

**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
19 October 2021
Whatley Quarry – In person and via Microsoft Teams**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

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|----------------------------|--|
| • Ian Strachan (IS) | Hanson Aggregates Strategic Development Manager (Chair) |
| • Justin Collis (JC) | Hanson Aggregates Area Operations Manager |
| • Trystan Mabbitt (TM) | Hanson UK Consenting and Development Manager |
| • Philip Ham (PC) | Councillor Somerset County Council, Mendip Central & East |
| • Alison Barkshire (AB) | Mendip District Council for Ammerdown |
| • Paul Hooper (PHo) | Downhead Parish Council |
| • Lisa Ramsay (LR) | Nunney Parish Council |
| • David Mattick (DM) | Leigh-on-Mendip Parish Council |
| • Alan Townsend (AT) | Coleford Parish Council |
| • Ann Crowcombe (AC) | Cranmore Parish Council |
| • John Henderson (JH) | Mells Parish Council |
| • Ruth Amundson (RA) | (standing in for Colin Arnold Principal Planning Officer, Somerset County Council) |
| • Richard King (RK) | Great Elm resident |
| • Will Palmer (WP) | Whatley Resident |
| • Andrew Bramstone (ABR) | Chantry resident |
| • Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) | Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council |
| • Francis Hayden (FH) | Mendip District Council, Cranmore Doultling and Nunney |
| • Samantha Stagg (SS) | Communications for Hanson UK |

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

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|--------------------|---|
| • Martin Payne | Chantry and Mells Parish Council |
| • Martyn Ford | Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers), Somerset County Council |
| • Nienke Pengelly | NP Wood plc |
| • Steven Morton | Hanson UK Marketing and Communications Manager |
| • Simon Stonehouse | Natural England |
| • Lila Morris | Somerset Wildlife Trust |
| • PC Toni Lines | Avon and Somerset Police |
| • Jason Black | Mendip Rail Ltd |

AGENDA

1. **Introduction** – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Welcome and handover to elected Chair
 - Review of minutes from last meeting
 - Review of Group's Terms of Reference

2. **Whatley update** – Justin Collis, Area Operations Manager, Hanson UK
 - Operational overview
 - Logistics (including road and rail)
 - Feedback
 - Environmental
3. **Other sites and community update** – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Westdown
 - Community giving update
4. **Noise monitoring survey and next steps** – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
5. **Planning update: Whatley and Westdown** – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Hanson UK
6. AOBs
7. Date of next meeting

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome:

- Ian Strachan (IS) greeted all parties and thanked them for their attendance at the meeting. He explained the decision to switch to a hybrid meeting had been made on basis of latest Covid rates for Somerset.

Review of previous minutes:

- IS asked for validation of the Group's Terms of Reference shared at the last meeting. These were accepted by the Group and IS confirmed that they would be added to the Liaison Group section of the Whatley and Westdown community website.
- IS thanked the candidates who had put themselves forward for the role of Group Chair. He advised the Group that Cllr Philip Ham (PH) had secured a majority in the online vote of members. IS handed over the role of Group Chair to PH.
- PH asked the Group to validate the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and reflective account. This was agreed and the minutes accepted by the group.
- Will Palmer (WP) advised PH that he had yet to receive a response to his direct email to PH of the 23rd September. PH asked WP to resend it.

Actions from previous meeting:

Justin Collis (JC) provided feedback on outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

- *CA to confirm Somerset County Council (SCC) approach re ROMP process and whether local people will be consulted.* This action remains outstanding.
- *Recirculate details on how to complain to SCC and MDC.* Appendix 2 to last meeting minutes.
- *Hanson to check wording on website re funding support for community giving.* Complete. To confirm, at Whatley and Westdown, Hanson will consider supporting pupil-based educational initiatives, but its policy is not to support day to day school spending.
- *Hanson to set up online voting for those who put themselves forward to be Group chair.* Complete, with PH elected Chair.
- *IS to attend Martin Payne's (MP's) property re blast on 23/07/21.* Complete and IS attended additional further residents' properties.
- *Follow up with Cllr Ham re his proposals for funding for roundabout at Beacon junction/Old Wells Road.* Complete.

Detailed in response to planning related queries circulated 2/09/21:

"Our detailed traffic and transport assessment assessed the impact of the proposed development traffic on the surrounding network and key junctions. Although it concluded that development traffic can be accommodated on the existing transport network, In light of ongoing liaison with SCC on highway issues relating to our proposals, we are keeping an open mind on this issue pending feedback and guidance from SCC Highways."

