?

- SP said those that were doing 15mph+ were between 16mph and 20mph, so they were not breaking the speed limit, but were not doing what the quarry has asked them to do.
- SP said all drivers caught over 15mph get spoken to, with repeat offenders being banned for 4 weeks. 2 drivers have been banned in November for going over 15mph. Its normally a 4-week ban, but in the past, Heidelberg Materials has also issued permanent bans.
- NH said can residents use the camera if properly trained. This seems a sensible way of increasing the camera usage.
- SP said he would think about it, to which BA replied if we have a resource issue, it could be an option to increase the speed monitoring.
- NH asked if there was an update on the ROMP.
- BA said it would be covered in the agenda later, but no, nothing has been issued by Somerset Council (SC) so in the meantime Heidelberg Materials' will continue to work to the current planning conditions which are in place until the year 2042.
- NH said regarding MP Connect - is this still being undertaken as vigorously as in previous months? Many new trucks and drivers seen of late - a lot of 8x4's, new trucks to Venns Gate, speeds look high.
- SP said yes, all drivers get an induction, some before they visit and some at the first visit, but once the first visit has occurred, all drivers visiting Batts Combe are inducted to site rules.
- NH asked how SP's ride-a-long went?
- SP said it went well, but not on the original planned day and ended up being on a Tuesday when I know NH works at the office. I was going to call him just before we passed his house, to tell him the speed at which we were passing, so he could calibrate his eye.
- NH said reference the relocation of the speed sign, it would be ok to put it outside Venns House for a few weeks.
- SP said yes, he had instructed the maintenance team to move it on several occasions and will chase them again.
- NH said Esso garage parking - trucks are parking on the bend outside the Esso garage and this has been reported for the last 3 weeks. Some trucks are multiple offenders. They are getting there as early as 5.40am but are not allowed into the quarry until 6am. They queue and enter Venns Gate at 5.55am. 3/4/5 trucks queueing on a blind bend, at a junction and in the dark is dangerous and should be stopped. Please advise what has happened to deter drivers from doing this as it isn't working? Should it be made a police matter?
- SP said Heidelberg Materials' planning conditions are that the lorries aren't permitted to enter the quarry before 6am. They were parking on Warren's Hill. We asked them to stop

doing that as residents were being disturbed, and to not enter Venns Gate before 6am. This seems to have moved the issue to a more dangerous location. Staff have been down and warned them on a few occasions, and we have a tanker currently on a last warning for a 4-week ban. I can only advise you contact the police if you see anything or anyone acting or causing a dangerous situation.

- NH asked if there was any news of a footpath being developed in Venns Gate?
- BA said the subject would be covered in the agenda, but it had moved forward to the stage where SC's planning department has issued a reference number.
- NH said the only other issue was one her husband had raised on a few occasions, where lorries are parked, blocking her driveway, rendering them unable to leave the driveway on a few occasions.
- SP said we have a perfectly good lorry park they can use.
- NH asked if they were allowed to use it?
- SP said yes, they were allowed to use it, but felt some may prefer not to due to the strict health and safety polices Heidelberg Materials' have requiring risk assessments etc. Out in the road they wouldn't have to do the paperwork.

### **3. Batts Combe (Hanson Site) update**

- SP said there had recently been a reduction in working hours at Batts combe and were continuing to work in the Southeast corner of the quarry.
- SP said the contract crush was now complete.
- SP said the volumes the site is delivering is a 3<sup>rd</sup> less than 2019 when it was at its peak. He said in 2019 it was mostly Heidelberg Materials' owned trucks, or franchise trucks hauling out of Batts Combe.
- SP said for the new members of the group, we have 3 types of hauliers that use Batts Combe. Heidelberg Materials' owned trucks, being driven by Heidelberg Materials' employees. Franchisees, so these trucks are branded with Heidelberg Materials but are owned by and are subcontractors, so the drivers work for the sub-contractor. The third type being those who collect, so they use us as a shop so to speak. The outgoing tonnage is down compared to 2019, but the collect drivers have increased, and these are more challenging to control.

