



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting**
16th April 2024 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Philip Ham (PH) (Chair) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Ian Strachan (IS) Heidelberg Materials, Strategic Development Manager
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

JOINED ONLINE:

- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager
- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers) Somerset Council
- Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council
- Alan Townsend (AT) Coleford Parish Council
- Paul Hooper (PHO) Downhead Parish Council
- Ricard Evans (RE) Whatley and Chantry Parish Council
- Simon Clegg (SC) Nunney Parish Council
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials Regional Transport Manager
- Steven Morton (SM) Heidelberg Materials UK Communications Director
- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council
- Nieke Pengelly (NP) WSP

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

- Welcome 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 – Vincent Pitt, Unit Manager Whatley quarry, Heidelberg Materials

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

3. Environmental Update – Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect, Heidelberg Materials

4. Planning update – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Heidelberg Materials

- Westdown progress
- Whatley ROMP

5. Any other business

6. Date of next meeting

(Please note that the order of the agenda may need to be adjusted to accommodate Vincent's possible late arrival due to travelling back from an internal meeting in the Midlands)

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

PH welcomed attendees to the meeting and highlighted aim to complete meeting by 18.30.

Apologies received from: Vince Pitt, Martin Ford & Nienke Pengelly.

Review of previous minutes:

- The Group confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters Arising:
 - Water accumulation along Bulls Green Link Road has been investigated and it looks like the culverts are covered and clogged. Possibly going straight down the road in heavy rain. BC has contacted Somerset Highways which has given the issue a reference for inspection /action as necessary.
 - Regarding the local seedlings that have been collected. The beds are ready up by the top office, and they just need filling with soil. The seedlings will be re-planted into Vallis Vale - RK advised he has some to pot on.

2. Planning update

Westdown

TM provided an update on the planning application to update existing conditions for Westdown quarry ahead of reopening it:

- Amended proposals submitted to Somerset Council late October 2023. In discussion and working with CA regarding outstanding objections, Heidelberg Materials (HM) has had meetings with Natural England (NE) and Somerset Council looking at the next steps, and is now finalising reports ahead of the application going to committee. Will keep everyone updated.
- Currently unsure which committee the planning will now sit with given there is a proposed constitutional change being put to the council in May.
- The new proposed scheme of working sees operations limited to within Westdown's existing boundary.

Whatley

- We are still waiting with regards to the ROMP. Somerset Council asked for some further information it said it required. HM has pushed back on this as the company has already provided this.
- TM added that, given so many changes in policy, SC needs to be clear so everyone can see.

3. Landscapes update

AH gave an update on the environmental work going on at Vallis vale, Asham Wood and Whatley.

Vallis Vale

- Felling works at Vallis Vale have been suspended until after bird nesting, as advised by the ecologists that have been overseeing the felling works for the duration of the project. There are c. 12 trees still standing and these will be felled after bird nesting has concluded in September. There are some minor snagging works left to do to rationalise and tidy up areas and reinstate removed and broken kissing gates and fencing.
- Compensatory bat and bird boxes have been erected as advised by our Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) but AH has requested that HM erect more to include owl and raptor boxes after feedback from the public.
- A useful meeting was held with a couple of local residents to explain in more detail the felling works going on in Vallis and how this was being managed on the ground, including the interaction between the felling contractor and ECoW and the details of our management plan and permission. One key thing that came from that meeting was the feeling that communication from AH could improve and so AH will aim to provide more detailed minute notes in this meeting and use RK as the site's representative to post more information on the village WhatsApp group. We have a village walk this Thursday, but again if it would be useful we could increase the frequency to as and when people feel it would be beneficial.
- A complaint was filed with Natural England (NE) the statutory body by a member of the general public regarding the works in Vallis Vale. A site meeting has been held with NE to review the felling works to date and the issues raised and we will wait to see if there is any further remedial actions required – albeit on site, NE seemed to not sustain the concerns raised.
- A site meeting was also held with Somerset Council's rights of way officer, the Environment Agency (EA), Wild Trout Trust (WTT) and NE regarding the footpath repairs that are required along the Egford Brook path. Following discussions, it has been concluded that given the time it takes to get EA approval it is likely the paths won't be repaired until this time next year. This is not the timeframe we hoped for. However, it is essential to get the correct approvals and we are looking forward to working in partnership with the WTT, EA and NE to come up with sustainable solutions to the footpath and bank erosion issues while also benefitting the ecology of the site.
- Temporary repairs have been made to the footbridge on the Egford Brook and Mells River confluence with a full replacement scheduled for 2025.
- The sleeper bridge over the River Mells has also been condemned for all users following a structural survey and will now be closed. The other footbridge over the Mells has also been surveyed and we are awaiting the results.
- There is a labyrinth of unauthorised paths on the site made mostly from desire lines and avoiding worn paths (understandably so in places). We will be reviewing these in conjunction with Natural England to see whether any of them can be

retained in conjunction with any plans to replace the sleeper bridge, or not as the case may be.