- *Confirm if Hanson is willing to have a section 106 - 8 million tonne cap on Westdown and Whatley to future proof changes in strategy/management etc.* Confirmed. Hanson is happy to make this commitment as part of the planning process if required.

Points raised:

- Paul Hooper (PHo) subsequently asked if improvements to Beacon Cross roundabout would be made part of a Section 106 agreement for Westdown quarry. PH confirmed he had had a constructive dialogue with Hanson on this and that as Somerset County Councillor he was strongly advocating for this.
- John Henderson (JH) asked about improvements to footpaths close to Whatley. Trystan Mabbitt (TM) advised that he had met with Cllr Berkshire and discussed the principle with SCC and that Hanson's preference it to treat any upgrades as part of the outstanding ROMP

(Review of Minerals Planning) which remains undetermined since Hanson's submission to SCC in 2012

- JC confirmed that vegetation had been cut back around the entrance to Whatley in order to improve pedestrian access.

- *Provide information for RK and WP on: Number and configuration of trains and KEA wagon destinations and why can't KEA wagons be used in daytime.*

JC advised that currently, Mendip Rail has x26 KEA wagons, 19 of which are in use at Whatley. KEA allocation is dictated by facilities at destination railheads, and some are in use during daytime hours.

Wherever possible coordination takes place to ensure the configuration of KEA wagons in one train, but there are instances when the x7 'spares' are used to replace other wagons undergoing maintenance.

All KEA wagons will be replaced in Spring 2022 with the arrival of new wagons.

- *Confirm policy to RK re debris in River Mells:*

Complete. For reference: Hanson does not routinely clear small debris from the river unless it is likely to cause a threat to flooding upstream or damage to bridge structures. We do remove larger trees that fall across or into the river, but we do rely on local walkers and/or residents let us know if they see anything like this. The best way to reach the team is either via 0800 644 4234 or by emailing Whatley.quarry@hanson.com

- *Advise RK what the pink dots on the trees mean.*

Confirmed and also detailed in issue 2 of community newsletter: Red dots mark trees affected by ash dieback as part of work in liaison with the Forestry Commission re felling affected trees.

- *Provide information on how limestone aggregate is used.*

The following information was shared with the Group: In addition to use in construction and maintenance, limestone aggregates are used in.....

- Cleaning water – to purify and control hardness; used to treat sewage, P
- Plastics – used as an inert fill, to mix with polymers
- Electricity – lime used in coal mines to prevent explosions, used to refine oil
- Carpet backing – used as a filler to extend latex
- Rubber – used as a filler
- Paper – used as a filler
- Paint – used as a filler
- Toothpaste – used as an abrasive
- Soap – used in making soap
- Cattle feed – put it in their feed for the calcium
- Chicken feed – put into feed for hens to make strong shells
- Sugar – used to purify it
- Clothes – used in dyes and washing powders
- Fertiliser – used to control PH of soils and neutralize acid soil
- Pencils – used as filler in 'lead'
- Indigestion tablets – limestone active ingredient, controls gastric acid

- Medicines – used as a carrier for active ingredient
- Flour – used as filler
- Food – add to foods aimed at children, with added calcium
- Drinks – controls PH of alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks ie orange juice
- Chewing gum – used as a filler

An infographic and further information developed by the Mineral Products Association re the role mineral products play in construction were also shared with the Group:



- In a typical year, the UK uses around 250 million tonnes of aggregates, of which 28% (c.70Mt) is derived from recycled or secondary materials with the balance coming from primary sources quarried from the land or dredged from the seabed.
- Collectively, this is equivalent to four tonnes for every man, woman and child.
- Source: www.mineralproducts.org

2. Whatley quarry update

JC provided an update:

Operational overview:

- Volumes YTD on target
- Continuing to trial co-efficiencies:
 - From 5th July this has included suspension of activity at the primary crusher from 00.00 to 06.00.
 - Primary Last load at midnight.
 - We have also suspended excavation/working the primary at weekends since the middle of May and this continues.
- On-going additional investment including delivery of £10m of new plant with delivery of new truck linings expected from December.
- No current cases of Covid-19 or instances of isolation.
- x3 new local apprentices now started, plus x2 new female starters – reflecting Hanson’s diversity commitments and support via its Network of Women (NOW).
- Finalist for Mineral Products Association H&S innovation award – 10th November.