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### **Blasting**

- SP showed a video of the most recent blast and explained Heidelberg Materials' planning conditions mean they can operate to a maximum Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) of 9mm/s (millimetres per second). The lowest recorded in 2023 for Batts Combe was 0.79mm/s and the highest 2.725mm/s and well within the limit of the planning condition.
- SP shared a table of all the recorded PPVs for the year so far -

Date	Shot	PPV Recorded	Scaled Distance	Air Over Pressure	MIC	mic A	Quarry Level
Wednesday, January 18, 2023	R0123	0.925	70.0	111	165	12.8	8
Monday, February 6, 2023	R0223	1.25	50.9	109	154	12.4	4
Friday, March 3, 2023	R0323	0.79	68.2	108	153	12.4	9
Tuesday, April 18, 2023	R0423	1.175	73.8	110	134	11.6	9
Friday, April 28, 2023	R0523	1.475	65.8	111	154	12.4	9
Saturday, May 20, 2023	R0623	2.05	55.7	114	145	12.0	5
Friday, June 9, 2023	R0723	2.725	53.9	112	148	12.2	5
Wednesday, June 14, 2023	R0823	2.075	47.1	111	176	13.3	6
Thursday, July 6, 2023	R0923	1.975	54.1	108	159	12.6	5
Monday, July 17, 2023	R1023	2.425	50.5	108	160	12.6	5
Tuesday, July 25, 2023	R1123	1.525	52.0	108	164	12.8	6
Friday, August 4, 2023	R1223	2.35	70.0	110	135	11.6	9
Thursday, August 17, 2023	R1323	1.88	50.7	110	181	13.5	6
Thursday, August 17, 2023	R1323	1.375	129.3	108	181	13.5	6
Thursday, September 14, 2023	R1423	0.775	53.6	109	137	11.7	5
Thursday, September 28, 2023	R1523	1.15	54.5	112	150	12.2	7
Friday, October 6, 2023	R1623	1.15	58.9	108	152	12.3	7
Tuesday, November 7, 2023	R1723	1.15	51.6	108	136	11.7	4
Tuesday, November 7, 2023	R1823	1.25	96.5	100	33	5.7	5.5
Monday, December 4, 2023	R1923	2.3	51.0	113	159	12.6	6

- SP said that for this week's blast (Mon 4<sup>th</sup> Dec), it was wet, there was moisture in the air and in the ground. This heightens the sense of vibration, and the cloud cover heightens the sense of Air Over Pressure (AOP), which is measured in decibels.
- SP said we didn't receive any complaints, was aware that a local Facebook page had many comments about it.
- SP said the blasting data for 2023 show the quarry is working to about a 3<sup>rd</sup> of its planning consent, and there are no more blasts planned for the rest of this year.

### **Speed Monitoring**

- SP showed the speed monitoring graph that is published on the Batts Combe community page.
- BA explained how the result on the table are sought. He said a member of staff goes to different locations on the roads leading to the quarry. They have a speed gun and only capture the speed of the trucks. He said they normally go out 2 – 3 times a week at different times of the day.
- SP said in previous meetings, a resident had asked for some more information, for example is there were 60 trucks in 1 month monitored, on how many occasions in the month was that. SP went on to say this information is commercially sensitive but would be happy to share in the meeting.



## Batts Combe HGV speed monitoring

November 2023



▲ Average speed recorded: **14 MPH**



▲ HGVs at/below 15mph: **77%**  
(No. of HGVs monitored: 61)

October 2023



▲ Average speed recorded: **14 MPH**



▲ HGVs at/below 15mph: **87%**  
(No. of HGVs monitored: 31)

September 2023



▲ Average speed recorded: **14 MPH**



▲ HGVs at/below 15mph: **76%**  
(No. of HGVs monitored: 37)

August 2023



▲ Average speed recorded: **13 MPH**



▲ HGVs at/below 15mph: **85%**  
(No. of HGVs monitored: 40)

## Community

- SP said Weare Parish Council had made a request for a donation of £500 for a bin to be installed in a new layby set up along the A38 heading southbound. The Parish Council said Somerset council had agreed to empty the bin on a regular basis but would not fund the cost of the bin. Heidelberg Materials approved the request but had not heard back from Weare Parish Council yet.
- SP said in October Batts Combe Quarry had accommodated a visit from 33 year 3 children from Axbridge First School, which was organised by teaching staff to engage the children as part of their science studies.
- SP said Batts Combe had provide 10 volunteers over a week and hired in machinery to help Axe Valley Men Shed with their land at Shortlands to dig a trench for a water pipe to get water up to the end of the field, levelled off an area where a fruit cage is to be erected, and dug out a wildlife pond. Also, three volunteers went to the old Station in Axbridge where they have just moved to help clear a room, photograph some furniture, and post some adverts on social media to sell to raise money for the charity.



- SP said Batts Combe Quarry recently run a colouring competition between three school's close to the quarry. Axbridge First School, Cheddar First School, and Draycott First School. He said we received over 260 entries and a child from Axbridge First School won the overall prize of chocolates, colouring set and for him and his family to visit the quarry on 1<sup>st</sup> December to switch on the Batts Combe star, which can be seen from surrounding villages.

