

## Whatley and Westdown Quarries Community Liaison Group Meeting

21 July 2021

Whatley Quarry – Microsoft Teams

### ATTENDEES:

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| • 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  |
| • Alison Barkshire (AB)  | Mendip District Council for Ammerdown   |
| • Philip Ham (PC)        | Councillor Somerset County Council, Mendip Central & East   |
| • Paul Hooper (PH)       | Downhead Parish Council   |
| • Lisa Ramsay (LR)       | Nunney Parish Council   |
| • David Mattick (DM)     | Leigh-on-Mendip Parish Council  |
| • Martin Payne (MP)      | Chantry and Mells Parish Council  |
| • Alan Townsend (AT)     | Coleford Parish Council   |
| • Ann Crowcombe (AC)     | Cranmore Parish Council   |
| • John Henderson (JH)    | Mells Parish Council  |
| • Colin Arnold (CA)      | Principal Planning Officer, Somerset County Council   |
| • Richard King (RK)      | Great Elm resident  |
| • Will Palmer (WP)       | Whatley Resident  |
| • Andrew Bramstone (ABR) | Chantry resident  |
| • Martyn Ford (MF)       | Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers), Somerset County Council |
| • Samantha Stagg (SS)    | Communications for Hanson UK  |

### APOLOGIES:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| • Francis Hayden     | Mendip District Council, Cranmore Doultling and Nunney    |
| • Richard Keith-Hill | Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District 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                                  |

## **AGENDA**

1. **Chair's introduction** – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
  - Welcome and introduction
  - Review of minutes from last meeting
  - Review of Group's Terms of Reference
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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. **Planning update: Whatley and Westdown** – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Hanson UK
5. AOBs
6. Date of next meeting

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## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **1. Chair's introduction**

#### Welcome:

- IS greeted all parties and thanked them for their attendance at the meeting.

#### Review of previous minutes:

- IS asked for validation of the previous minutes as a true and reflective account. This was agreed and the minutes accepted by the group.

- Actions from previous meeting:
  - *CA to provide information on levels of feedback received by SCC enforcement officer re Whatley.*
    - MF advised the group that SCC had received x 3 complaints on blasting, but that information received from Hanson shows that the blasts were compliant.
    - WP asked who at Somerset County Council (SCC) local people should direct complaints about quarry operations to.
    - MF advised that emails should be sent to him while copying in the quarry.
    - AB asked if a list of relevant contacts could be recirculated – see appendix 2 attached to these minutes.
  - *Hanson to provide geological maps and information for review at future meeting.*
    - This were shared in the meeting and are added as appendix 1 to these minutes.
  - *Hanson to liaise with Nunney PC with re attendance at forthcoming parish council meeting on 21/06/21.*
    - Complete, Hanson attended meeting on 21/06/21.
  - *Hanson to liaise with AB re footpaths.*
    - IS and TB met with AB. Hanson has been cutting back vegetation along footpath close to entrance. JC and AB awaiting feedback from SCC highway team re request for additional footpath.

#### Review of Group's Terms of Reference:

- IS asked the Group to provide feedback on the proposed terms of reference that had been circulated.
- AC asked for both Cranmore and Doultong PCs to be added as members of the Group.
- IS reaffirmed that he was acting as interim Chair and that it is Hanson's approach that a Chair should be appointed from the Group.
- He asked members to put their names forward by **28/07/21** with a view to having a subsequent online vote.
- AC proposed Cllr Philip Ham as Chair and he accepted that he would be willing to take on the role at least for the next year or two, subject to impending changes expected with SCC structure.

## **2. Whatley quarry update**

JC provided an update:

#### Operational overview:

- Volumes YTD on target
- Continuing to trial co-efficiencies:
  - From 5<sup>th</sup> July this has included suspension of activity at the primary crusher from 00.00 to 06.00
  - 18 weekends without operating plant at the primary crusher
- On-going additional investment including delivery of £10m of new plant from October:
- LED light upgrade on-going
- 3+ Covid cases/cases isolating.
- x3 new local apprentices secured for August start date.

- x1 additional employee for EPC Groupe (recruited locally).
- Whatley shortlisted for a Mineral Products Association (MPA) award for innovation in Health and Safety

Logistics (including road and rail):

- H&S works carried out to rail system. Previous correspondents informed via email.
- Ongoing liaison with Mendip Rail re configurations of KEA wagons – a few were separated following servicing and are being pulled back into one journey.
- Highways carrying out repair works on road surface adjacent to exit on 10/08/21.
- Trees cut back that were overhanging highway on Holes Lane/Knapton Hills. Also liaison with Somerset Highways who are carrying out an inspection of the site with a County Arboriculturist who is now due to undertake a detailed assessment of trees with ash dieback.