Points raised:

- AB asked for an update on the development of pathways around Whatley. TM confirmed (as above) that it was Hanson’s intention to wrap any amendments into the ROMP or future planning consent.

Logistics (including road and rail)

- Rail works completed – to improve track conditions.
- Ongoing liaison with Mendip Rail re configurations of KEA.
- SCC highways work not yet complete.

Feedback

Month	Number of contacts logged	Number of correspondents	% Negative	%Neutral	% Positive	No. Negative
February	16	8	100			16
March	51	16	79	21		47
April	67	21	71.5	27	1.5	51
May	53	18	43	19	2	42
June	37	81	81	16	3	30
July	56	30	71.5	28.5	0	40
August	34	26	69	25	5	25
September	47	27	68	32	0	32
October	18	10	66	27	6	11
Total	379	237				294

- JC confirmed that between February and 18/10/21 Hanson had received x 379 logged items of correspondence from x 100 individuals. Of these x294 were complaints from x61 people, with x3 correspondents sending x128 complaints. This is equivalent to 34% of all correspondence and 43% of all negative feedback received.
- JC set out that since the last meeting the percentage of complaints relating to rail related noise had dropped, as had those relating to daytime noise and blasting. He also set out that Hanson is now monitoring complaints received relating to night-time noise (20.00-00.00) and that this group represented the majority of emails received.

Issue as a percentage of negative feedback received	August - October
daytime noise 06.00 -20.00	7%
evening noise	42%
Night-time noise	20%
blasting	16%
rail noise	3%
other	12%

Environmental

- Whatley: On going liaison with Natural England and Forestry Commission re ash dieback management.
- On-going road sweeping activity.

Blasting

- JC confirmed that work to reduce vibration levels continues and that Hanson is still trialling approaches to:
 - Control vibration without increasing frequency of blasting
 - Maintain fragmentation to enable the primary crusher to be suspended at 00.00
 - JC advised that targeting blast design on the south face of the quarry continues to be designed to a lower self-imposed maximum PPV of 4.5mm/s – down from previous design parameter of 7mm/s.
 - JC also advised the Group that additional monitoring locations had been instigated.
- JC advised that a blasting notification service, as detailed in the recent community update newsletter, would soon be launched providing those who sign up with advance notice of blasts.

3. Other sites and community update

- JC provided an update on Hanson's other East Mendip sites:
 - Westdown: Review of the woodland management plan for Asham wood.
 - Vallis Vale: Liaison with Natural England, Somerset Wildlife and Forestry Commission ongoing. Hazardous tree survey complete – sadly the impact of ash dieback across the Mendips means work to fell affected trees is necessary to ensure the safety of the users of Vallis Vale. Hanson mindful

this will have an impact on visual amenity and we are working on a replantation scheme with appropriate indigenous species.

Points raised

- RK thanked JC for the progress report and said he looked forward to spring and the introduction of the KEA wagons. He asked if recent works in the tunnel would result in any further noise reductions associated with the railhead. JC set out that the tunnel maintenance work was carried out by Network Rail and was not instigated with a view to mitigating noise but to ensure the safety of the track.
- JC advised that additional work replacing sleepers may provide some noise mitigation benefit, but the gradient of the track will still necessitate trains having to break as they travel towards Westbury. JC added that it will be the introduction of the new wagons that will help to mitigate train related noise, though the reduction in feedback received from the local community relating to rail noise indicate the measures taken to date have provided some benefit.
- RK asked if there was any progress on an updated Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), especially in light of the comments about Ash dieback and the impact on Hanson owned land by the River Mells. TM responded that with discussions ongoing with the relevant bodies including the Forestry Commission this has yet to be carried out. He suggested a more detailed update from the Landscape team at the next meeting. He confirmed that a revised BAP would consider the visual impact of ash dieback.
- Francis Hayden asked if Hanson could confirm its policy with regards to the removal of tress with ash dieback. He asked if all trees are removed as a matter of course or if it is considered that some may recover/have immunity. TM and IS advised that the approach would be confirmed.
- PH referred to the condition of the road outside the quarry acknowledging the issues relating to its adoption by SCC. He stressed that regardless of the history it still needed resolving. TM advised that Hanson's legal representative has been advised by SCC's solicitor that a change of guard in SCC has meant that things had stalled and that an updated instruction from whoever now has oversight in SCC is required to allow them to proceed. IS advised that Hanson has offered to cover all costs associated with the work but is legally not allowed to do the work itself.

