

Whatley and Westdown quarries Community Liaison Group Meeting

9 June 2021

Whatley Quarry – Microsoft Teams and in person at Whatley quarry office

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| • Ian Strachan (IS) | Hanson Aggregates Strategic Development Manager (Chair) |
| • Justin Collis (JC) | Hanson Aggregates Area Operations Manager |
| • Alison Barkshire (AB) | Mendip District Council for Ammerdown |
| • Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) | Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council |
| • 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 |
| • Steve West (SW) | Mells Parish Council |
| • Martin Payne (MP) | Chantry and Mells Parish Council |
| • Colin Arnold (CA) | Principle Planning Officer, Somerset County Council |
| • Richard King (RK) | Great Elm resident |
| • Dr. Liam Bermingham (LB) | EPC Groupe |
| • Will Palmer (WP) | Whatley Resident |
| • Andrew Bramstone (ABR) | Chantry resident |
| • Nienke Pengelly (NP) | NP Wood plc |
| • Samantha Stagg (SS) | Communications for Hanson UK |

APOLOGIES:

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| • Trystan Mabbitt | Hanson UK Consenting and Development Manager |
| • Steven Morton | Hanson UK Marketing and communications manager |
| • Martyn Ford | Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way,
Gypsies & Travellers), Somerset County Council |
| • Simon Stonehouse | Natural England |
| • Lila Morris | Somerset Wildlife Trust |
| • PC Toni Lines | Avon and Somerset Police |

AGENDA

1. Introduction – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Welcome and introduction to new members
 - Hanson’s on-going approach re liaison meetings
 - Review of minutes from last meeting

2. Whatley update – Justin Collis, Area Operations Manager, Hanson UK
 - Operational overview
 - Logistics (including road and rail)

- Feedback
 - Environmental
3. Introduction to blasting and vibration control – Dr. Liam Bermingham, EPC Groupe
 4. Noise study update – Justin Collis, Area Operations Manager, Hanson UK
 5. Other sites and community update – Ian Strachan, Strategic Development Manager, Hanson UK
 - Westdown
 - Community giving update
 6. Planning update: Whatley and Westdown
 7. AOBs
 8. Date of next meeting

Minutes:

- **Introductions**
 - IS greeted all parties and thanked them for their attendance at the meeting. Introductions were given by all attendees including setting out which groups they represented.
 - IS set out the aims of new format Whatley and Westdown community liaison group (WWCLG), providing details of which groups had been invited to join.
 - IS advised that Terms of Reference for WWCLG would be circulated with the minutes – with a view to them being adopted by the Group at the next meeting.
 - 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 in due course.
- **Review of Previous Minutes**
 - JC provided an update on the actions from the previous meeting:
 - AB forward contact details for Mells Parish newsletter – completed on May 6.
 - JC & IS to contact each parish for representation – completed.
 - TM contact SCC for list of councillors for invitation – completed.
 - JC to contact highways about a footpath outside of quarry - completed on April 28.
 - AB as MDC councillor also to make approach.
 - JC advised he had contacted Highways and it has been passed on to the appropriate team. He also sent details to AB so she could contact and back the request.
 - The site has also been cleared cut and strimmed to make pedestrian use easier.
 - IS asked for validation of the previous minutes as a true and reflective account. This was agreed and the minutes accepted by the group.
- **Whatley Quarry Update**

- JC provided an operational update for Whatley quarry:
 - Volumes YTD on target.
 - Trialling co-efficiencies.
 - Implemented upgrades to;
 - LED lighting
 - Ceramic crash points (2.5dB reduction)
 - Roller drums
 - Roller doors on static plant
 - Cladding on plant
 - Rigid Dump Trucks replaced
 - On-going additional investment including delivery of £10m of new plant from October.
 - No Covid issues – now in stage three of lockdown easing.
 - x3 new local apprentices being recruited in engineering.

- WP expressed concern on behalf of a number of residents in neighbouring villages with regards to operation noise levels. He read out a number of complaints from a resident that had recently been forwarded over the course of a few days to Hanson's Whatley email address.
- WP asked MDC and SCC to review the number of complaints forwarded/received and check Hanson's assertions that it is compliant with its permitting conditions.
- CA confirmed he would liaise with the Enforcement Officer.
- PH, who advised the Group that as in his role as SCC Cllr he oversees quarrying on behalf of the council, confirmed that he had not received any complaints re Whatley from constituents for over 12 months.
- DM advised that he was not aware of any complaints coming from Leigh on Mendip. He was aware that previous complaints from Leigh on Mendip had in fact been linked with the noise from the road cleaner.
- AB asked for Hanson to work with residents with regards to noise, both from blasting, railhead and quarry operations.

