



**Whatley and Westdown quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
20 January 2026 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
(Chair)
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Peter Shepherd (PS) Nunney Parish Council
- Sally Foster (SF) Nunney parish Council
- Chris O'Connor (CO) Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager Mendips &
Masters aggregates
- Kirstie Gibbon (KG) Heidelberg Materials, Project Manager, Westdown Quarry
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- Jacob Smalley (JS) Heidelberg Materials, Graduate Trainee Landscape
Architect
- Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies
And Travellers) Somerset Council
- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Area General Manager – South Region
- Kyle Smith (KS) Heidelberg Materials, Unit Manager, Whatley Quarry
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development
Manager
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials, Regional Transport Manager
- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

- Welcome and Chair introductions
- Apologies
- Review of minutes from last meeting
- Matters arising from last minutes

2. Whatley quarry update (Chris O'Connor, Operations Manager Mendips & Masters Aggregates)

- Great Elm residents' meeting re water levels
- Operational overview
- Logistics (including road and rail)
- Blasting
- Feedback
- Community giving update

3. Westdown Quarry update (Kirstie Gibbon, Project Manager – Westdown Quarry)

4. Environmental Update (Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect)

5. Planning update

- Westdown Proposals

6. Any other business

7. Dates of next meetings

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

- The Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves.
- The Group reviewed the matters arising from the previous meeting and confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters arising:
 - RK was not sure of the commitment to monitoring flow of the river is sufficient on the note prepared. AH will ask the Wild Trout Trust to join the April Meeting (Action AH).
 - TM to share water model being developed with EA on completion - ongoing.
 - VP to speak to EPC (blasting specialists) to better understand why PPV used rather than PGA.
 - Heidelberg Materials to provide update re tip recycling project.
 - SS to send NWR details to AC - complete
 - Revised Great Elm meeting note - forwarded to Richard King for review 19.12.25. Feedback received and amendments to be made ahead of recirculating.

2. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview

- CO provided an update on production and sales volumes for 2025.
- Sales were above plan. This was due to continued destocking.
- Rail distribution of materials accounts for 61.5% of all materials leaving Whatley.
- Looking to maintain production volumes for the year ahead.

Capex

- 08e electric shunter locomotive has arrived. Naming ceremony with local primary schools' competition winner planned for February. (now confirmed 18 April).
- It's the first electric shunter in any quarry in the UK. Challenge is capacity and charging. We are trialing to see how effective it is so we can reduce our diesel engines. Currently 1 electric and 2 diesel on site.
- Plant upgrades ahead of supply to nationally significant infrastructure project on-going.

Projects

- The tip recycling project is going well. Stone recovery rate is 12-15% resulting in approx. 120,000 tonnes of usable rock. This goes back into the primary crusher and then processed into product.

Recruitment

- Continuing to recruit for a number of current roles, including 2 in the maintenance team (nights). Details at: www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/careers
- Whatley quarry is giving a local student valuable hands-on experience in the workplace as part of their Engineering T Level. Partnering with Somerset Studio School in Radstock and the Somerset Earth Science Centre (SESC), the quarry is providing a weekly placement alongside classroom learning. It's possibly the first example of a T-Level student having a work placement in a quarry. Apparently he wishes he could do it every day.
RK Asked if there's a selection process, can they apply here? SS replied the SESC facilitated it and would like to roll it out elsewhere. We currently have a 16/17 year old apprentice, which is another

way into the business. Quarry apprenticeships come in different forms and are the best way to future-proof the workforce:

- Craft apprentice where they are also expected to go to college during the week.
- Higher apprentice who will study for a degree at Derby university alongside their work at the quarry.
- More information at [Heidelberg Materials Careers | Heidelberg Materials UK](#)

It was added that the average age of employees at HM is 45, which is 10 years lower than the industry average.

SF asked why it was hard to recruit people. CO responded that the work out in the quarry is hard.

There has been a recruitment gap for years, but we need to show people that it's not all dirty quarry work.

PS asked if there are many female graduates in the business. CO said that there are targets which we are working on, however it seems not particularly attractive to people leaving school/college. We rely on our people going into schools to promote the work and career opportunities.

SW asked if we do work experience. AH advised yes we would always consider it if requested. CO added that the September work experience student is now asking about apprenticeships at Whatley. SS advised we are looking to develop relationships with more secondary schools in the area re work experience







PS asked if HM joins the SESC open days. JS said yes he's been to them with his brother who is now studying geology following his work experience. CO added that there are lots of opportunities, it's a brilliant industry to join.

RK asked if apprentices are locals. CO replied yes the craft apprentices are local, however the higher apprentices have come from further as they are more likely to be driving.