**Points raised:**

- WP asked for clarification on no weekend working. JC confirmed this applied to the primary crusher.
- RK asked if the trial of no operations at the primary crusher between 00.00 and 06.00 applied to the railhead and if rail-related operations were subject to the same planning related permitted operating hours. JC advised that rail operations are not subject to the same operating restrictions and that the current trial does not apply to the railhead.
- RK asked for further details on how many trains arrive and depart from Whatley per day and what their destinations are. JC advised that it's around 10 trains (x20 journeys) within 24 hours. He will confirm and provide further feedback.

Environmental:

- Whatley: Ash dieback review and plans for future management being prepared by senior landscape architect.
- On-going road sweeping on community roads.
- Off-site blast monitors installed at 2 additional locations – both compliant and corroborate predicted readings/blast design.

**Points raised:**

- RK asked for details of Hanson's landholding in the area. TM advised that this could not be shared as it is commercially sensitive.
- RK asked what company policy was re trees debris in the River Mells.
- RK expressed concern that the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has not been updated since 2019 and so does not address Ash dieback which is leading to tree debris in the River Mells – causing the river to foam. He asked if the pink painted dots on some trees was an indication that they were to be felled.
- TM advised that the BAP is being updated and took an action to follow up and provide RK with relevant information.
- WP asked if the KEA wagons could be scheduled for daytime use to reduce noise disturbance for locals at night. JC advised that schedule is influenced by the depots that can 'receive' them but would follow up with Mendip Rail.

## Feedback

Month	Number of contacts logged	Number of correspondents	%negative	% neutral	% positive		no. negative
February	16	8	100				18
March	51	16	79	21			47
April	67	21	71.5	27	1.5		51
May	53	18	43	19	2		42
June	37	24	81	16	3		30
July	28	14	64	25	10		18
Total	252						206

- JC confirmed that between February and 20/07/21 Hanson had received 252 logged contacts from 53 individuals.
- JC advised that feedback issues were on the following:
  - Daytime noise: 19% (19.7%)
  - Night-time noise: 28% (18.7%)
  - Blasting: 17% (11.6%)
  - Rail noise: 17% (12%)
  - Other: 17% (38%)
 (data in brackets is that reported at last meeting)
- JC advised that, overall, 82% of the feedback received had been negative but, of the negative feedback received, 61% is from x6 individuals, with these same correspondents making up 50% of all feedback received. X1 individual represents 23% of all responses received.

## Blasting/geology

JC continued with his Whatley update:

- Carboniferous limestone that is worked at Whatley strikes east-west and dips very steeply northwards at c. 70 degrees from horizontal.
  - The beds continue northwards disappearing deeply underneath the overlying Sandstones and Shales of the Coal Measures.
  - All local quarries (with the exception of Moons Hill) are confined to beds of Carboniferous limestone.
  - Blasts designed to be within an already self-imposed best practice internal PPV limit of 7mm/s.
  - Majority of blasts at Whatley are monitored as having an actual PPV between 2mm/s and 3.5mm/s.
  - Drill rigs are GPS located and some are automatic allowing for accurate blast hole placement.
  - Drone technology provides accurate burden measurements and hole placement.
  - At least x 3 locations monitored every blast.
- NB: PPV is measured on a logarithmic – non-linear – scale.*

## Work to reduce vibration levels

- Currently trialling approaches to:
  - Control vibration without increasing frequency of blasting
  - Maintain fragmentation to enable the primary crusher to be suspended at 00.00
- Now trialling the design of blasts on the **south face** of the quarry to a self-imposed PPV parameter of @4.5mm/s – down from current design parameter of 7mm/s.

- Actual PPV monitored levels previously recorded have been well within the design maximum.
- Continuing trials with double decking and triple decking.

**Points raised:**

- MP said that, given cracks in his own property and feedback from people living in Whatley and Chantry parish, that he did not have confidence in Hanson's figures. He stressed that there was a disconnect between the monitored figures and people's experience.
- IS advised that there is nothing in the geology maps to indicate why residents in Chantry/Whatley are experiencing/reporting more impactful blasts. He agreed to attend MP's property for the blast on 23/07/21.
- JC confirmed that Hanson is working to achieve a balance between the impact of blasts and their frequency.

Independent noise study

- Permitting allows an average of 42dB (night-time operation) across a 10-minute window.
- Independent noise and acoustics study carried out by Socotec over March, April and May.
- Data collected across a range of differing meteorological conditions at locations inside and outside the quarry – including a range of locations in Mells, Chantry and Whatley.
- Inside the quarry readings and modelling carried out on both mobile and static plant and across quarry activities (ie excavation, primary, rail, loaders) to understand more about noise emitters and noise radiation.
- Additional monitoring points added in May and Hanson is awaiting receipt of report.
- SOCOTEC is now analysing the data outputs which will take some time, and Hanson remains committed to sharing the findings as soon as feasible.