## Christmas Competition Winner – Ollie Lewis



- AH said she had just attended a Dormouse training day at Batts Combe. Heidelberg Materials match funded a Somerset Wildlife Trust dormouse training session that was attended by local landowners to understand how to manage their land for the benefit of the species. We had a follow up visit with the dormouse specialist who gave us site specific management advice.

### **Feedback and complaints**

- SP said he was continuing to monitor complaints and showed the group a list of complaints received and logged since the last meeting.
- BA said for the next meeting, could we get some slides together to show how MP connect works.

### **4. Land and Mineral Planning update**

- BA said the last monitoring visit was in March and we had not yet had a follow up visit. He said we are likely to get a couple in the new year, other than that there is nothing new since the last meeting and RA has confirmed there is no further update.

### **5. Landscape & Biodiversity update**

- AH said off the back of the dormouse training session the specialist came out and gave some useful site-specific advice on managing the dormice habitat on site. The idea is to create a mix of scrub and bramble and coppicing work will be carried out at The Perch and the woodland adjacent to Tower Testing in the new year.
- AH said fences that had been cut to install gates along the back of the house on Warrens Hill have been tidied up to keep the cows out.
- AH said bramble and scrub regrowth that had re-grown since the flailing on The Perch last winter has been sprayed off.

- AH said Hydroseeding will be carried out in the Spring on the ramps to try and get vegetation to start growing and make them less visible in the landscape.
- NH asked if a decision had been made regarding the wild sheep and goats.
- AH said we are still working with the National Trust and Longleat. She said a thermal drone survey would be done in February with the intention to draw up a plan to reduce numbers.
- AH said the sheep and goats cause an issue due to hygiene, with Batts Combe being FEMAS regulated, and we've not been able to plant trees for about 6 years because they eat them all which is against our restoration and biodiversity aims.
- AH said once the plan was drawn up, it would take a while to put in place due to having to obtain shooting licences etc.

## 6. Environmental Health update

- SP said the last visit was on 16<sup>th</sup> October where a couple of small recommendations were highlighted, other than that all was well.
- SP said he's recently taken out an annual service contract for ducts and emissions testing.

## 7. Council update

- BC said nothing to report from Cheddar Parish.
- MT said nothing to report from Axbridge.
- PH said the "STOP" signs on the slip road off Axbridge bypass were still causing an issue.
- BF said there was nothing to report from Somerset.

## 8. AOBs

- BF said he's forgotten to go through the actions from the last minutes, so would do it now.
  - MMB to upload approved minutes from December's meeting to the Batts Combe web page. **Done.**
  - BA to submit plans for pathway in Venns Gate. **JH completed and is awaiting a response.**
  - BA to confirm who will be responsible for the footpath. **Done – would be Highways.**
  - SP to speak to sweepers about speed. **SP spoke to sweepers.**

- SP to chase convex mirror for AC. **Done but had no effect so mirror back in office.**
- SP to increase speed monitoring in busy periods and early in the morning. **Done.**
- SP to move speed sign. **On list of jobs for fitters.**
- MMB to get more detail on speed monitoring. E.g., How many occasion was speed monitoring done to get the overall number of lorries checked? **Done**
- MMB noted that NC had attended on behalf of Avon & Somerset Constabulary, which has not happened before due to work times and emergencies.
- NC said regarding HGV's parking at the side of the road by the garage and blocking the road on a bend, he would ask his sergeant if he could change his shift so he could drive past and speak with them. He went on to say the only other team working that early in the morning would be the response team, who are run ragged and would not be able to attend.
- NC said about "speed watch", civilians would not be insured and would not recommend allowing volunteers (residents) to carry out the task.
- AH said could we offer free hi-viz over jackets and back packs to residents, so they are more visible to traffic?
- PH said if this is ok, can I add it to the newsletter for the school.
- SP said yes, that would be fine, to which AH added it would be for the residents of Venns Gate, Hannay Road, and Warren's Hill.
- NC said if residents had clear footage of hauliers breaking the law, for example videos of them speeding past their homes, breaking weight restriction or using a mobile phone while driving, they should upload them to the Avon & Somerset website.
- SP asked if this was the same process with any complainants.
- NC replied in the past, the evidence provided by the public, by uploading images and video has resulted in letter's being sent to the driver, points and even prosecution. Go to [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk) and click on "report".
- BA advised the date for the next meeting being 07 March 2024.

### **Summary of Actions**

- SP to move speed sign
- Slide on MP connect for next meeting

### **Proposed dates for next 4 meetings**

Thursday 07 March 2024

Thursday 06 June 2024  
Thursday 12 September 2024  
Thursday 05 December 2024

[ENDS]