- Some geological volunteers kindly carried out a maintenance visit to the De La Beche unconformity and removed rubbish and helped to clear vegetation from the base of the face. We will be installing some steps up to the De La Beche, where ground conditions are difficult, to help improve access. AH will also be working with geologists to create information boards for this site and Tedbury Camp.
- The Earth Science Centre is recommencing their school field trips today.
- There are ongoing works to remove debris build up in the river against bridges but these have to be done when there is safe access to do so when the rivers aren't in spate.
- Following AH visit last week in the spring sunshine she concluded that, despite the footpath erosion issue and the fact we have felled c. 500 trees this winter, the site looked very good. The brash stacking is tidy and has been overseen by the ECoW, there are good amounts of cord wood left for deadwood habitat and the ground flora was regenerating well.
- AH has commissioned a further year's worth of monitoring of the bat cave in the old quarry (Mells Valley SAC) after it was confirmed last year that Lesser Horseshoe bats were still using the site, we hope numbers will begin to increase now that the site is secure. In addition, AH has asked for a quote from First Ecology to start conducting bat transect surveys along the rivers to build up a picture of how bats are using the site overall.

RK asked if there was any progress with the lime kilns. AH advised 2 of the lime kilns had been cleared of vegetation, one is a work in progress and a third is still to do. VP has commissioned structural surveys of the features and these surveys will be reviewed for actions for repair or if fencing is required to provide safety standoffs.

RK also asked about the information boards that were mentioned in a previous meeting. AH advised these are on the to do list and she is in contact with local geologists re content.

Asham Wood

- Coppicing works within the wood are ongoing, plus clearing of fallen trees across the Rights of Way is also taking place whenever reported.
- The pond in Asham has also had its edges coppiced to improve light levels to the water body.
- The deer stalking has commenced and AH advised that people may be aware of a series of high seats installed.
- The woodland management plan is due to be updated this year in liaison with NE and the Forestry Commission.
- The northern end of the bridleway associated with Fordbury Water will also be repaired in liaison with SCC RoW officer this year having been eroded by flood waters.

Whatley

- Repairs to the perimeter fence in Railford Bottom have been carried out following a report from the public.
- Footpath repairs will also be carried out in Railford Bottom as agreed with the SC RoW officer when ground conditions allow.
- Subject to an ecological watching brief there are some ash trees to come down on the hill up to the entrance of the quarry where the road will also be temporarily closed.

4. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview:

- TM provided an update on production and sales volumes year to date. Production is on target, and sales are up on plan.

Capex

- As discussed, there will be rail track replacement works ongoing with £600K approved for 2024. RK asked where these will be happening. ACTION VP to update.
- Dust suppression project completed by year end.
- Allocation of £200,000 for improved onsite welfare facilities, including upgrades showers etc.
- Wash plant upgrade planned.

Projects

- Installation of defibrillators in Chantry. An Electrician will be involved in setting these up.
- Participation in a local litter pick on the roads around 5 Mendip quarries. 42 people volunteered over the 5 days, and 18 miles of roads were litter picked. Approx 20,000 items were bagged (1740kg).
- Planned repeat river clean volunteering in autumn. We are speaking to the Wild Trout Trust to find out which areas need to be cleaned this year.
- Bridge repairs (as per AH update).
- Lime kiln survey. (as per AH update).

Recruitment

- Recruiting for a number of roles including 11 in the maintenance team.
- Recruitment of two Mechanical Engineering apprentices as promoted in 5 Alive parish magazine. www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/career It seems one application received has been as a result of them seeing it in the 5 Alive Magazine.