Community Giving

- IS provided a recap on the company's approach:

Hanson's 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.
 - Recent donations:
 - £500 towards mells digital – village website.

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

Stakeholder engagement

- IS provided an update on recent activity:
 - Issue 2 of Community Matters distributed.
 - Open Day – postponed until Spring 2022.
 - Visit to site by Russell Society – archaeologists

4. Noise monitoring survey and next steps

- JC set out the existing permissions as they relate to noise at Whatley:
 - Permitting allows an average of 42dB (night-time operation) across a 10-minute window.
 - Noise levels limited to 55dB(A) across a 10-minute window between 06.00 and 20.00 Mon-Fri and 06.00 -12.00 Sat. at x 5 specific locations/receptors.
- JC advised that the noise study comprised of:
 - **Source noise monitoring on site.** Over x20 activities were monitored on site during normal operations purposes and levels recorded.
 - **Noise monitoring at a number of off-site locations (NSRs)** across a range of differing meteorological conditions on six random non-consecutive dates in March, April and May.
 - Using the data collected a **CadnaA model** was developed showing a **worst-case scenario** at a range of locations helping to inform thinking on further possible mitigation measures. Steps now being evaluated include adapting the fan casing on the dust extraction fans to reduce low frequency sound. The introduction of rubber linings on the dumper trucks (see below) are also expected to reduce the sound of rock impacts.

Points raised

- WP asked if there would be any further information forthcoming on the noise study provided. IS advised that providing further information was Hanson's aim.
- WP requested more information on the issue of ambient noise and what the reference to levels means. JC set out that ambient noise refers to background noise. Ensuring a robust scientific interpretation of the data collected is still on-going.
- Paul Hooper (Pho) set out his experience with ambient noise with regards to the Bath and West showground and that aircraft noise could cause spikes.

On-going investment programme

- JC provided an update on aspects of the extensive the programme already completed:
 - Repairs and on-going maintenance to doors (standard and roller type for equipment).
 - Repairs and maintenance to cladding on buildings.
 - Crash points changed to ceramic linings (where material falls from a conveyor belt to the next in line.)
 - Reception hopper being left always one quart full to prevent full heigh fall of material being tipped from the dumper.
 - Head drums on conveyor belt lagged to prevent possible slip and squeal.
 - Older Hitachi rigid dump trucks swapped to newer Komatsu models.
 - Hanson has also suspended excavation/working the primary at weekends since the middle of May and this continues.

Plus, cessation of quarry extraction, including at the primary hopper, between 00.00 – and 06.00

Planning Update

TM provided an update on planning related issues re Westdown;

- Circulation of planning rebuttal to response in respect of queries raised in presentations to Nunney, Whatley & Chantry, Cranmore and Downhead parish councils re planning submission to SCC to update existing planning consents at Westdown.
- Planning response to material planning considerations for Westdown provided to SCC with details to be advertised both on their website and that of Hanson.
- SCC consultation on Hanson's submission for Westdown now closed.

Points raised

- A member of the group asked re the timing of the determination for Westdown. TM advised that Hanson is pushing SCC for a determination before the end of the year and is also taking steps to ensure that the application time does not lapse by extending it as required every six weeks.

- AB asked for clarification on statements made in the recent planning response document (Westdown Quarry: Our response to queries received about our proposals to update existing planning consents) that appeared contradictory with regards to the allocation of material by road and rail if Westdown is approved. AB also asked about comments referencing links to HS2. In summary, TM and IS provided the following information:

Westdown quarry has permission for mineral extraction until 2042, though it has not been operational since the late 1980s. Hanson's application to Somerset County Council is focused on bringing the existing permissions in line with modern environmental standards and quarrying practices and includes extensive mitigation measures to reduce any potential impacts on local communities and the environment.

Importantly, Hanson's proposals also include significant ecological enhancements through the restoration of the adjacent Asham Wood void area and the progressive restoration of the quarry. This transformative legacy project will provide extensive biodiversity enhancements with the proposals shaped by the need to protect and enhance wildlife habitats.

The overarching principle is that the operations of both Whatley and a reopened Westdown will not exceed the current mineral volumes and vehicle movement levels permitted for Whatley.