On-going noise mitigation work

Purpose (as previously set out):

- Whatley quarry is committed to continuously improving environmental sustainability and mitigating the impact on our neighbours.
- The internal noise committee has been set up to focus on identifying and reducing noise pollution across all aspects of on-site activity.
- Identified areas of improvement and now implementing adaptations.
- Committee continues to meet monthly.
- Consists of representatives from the quarry ops and the rail staff.

	<p>New mobile plant now on site. Noise readings being measured with no increase from previous plant.</p>		<p>Rubber lining on material bunkers has been agreed within project works to be undertaken.</p>
	<p>Introducing a Noise Charter as a behavioural approach for operators to improve site standards – such as smooth acceleration.</p>		<p>Investigating the use of acoustic ‘heat maps’ to understand and target high noise areas.</p>
	<p>Reviewing advanced electronic blast sequencing to reduce air over pressure noise.</p>		

BC asked if there were any people from the community represented on the committee. CO said no. The feedback comes from the liaison meetings and is then fed back to the groups. SS added that the committee was set up following concern about the feedback from the liaison group members and residents. SW asked if there was a list of improvements so they can share with locals. SS replied that she will forward details to SW to share.

Improvements listed include new mobile plant with bucket liners and sound muffling on the engines. SW asked if the use of electric dumpers are a long way off? CO said need to consider the capacity and infrastructure, however it's in the pipeline but a while away yet and that any new Load & Haul contracts will take this into consideration.

PS asked if the mobile kit at Westdown quarry will be electric as there is a noise concern at Nunney. CO responded there will be the same noise considerations at Westdown as there are at Whatley. KG added that when the mobile crushers are set up they will make sure the noise impact is considered. AH said that it is part of the planning, to take into account how it may affect local villages.

PS asked if S106 is part of the application under the environmental umbrella. AH replied yes it will be a consideration and Heidelberg Materials is currently liaising with Somerset Council officers on this. AH added that HM can't submit the documents for final approval until all aspects have been agreed.

PS asked if this means there will be potential delays to the start of production. KG said no, we are hoping to start preparation work around July, with production coming onstream in 2027.

CO advised that additional noise reduction measures including Finning carrying out some driver training, to help with noise reduction on the big machines, which will be monitored for things such as idle time. He added that the site is also looking to add linings to the product materials bunkers. The use of noise heat maps will also help identify areas to be targeted by the noise committee.

Noise committee – rail

Actions completed (recap of information shared at last meeting):

1. New greasers on tracks to reduce the wheel screeching for train movements.
2. Replaced run-round road – worn out tracks previously causing extra noise.
3. Welded the joints on tracks to reduce movement of the tracks.
4. Tamped the siding tracks, again to reduce movement.
5. Development of 10-year maintenance plan for planning priority works.
6. Produced a list of noisy activities in Freight Liner Loco workshop – resulting in reduced night activity, with others moved to Merehead.
7. Examined how to keep doors closed in the wagon workshop. Doors now being shut as much as possible, with daily checks.
8. Removal of Buck-eye wagons: these types of wagons must be banged together when being connected to others. 32 will be removed from Whatley at the end of February.

RK wanted to add that he has emailed VP regarding excess track noise at 10:55 AM on 19th Jan.

Blasting Operations:

CO provided an update on quarry blasting:

- 2 blasts so far in 2026 with average vibration of 4.15mm/s PPV.
- Blast planned for Friday 09 unavoidably delayed to Saturday 10.
- Rescheduled blast on 10/01/26 also delayed and decision was taken to blast at 12.45 as a “safety-first” approach.
- The alternative was, as per 8.1d regulatory requirement for two people to have stayed out all night for two nights to guard the shot, in very low temperatures.