Blasting Operations:

SS provided an update on quarry blasting:

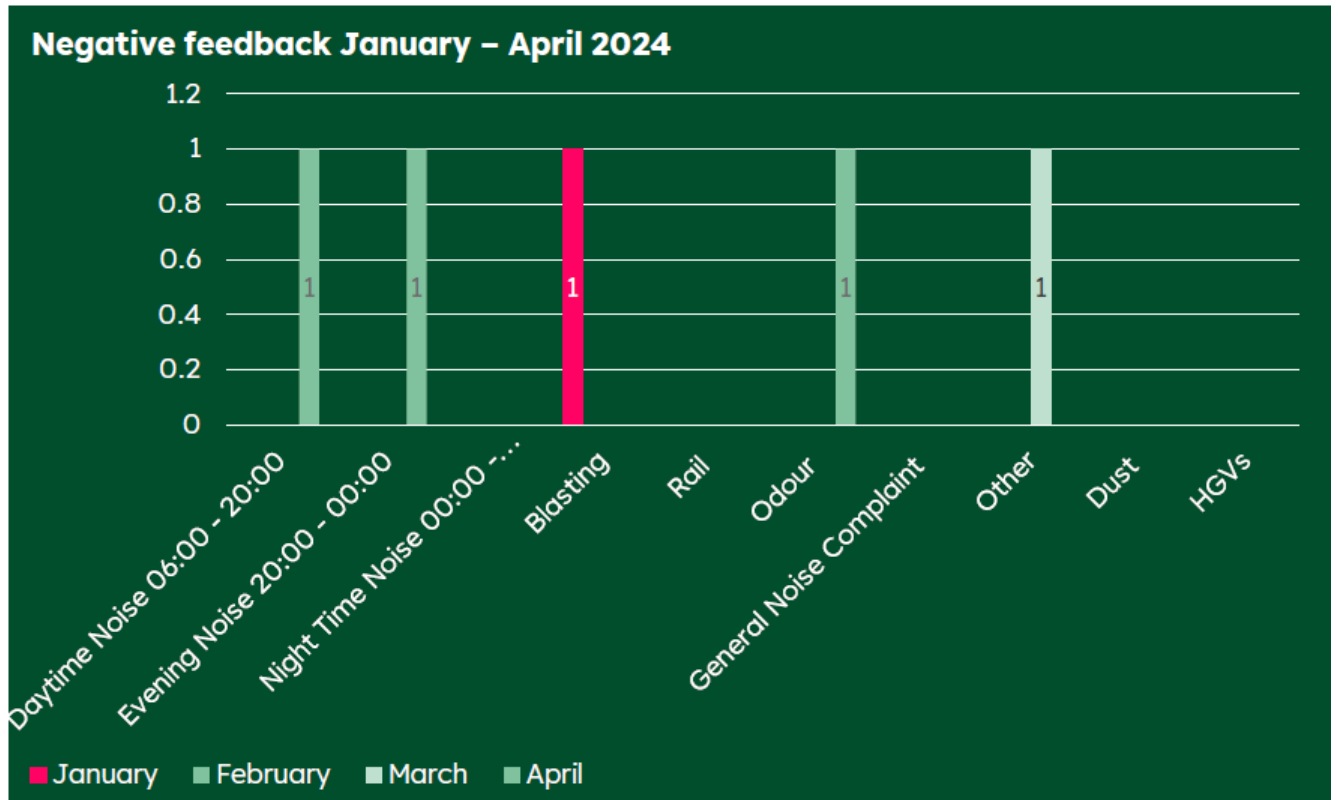
- The 2024 YTD (until end of March): Average highest PPV recorded: 2.65 mm/s (average for 2023 2.74 mm/s)
- Of the 27 blasts in Q1 96% were at, or below, 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry).
- 100% of blasts in Q12024 within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.