Whatley quarry has permission for 8mtpa extraction. In recent years levels have been circa 6mtpa. There is in the region of 110Mt of permitted reserves remaining at Whatley of which 55Mt is currently constrained given the existing infrastructure in form of the plant site, rail, stock yard and eastern tip.

Whatley Quarry is permitted to transport up to 4 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) via road. It is intended that the future 2mtpa road transport activity at Westdown would be in lieu of these agreed traffic volumes. This means that HGV traffic from Westdown Quarry and Whatley Quarry combined will not exceed 4mtpa.

There is no intention to link Whatley's rail access directly to HS2. Material transported by rail for use in the HS2 project would be delivered to a number of depots, for onward delivery to the main contractors building HS2.

There are no permissions restricting volume movement by rail from Whatley – any constraints are as a result of the site and network limitations which would preclude an increase on current levels.

In recent years @3.6mtpa have been transported by rail from Whatley. Re opening Westdown allows for rail transport to be conserved for material from Whatley to serve National Infrastructure Projects.

IS explained that Whatley has existing consents until 2030 – an application for a ROMP (Review of Mineral Planning) for Whatley was submitted to SCC in 2012 and remains undetermined.

- FH asked if Hanson was 'speculating' on gaining approval for Westdown to shore up volumes at Whatley – given that extraction from Whatley will become increasingly constrained. TM advised that permissions remain in place for extraction at Westdown, the current application is to update existing permissions. Regarding Whatley – in line with Policy, Hanson have submitted updated information to review

the conditions of the current extant 1996 permission back in 2012 as required. However, this application to update schemes, operational practices and the life of the quarry to 2042 is still to be determined.

He also set out that the mineral from these quarries is considered a national resource identified for Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects and that Hanson's approach is in line with planning policy.

AOBs

- WP set out that Hanson is having a major impact on the area and not enough is being done to mitigate the impact of operations.
- ABR added that not enough was being done including in relation to blasting and that Hanson was not being transparent with regards to long term plans for Whatley.

JC responded commenting on the reduction in complaints relating to blasting and that all recorded blasts are well within the permitted levels and within Hanson's self-imposed lower levels being applied to the south face. JC also referred to the latest dust reports that also show compliance well within permitted levels. The latest reports will be posted to the website.

IS agreed to meet with ABR separately to review latest blasting data and to set out volume plans. WP asked to be involved in this.

- Ann Crowcombe expressed her concern about the speed of HGVs in Waterlip describing a recent incident. She also asked why HGV drivers can't be told not to use this route now rather than linking it to the Westdown application. IS said he would review the issue again with the transport team with a view to instigating this – although he did set out the limitations of the company policing this among haulier and drivers given this is not a legally mandated condition.
- WP asked for clarification on the revised environmental studies required for SCC to determine the ROMP- as Colin Arnold at SCC has told him this was holding up the ROMP review.

TM advised that the ROMP remains undetermined by SCC.

He also explained that an extensive range of studies underpin the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that is an integral part of the Environmental Statement (ES) which forms a significant part of major planning applications for which an ES is a statutory requirement. These EIA studies can only be carried out at certain times of the year (such as those examining rare species) and they have a limited shelf life. Carrying out the EIA and the development of an ES is extremely expensive and time-consuming process. For example, it took over 18 months' worth of surveys and additional preparation to submit the Westdown application which all in all was a three-year process for Hanson.

TM advised that Hanson have not been advised by SCC with regards to any further requirements in this regard – given that the ROMP submitted in 2012 had a complete ES containing a full EIA.

WP said he was having audio issues and would email TM as he couldn't hear the response detailed above.

Next meeting

15th December at 5.30 in person (if possible) at Whatley offices.

Summary of actions

- Post signed copy of terms of reference to liaison group page of website
- Provide further update on noise study.
- Update on revisiting biodiversity action plan – including impact of Ash die back /visual amenity as a result of tress being felled.
- Provide details on felling policy – whether this is to take down or leave some trees suffering from Ashdie back as some may be immune.
- Hanson to follow up with SCC re condition of road outside quarry.
- Clarification on approach re road and rail for Whatley and Westdown.
- HGVs/ Waterlip – Hanson team to follow up internally with its transport team.
- WP to email to ask TM for clarification on ROMP situation.
- Provide AC with detailed number of HGVs when Hinkley material was transported by rail.