**3. Other sites and community update**

IS picked up the update for Hanson's other sites in the East Mendips:

Westdown:

- Installation of additional boulders to prevent motorcyclists accessing site/parking their vans.
- Security liaison with Police on 17/07/21 to prevent rave.
- Litter picking and fly-tipping/scrap removal.

JC provided an update on:

Vallis Vale:

- River works – removal of Hogweed.
- Ash dieback – landscape survey and liaison with English Heritage and Somerset Wildlife Trust, which will help to inform review of the woodland management plan for Asham Wood.

Community giving:

IS provided a recap on the company's approach:

- 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.
- Recent donations:
  - £1,100 for Nunney church bell augmentation project to commemorate the fallen of Nunney village.
  - £2,500 towards a new sensory room for SEN pupils at Mells Church of England First School.
  - £500 towards the development of a spiritual garden and outside space at Bishop Henderson Primary School Coleford.
- 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)

#### **Points raised:**

- AC queried the donations to schools as this is excluded on Hanson's website. IS reiterated the key criteria and confirmed that donations could be sought from educational establishments. IS said Hanson would review its website for clarity.
- IS provided a recap on Hanson's Quarry Life Awards – biennial award scheme aimed at raising awareness of the biodiversity value of quarrying sites and sharing emerging best practice. Prizes from EU 5,000 up to EU 30,000. More information on taking part and project criteria can be found at: <https://www.quarrylifeaward.com/about/how-participate>

#### **Stakeholder engagement:**

IS provided an update on recent and planned activity:

- Meeting with David Warburton MP.
- Next issue of Community Matters in development.
- Open Day – 19<sup>th</sup> September. To include blasting demonstration, family activities, etc.
- Visit by SVSJ Church School – Dogwood class.

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

TM provided an update.

#### **Westdown:**

- Presentations to Nunney, Whatley & Chantry, Cranmore and Downhead Parish Councils re planning submission to SCC to update existing planning consents at Westdown.
- Preparing response note covering queries concerning the application raised across all of the meetings.
- SCC consultation on Hanson's submission for Westdown now closed.

#### **Points raised:**

- TM set out that Hanson's response to the key themes received via feedback is currently being prepared and would cover transport, carbon, legacy and rail improvement strategy. The aim is to circulate this by the end of next week, 30/07/21.
- AB asked for a list of materials that quarry products are used in.
- AC asked why, if the use of the Waterlip cut-through may be included via conditions, why couldn't it be introduced for Hanson's HGV drivers now. She explained that 20+ Hanson vehicles are using the route per day.
- TM explained that with a combination of drivers, hauliers and contract drivers such a move would be difficult to enforce, and he didn't just want to pay lip service to the request. He

set out that Hanson was reviewing the strategic Traffic Management Plan in light of feedback and would be liaising further with SCC.

- AC stressed that it needed to be a fool-proof system and asked how many Hanson drivers don't have livery. JC advised it was around 50% but details will be provided.
- RK asked what the rail strategy was for Westdown and are any changes planned. IS reiterated the strategic approach (see below) which will result in no material change in volumes going by rail:

***Using a combined approach for the future of our Whatley and Westdown quarries will minimise the impact of our operations and bring benefits to neighbouring communities:***

- *Our overarching principle is that the combined operations of the two quarries, including mineral volumes and vehicle movements etc. will not exceed the current levels for Whatley.*
- *Our aim is to take advantage of Westdown's location, close to key road routes, to supply local demand. At Whatley this will enable greater use of the rail link to supply national markets. Together, these steps will cut our carbon footprint and reduce the impact of quarry traffic on neighbouring villages.*
- *Updating our existing consents for Westdown quarry will also deliver a transformative legacy project. The proposed phased restoration of the adjacent Asham Wood offers both significant environmental and biodiversity benefits and enhanced public rights of way.*

***We believe that this dual approach is the best option for our East Mendip quarries. It offers positive benefits for neighbouring communities through the rerouting of quarry traffic away from local villages and reflects our commitment to being a good neighbour.***