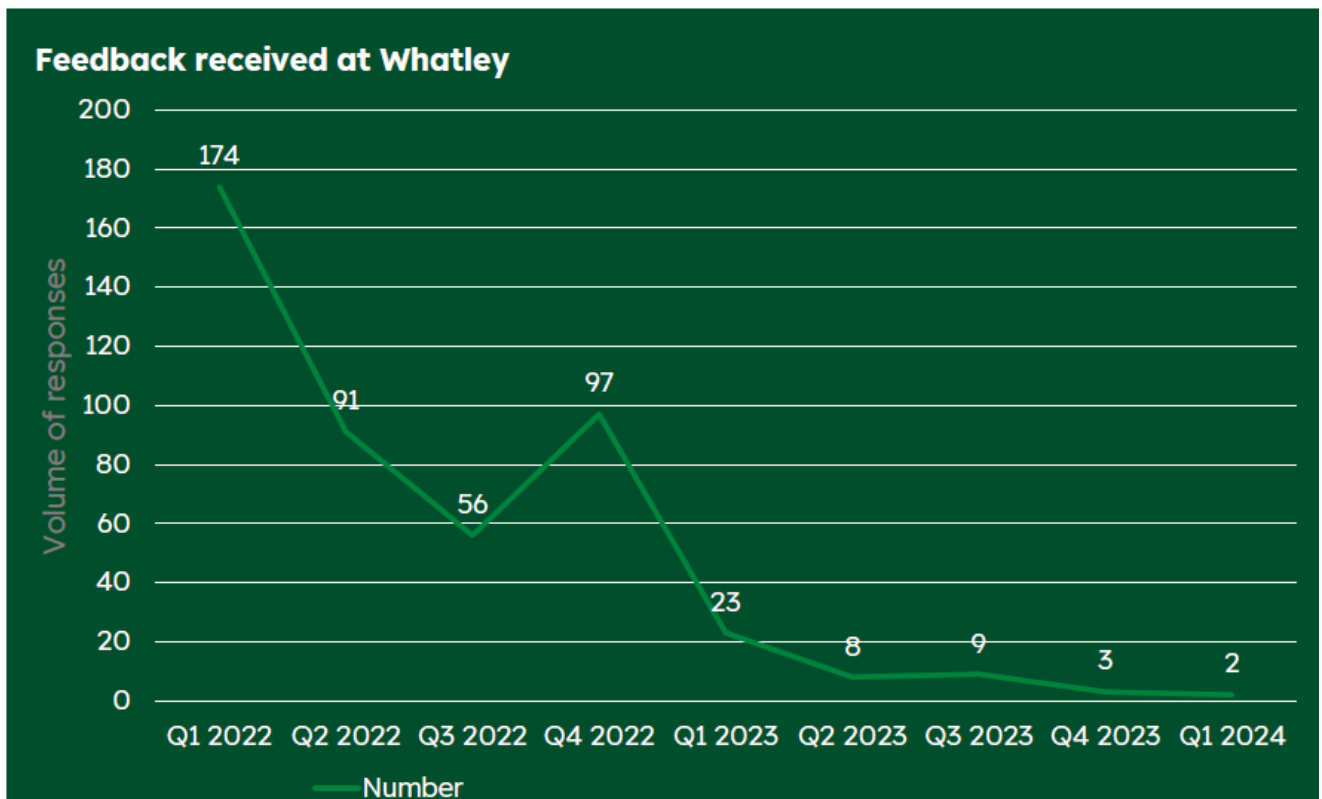
Feedback

SS provided information on feedback received:

Between January and April x5 pieces of negative feedback received, with issues being noise (1 day and 1 evening), odour, lights at night and blasting. We also had contact made regarding fallen tree damage to the perimeter fence.

See diagrams shared at meeting below:





Feedback January - April 2024

Re Noise

- 1 complaint relates to call from local resident concerning noise. Able to address this quickly by identifying source and carrying out immediate response.

Re blasting

- Relates to vibration on 19 January 2024 - highest PPV recorded at offsite monitoring locations was 3.05mm. AOP was 123 dB (average since 2021 being 114 dB).

Re odour

- Six local locations checked, but no smell as described by resident experienced/identified. No bitumen deliveries taking place.

Re lighting

- Level of lighting required at night for safety purposes. Reviewing again, if any lights can be switched off.

Community update

Recent commitments:

- Significant contribution to refurbishment of Great Elm Village Hall.
- Contribution to Friends of Chantry church re installation of lighting.
- Funding new sports kit for Mells Church of England First School.
- Cranmore parish Council - contribution towards installation of new defibrillator.
- 5 Alive parish magazine.
- £25,000+ committed so far this year.

AOB

- AC mentioned they hadn't seen any lorries in Waterlip for ages, which is excellent.
- SW wanted to say thank you for the response re the noise complaint. It was dealt with promptly.
- EK mentioned she really enjoys being a part of the committee and finds the detail about quarrying really interesting, adding "I love all this".
- RK asked how Heidelberg Materials are shortening their name. SS advised it can be shortened to HM but definitely not just Heidelberg.
- AH mentioned that she is working with NE regarding East Mendip Tree advice. NE are working on a new project to arrange grants and give advice to create new woodland around East Mendip in an effort to help make the ancient woodland more resilient. See included attachment.
- TM gave an update on legal position on validity of Asham void. HM understands and respects Somerset's position on the validity of the IDO scheme yet with our legal position being contrary to this the scheme is at present being held in abeyance. HM is confident that the revised scheme at Westdown can now be dealt with in isolation to this, given the different applications. However, HM is seeking to consider this further in order to provide greater clarity and remove any ambiguity to assist the public and the decision-making process.
- AH also mentioned the Quarry Life Awards, which is an HM Award given to projects to enhance the biodiversity of the quarry. It's open to anyone, who might have a great idea for a project. www.quarrylifeaward.com

Next meeting date

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 16th July 2024 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:
Tuesday 15th October 2024

Meeting Ends 18:55