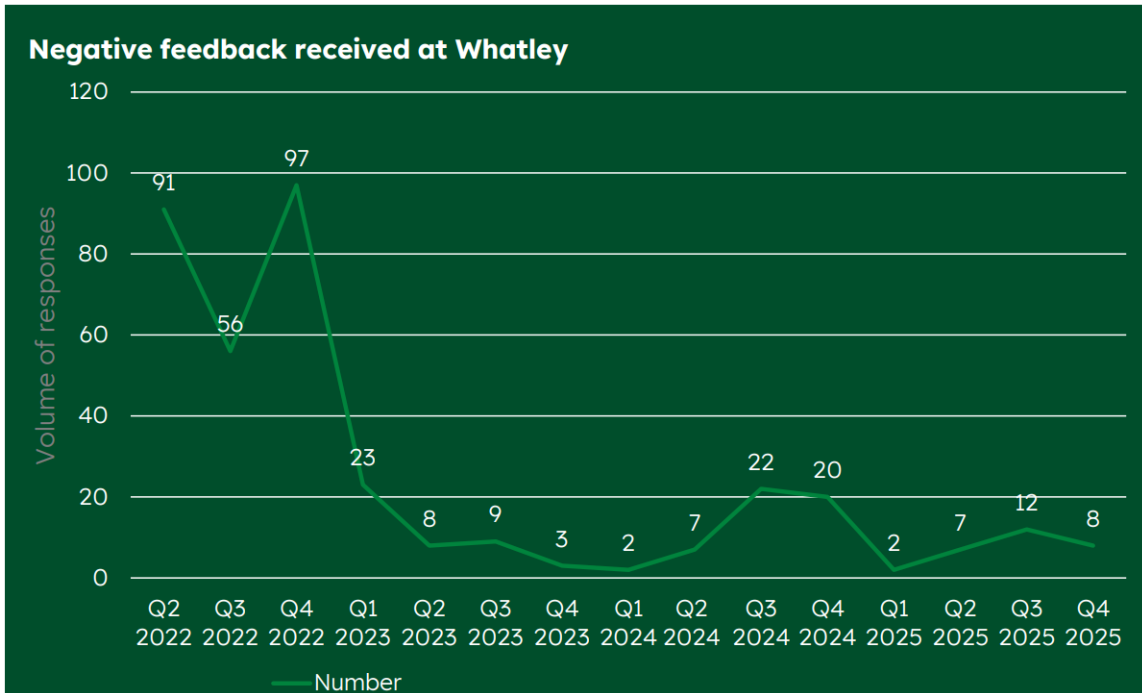
RK asked if we had any response from the community regarding the Saturday blast. CO replied that the blast vibration was 4.1mm/s PPV. in one location and others were around 1mm/s PPV.

PS asked if there were any plans for more big bangs like the one in July. CO replied there were none planned but will consider if necessary. Bigger blasts are more efficient and therefore cost less. However, it's a fine balance to maintain efficient blasting whilst also considering any impact on the local community but the commitment to limiting blast vibration to 4.5mm/s PPV wherever possible remains.

BC asked if there are constraints by the blasting company with regard to the designs. CO advised the designs are presented to us, then planned following feedback from previous blasts. They are then worked through during the Quarry Development Plan (QDP) meeting.

Feedback

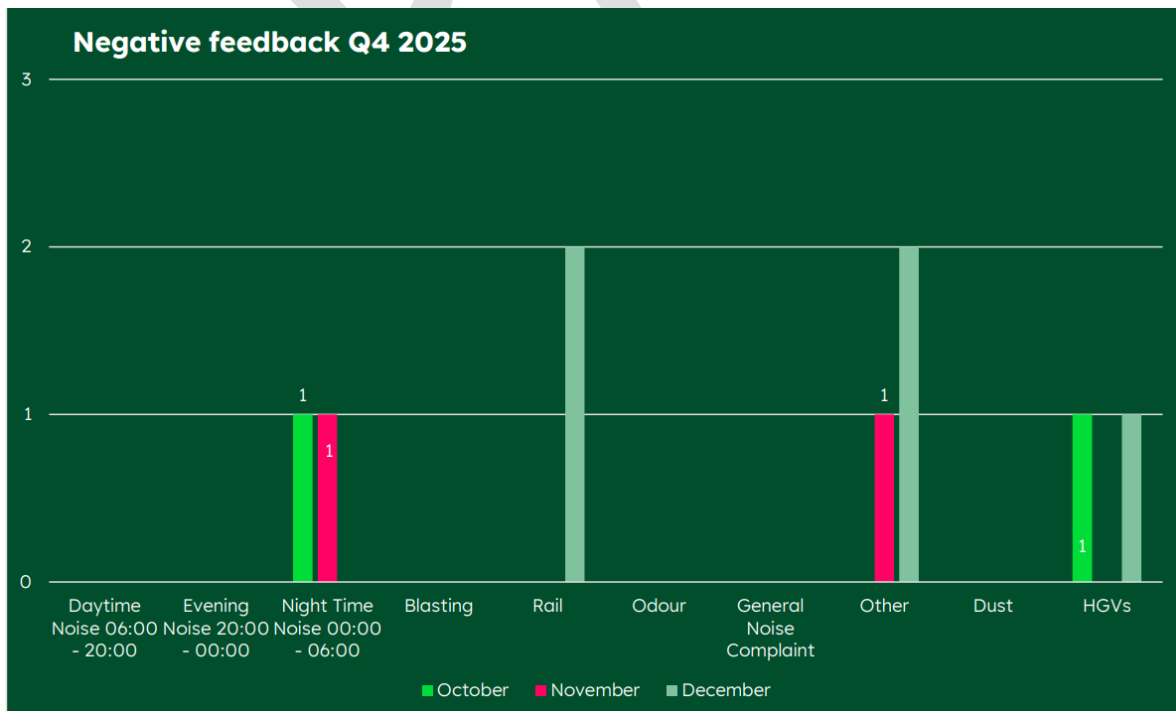
- SS provided information on feedback received: The data shared indicates a slight drop in negative feedback. See diagrams shared at meeting below:



Negative feedback October – December 2025

9 pieces of negative feedback:

- Blasting: 0
- HGVs & traffic: 2
- Noise: 2
- Other (Environment): 3
- Train noise: 3



January 2026: 1 (night-time noise related)

Community update

SS gave an update on recent charitable/community contributions.

- Donations of Christmas trees to Whatley and Chantry churches
- 20 initiatives supported in 2025, covering materials donations, volunteering and monetary contributions.
- Beneficiaries included Mells playing fields, Mells Community Shop, Mells Digital, upgrade to Whatley Loop and Loop Challenge, Coleford Flower Festival.
- To apply go to:
[Supporting the community | Heidelberg Materials UK](#)



3. Westdown Quarry

KG provided an update on the progress of re-opening Westdown quarry.

S106 – As above, this is awaiting final approval by Somerset Council (SC). The draft S106 was published last week and is now available to view for 21 days on SC's website. It details environmental mitigation, ecological/water not roads/speed limits.

KG added that Heidelberg Materials is currently agreeing details and going through the legal process with SC. Once this process is complete we can then start applying for the relevant licenses to enable preparation works.

PS asked when the first bit of ground will be cleared. AH replied if all licenses are approved then this is likely to be Sept/Oct when Heidelberg Materials is expecting to start stripping and ahead of more extensive clearance in April 2027. AH set out that the company is doing everything possible to move forward.

PS asked if the licenses get prioritised. BC answered they just go through as they come in, whether it's HM or an individual. AH believes it's been about 7 years going through the process, and progress is somewhat dependent on the capacity of the council.

KG set out that Capex funding has been approved internally and the team is ready to go once everything agreed. Hydrogeologists have been to survey the site and should get back to us in the next few months with recommendations on where we can use/save water for dust suppression.

RK asked which water courses will be affected. AH advised Westdown is hydrologically disconnected from Fordbury Water so shouldn't affect any locally. PS t asked if Nunney Brook will be affected. KG will find out from geologist Roger Griffiths if there will be any issues if extracting from below the water table. (Action).

PS also asked if the quarry will have to maintain a minimum flow. AH said that 2025 proved difficult due to the hot weather. CO added that we do our own checks weekly during hot weather and should we have a pump down, if we have capacity, we will provide water.

KG advised that Heidelberg Materials is also currently tendering for the vegetation clearance.

4. Environmental Update

Vallis Vale

- Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy are currently carrying out bat roost assessments of the trees identified for felling to ensure legislative compliance.
- A thermal drone deer survey was carried out which showed a high density of roe and muntjac deer using the site which can have a negative impact on the woodland habitat through browsing. We have tubed up trees and erected fenced coupes to protect natural regeneration of trees and have shared the results with Natural England (NE) for discussion in the Spring when we meet on site.
- The Egford Brook repair works were approved in November which was too late to implement works due to ground conditions and fish spawning restrictions so works will now go ahead in June.
- Information board details currently with our internal designer who will produce final board design.

Whatley

- Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy are currently carrying out bat roost assessments of the trees identified for felling to ensure legislative compliance

Asham Wood

- Deer management is ongoing and the recent thermal drone survey has shown that numbers are reducing however further work is required to bring the deer down to a sustainable level.
- Work on the woodland management plan is ongoing and we are hoping to meet with NE in the Spring to discuss.

5. Planning update

TM has sent his apologies and will update in the next meeting.

6. AOB

SW mentioned there was a lot of rubbish at the top of Chantry lane which was cleared up quickly so wanted to say Thank You.

Summary of actions

- AH to ask Wild Trout Trust to join the next meeting.
- TM to share water model being developed with EA on completion (From previous meeting)
- SS to forward details of noise mitigation measures implemented to SW.
- VP to speak to EPC (blasting specialists) to better understand why PPV used rather than PGA.
- KG will find out from Roger Griffiths if there will be any issues with Nunney Brook if extracting from below the water table.

7. Next meeting date

- It was agreed that this would be confirmed due to there being potential diary clashes for some HM attendees for the previously suggested date of 21 April 2026.

Next meeting now scheduled for Tuesday 12 May at 17.30.

Meeting Ends

DRAFT