- PH said that transport routes for local quarries in the MQP needed to be addressed holistically.
- CA advised that retrospective conditions couldn't be imposed.
- PH said that there was a need to review the Westdown proposals so that traffic heading north used the Old Wells Road and not the A361. He advised that he is following up on this issue with the regulation committee.
- TM and IS reiterated that Hanson would be reviewing the Transport Management Plan in light of feedback and Hanson is keen to find solutions that worked for all.
- PH commented that both Westdown and Barlett's quarry applications needed to be approved to secure supplies to be transported by rail from Whatley and Torr quarries.
- WP queried PH's assertion that Westdown's location meant that impact to residents would be minimal.
- AB asked if Hanson would be willing to have an imposed cap of 8 million tonnes across the two quarries as a condition.
- TM commented that if this was part of a section 106 agreement the company wouldn't shy away from it.
- WP asked when SCC would address the outstanding ROMP at Whatley.
- CA said that he had been in touch with Hanson earlier that week with regards to updated environmental studies.
- WP asked if local people would be consulted. CA advised that this would only happen if there is an amended Environmental Statement (ES) as that would be a substantial change which would require neighbour reconsultation. WP responded that the current position was untenable for local people and a review was overdue.
- CA said that if local people believed Hanson was in breach of its conditions they should get in touch with SCC.
- AC advised that, at a previous enquiry, it was said that traffic routes didn't need to be made a condition for Whatley as the Bulls Green Link Road would be the obvious



preferred route. Re Westdown, she is seeking a balanced transport strategy going forward.

- TM made the point that the Old Wells Road is designated as a local freight route, but he is seeking clarification with SCC.
- CA advised that Westdown would be determined at the earliest at the September meeting of the planning committee, but it could be later given the volume of responses received.

## **5. AOBs**

None.

## **6. Date of next meeting**

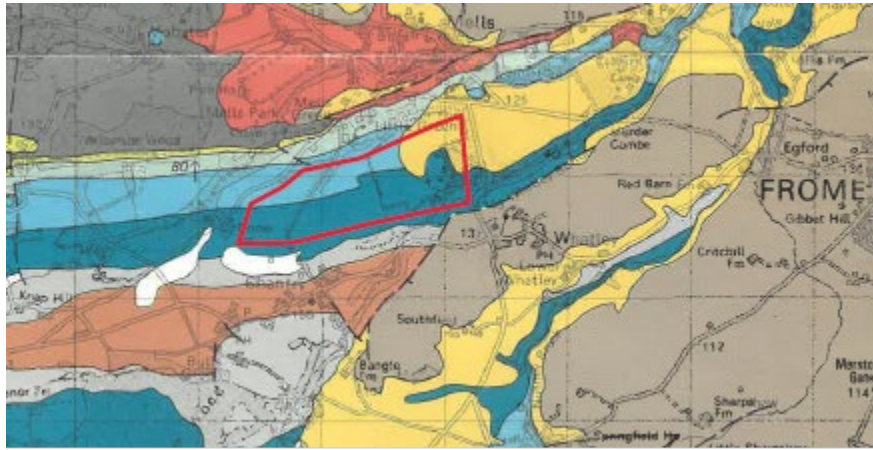
**15 September 2021 at 17:30 by Microsoft Teams (TBC)**

**This was subsequently postponed until the 19 October 2021 in person at Whatley offices.**

## **7. Summary of meeting actions**

- Recirculate details on how to complain to SCC and MDC.
- Hanson to check wording on website re funding support for community giving.
- Hanson to set up online voting for those who put themselves forward to be Group chair (deadline for nominations 28/07/21).
- Provide information for Richard King and Will Palmer on:
  - Number and configuration of trains
  - KEA wagon destination and why can't KEA wagons be used in daytime.
- TM/JC to confirm policy to Richard King re debris in River Mells and advise what the pink dots on the trees mean.
- IS to attend MP's property re blast on 23/07/21.
- Provide details of how quarry products are used.
- Provide details of HGV numbers at Whatley:
  - Livered
  - Owned
  - Haulier
  - Other
- Follow up with Cllr Ham re his proposals for funding for roundabout at Beacon junction/Old Wells Road as part of section 106 for Whatley and Barlett's quarry.
- 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.
- CA to confirm SCC approach re ROMP process and whether local people will be consulted.

## Appendix 1. Geological map of East Mendips



For more information see: <https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

## Appendix 2.

Hanson welcomes feedback, and this should sent direct to the quarry by emailing [Whatley.quarry@hanson.com](mailto:Whatley.quarry@hanson.com) or calling 0800 644 4234.

Further contacts:

- Colin Arnold: Principal Planning Officer, Somerset CC: [CArnold@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:CArnold@somerset.gov.uk)
- Richard Keith-Hill: Environmental Protection Officer, MDC:  
[richard.keithhill@Mendip.gov.uk](mailto:richard.keithhill@Mendip.gov.uk)
- Martyn Ford: Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers Rights of Way, Gypsies & Travellers: [MJFord@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:MJFord@somerset.gov.uk)
- Charlie Higgins Assistant Highways Services Manager County Roads:  
[mendip@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:mendip@somerset.gov.uk)

## Ends