- JC continued with the operational update:
 - Logistics (including road and rail):
 - New Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS) in place following revised guidance from Office of Rail and Road (ORR) re train movements/need to sound horns at night.
 - Whatley supplying up to x5 trains per week to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Hinkley Point C.
 - KEA wagons reconfigured.

- JC provided an update on feedback received with regards to the quarry operations.

Month	Number of contacts logged	Number of correspondents	%negative	% neutral	% positive
February	16	8	100		
March	51	16	79	21	
April	67	21	71.5	27	1.5
May	53	18	43	19	2
June (to 8th)	7	4	71	14.5	14.5

- JC confirmed that between February and June 8th Hanson had received 194 logged contacts from 45 individuals
 - JC advised that, overall, 81 per cent of the feedback received had been negative but of the negative feedback received 85% is from x6 individuals, with these same correspondents making up 50% of all feedback received.
 - WP asked about the nature of the positive feedback.
 - MP confirmed he had emailed commenting that the latest blast had been a marked improvement in terms of impact/vibration levels.
 - ABR expressed concern about the way in which the data was presented as it implied that only a small number of residents were providing feedback.
 - IS advised that was certainly not Hanson's intention, the company was presenting the data on the feedback received in an open and transparent way.
 - DM asked what the noise limits for Whatley are.
 - AB asked if anything about the operations had changed in recent months.
 - JC confirmed the planning limits – 42dB per 10-minute time periods. He confirmed that, apart from the improvements already referenced, there had been no other changes to operations.
 - NP commented that these planning regulations have been in place for some time.
 - IS confirmed that Hanson had submitted a ROMP (revision of mineral planning) some years ago but Somerset County Council (SCC) had yet to determine the application.
 - CA advised that he had a meeting with SCC's legal team the following day and SCC were willing to work with Hanson to get it an up-to-date position.
 - WP said he would be in touch with CA.

 - IS asked if there was any further feedback at this juncture. As there was no further feedback, IS introduced Dr Liam Bermingham to deliver his presentation entitled an 'Introduction to blasting & vibration control'.
- **'Introduction to blasting & vibration control'. Dr Liam Bermingham**
 - The slides from LS's presentation are attached.

LB advised that:

- Quarrying uses a very controlled approach to the use of explosives.
- While there will always be vibration and air over pressure the design of blasts aims to minimise the impact.
- Geology of the area to be blast influences the ground vibration.
- AB asked about the geology of Whatley's south face.
- JC advised the carboniferous limestone at Whatley runs north to south.
- LB advised that different rates of decay for different geologies are taken into account when designing blasts.

- LB advised that British Standard for Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) for quarry blasts is 15-20 PPV measured in mm/s. PPV refers to the movement within the ground of molecular particles and not surface movement.
 - LB advised that the size of the blast does not impact on PPV.
 - LB advised that most blasts at Whatley are less than 3PPV mm/s.
 - JC commented that buildings may see minor damage at 20mm/s, Whatley's planning conditions are set at a 9mm/s, although contractors EPC have a target of no more than 7mm/s and in practice the majority of blasts are measured at less than 3mm/s.
 - NP commented that PPV is measured via a logarithmic/exponential scale – the increase in PPV is not constant /not based on arithmetic progression.
 - LB stated that cracks in buildings would not be caused by vibration. Building materials have a defined life, for example plaster will respond – expanding and contracting – to temperature.
 - JC commented that the forecasting of PPV re actual levels recorded at Whatley are very accurate.
 - WP asked what else could be done to reduce the vibration of blasts at Whatley.
 - LB advised that a number of approaches are being trialled including; single hole blasts, decking blasts, more smaller blasts with delayed charges (though the noise timeframe here would be extended).
 - ABR commented that LB's presentation had set out convincingly that blasting is not damaging properties however, in reference to LB's comparison of levels being similar to a door being slammed, AB expressed that the experience of local people was much beyond this.
 - PH asked if the south face was near a fault line and would it be possible to have a geological map.
 - IS stated these are available on the internet as standard geological maps. He will however speak to Hanson's principle geologist Roger Griffiths for a copy.
 - JC advised that Whatley has the opposite geology to Torr Quarry. He confirmed that a geological map would be shared.
 - SW asked for confirmation of the PPV limit at Torr Quarry.
 - IS and JC confirmed it is 9 PPVmm/s.
 - MP asked if there were other quarries that received complaints re blasting/vibration.
 - IS advised that, yes, he was aware of others, but comparing quarry to quarry oversimplifies the issues as each quarry will have its own characteristics.
 - LB/JC advised that the Group would be updated re the findings of the various blasting trials.
- **Independent noise study**
 - JC provided an update on the noise study:
 - Permitting allows an average of 42dB (nighttime 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 (i.e. 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 are now analysing the data outputs which will take some time, but we remain committed to sharing the findings as soon as feasible.

- **Other sites update**
 - IS provided an update on the Westdown, Asham Wood and Vallis Vale:
 - Westdown – installation of additional security measures
 - Meeting with local residents to discuss additional security measures
 - 6x CCTV installed – with a view to combat fly-tippers
 - Information boards installed in conjunction with Natural England
 - Working with Natural England and Somerset Wildlife Trust
 - Ash dieback
 - Hanson has moved plum stones to the top layby to reduce access to site and fly tipping activities reduce access to site
 - Litter picking and fly-tipping/scrap removal

 - IS said that Hanson thought that levels of anti-social behaviour had reduced as a result of these measures being introduced, but he asked for feedback from Group members.
 - LR commented that weekends had been worse for motorcyclists accessing Westdown quarry and that she is pleased to see the cameras in place.
 - JC advised the Group that the local constabulary will take action retrospectively if registration numbers can be provided.

 - PH said that he had provided a registration number to police and that three police cars had been sent to the location.
 - IS reported that 75% of the trees in Asham Wood have signs of ash dieback disease. Hanson are now working on a plan to mitigate the impact, including removal of dead trees and planting of new trees. He estimated the programme would take up to 10 years.
 - IS advised that Hanson has plans to install new horse-friendly gates at Asham Wood.
 - IS reported on Hanson's local charitable giving including £1,200 for Community Council for Somerset's Mendip fund and the donation of Materials supplied to Mells Church of England First School's new Forest School.
 - He advised the group that Hanson is keen to support local initiatives and asked attendees to share the information on how to apply via the Whatley Community website with their own contacts.
 - IS updated the Group on Hanson's involvement in its parent company's HeidelbergCement's Quarry Life Award – a biennial award scheme aimed at raising awareness of the biodiversity value of quarrying sites and sharing emerging best practice. Details are available at www.quarrylifeaward.com/about/how-participate
 - IS updated the Group on stakeholder engagement activity including; a four-year old's visit to the site, a planned meeting with local MP David Warburton and an Open Day at Whatley in late August or early September (Covid-restrictions permitting).

- **Planning update**
 - IS shared Hanson's overarching approach for Whatley and Westdown:

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.
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- MP asked where the new entrance to Westdown will be.
 - IS confirmed that the proposals include the entrance be moved to Farmer's Gate. This is the straight section of road prior to dropping down the hill. The entrance here will provide visibility and is considered to be the safest option.
 - PH stated that he would expect a recommendation for traffic to turn left on leaving and a roundabout to be built at Long Hill cross roads.
 - PH expressed his concerns that Downhead had only received papers from SCC earlier on the June 9 with a deadline of June 30 for feedback.
 - CA said the SCC deadline was June 30 and that he would check why Downhead's covering letter stated 30th. **CA confirmed subsequently that SCC's deadline is June 30.**
 - LR asked if a Hanson representative would attend a Nunney parish Council meeting on June 21. IS confirmed and LR said the parish clerk would be in touch to arrange.
 - WP said clarification was needed on the impact of proposals on the railhead, would there be an increase in rail traffic.
 - IS said thinking on Whatley at early stages but future plans would not necessarily mean increased rail traffic.
 - LR asked if the cumulative impact of Westdown and Barlett's quarry proposals would be considered.
 - IS asked CA to comment on this. CA confirmed that SCC would consider the impact.
 - NP advised the Group that the Westdown proposal represents amendments to existing proposals. This is why there are x 4 separate applications, all with the same documents.
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- **AOBS**
 - WP commented that he did not think that Whatley was a good neighbour. He said there were real mental health issues among some in the community.
 - MP said he was concerned for the first time in 50 years about being sandwiched between two quarries.
 - WP said that while he appreciated Hanson's approach to making improvements, they were not providing sufficient mitigation and more needed to be done by Hanson's senior management – particularly with regards to nighttime working and blasting.
 - JC said that the blasting approach used at Whatley was the best available technique.

- SW said the majority of Mells PC was opposed to quarrying. He said that he was happy Whatley were following all of its conditions but that the village needed winning over. He was aware the quarry was developing in line with the technology available and wants to ensure that Hanson follows all its permitting conditions.
- ABR said he had no confidence in what was set out re mitigation measures.
- IS reiterated Hanson's approach about working with the local community and the investment in plant being made with much of the new equipment being delivered this autumn.
- AB requested via message about a follow up on footpaths.
- The Group decided that the next meeting should be held in July to include information on the noise study (subject to noise study information availability)

- **Summary of actions**

- CA to provide information on levels of feedback received by SCC enforcement officer re Whatley.
- Hanson to provide geological maps and information for review at future meeting.
- Hanson to liaise with Nunney PC with re attendance at forthcoming parish council meeting on 21/06/21.
- Hanson to liaise with AB re footpaths.

Next meeting: July 21, 2021 at 17.30 by Microsoft Teams.