

Community matters

A community newsletter from Heidelberg Materials
Whatley and Westdown quarries. | **Summer 2026** | **Issue 07**

Welcome

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new Area Operations Manager, responsible for all operations including aggregates, asphalt and recycling – bringing all activity under one team for a more cohesive approach.

I take over from Vincent Pitt, who moves to a new role within the business. I look forward to building on his work, especially in driving operational improvements and forging strong relations and open dialogue with the local community.

There is plenty of other news to share, including a major milestone for the reopening of our Westdown quarry, with planning conditions now agreed with Somerset Council (read more on page 4), plus an update on the local community initiatives we've supported.

We continue to invest to mitigate the impact of our operations where we can and Unit Manager, Kyle Smith, details some of the recent steps we've taken, including measures to reduce noise (see page 3).

Finally, we're delighted to report that we have lots of interest in our work experience programme, with six local students taking part this summer.



Chris O'Connor,
Area Operations
Manager



Competition winner, Cillian Gallagher with his parents and local MP, Anna Sabine, at the naming ceremony held at Whatley quarry.

Meet Battery Bill - the electric loco

We've commissioned a new Class 08e electric shunting locomotive at Whatley quarry, converted from a former diesel-powered shunter.

Five-year-old Cillian Gallagher from Bishop Henderson Primary School in Coleford won a competition among local schools to name the loco and attended a special naming ceremony at the quarry to unveil his winning entry – Battery Bill.

Cillian was joined at the ceremony by his family and friend as well as Anna Sabine, MP for Frome and East Somerset, who came along

to find out more about the battery-powered loco and its sustainability benefits.

"Commissioning the first electric shunter to operate at a UK quarry is a significant first for us," said Rail Logistics Manager Daniel Welch. "It reflects our ongoing commitment to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability and will also help to reduce noise for our neighbours."

Supporting local community groups

Members of our Whatley quarry team joined forces with local volunteers to carry out a day of maintenance in the churchyard at Chantry's Church of the Holy Trinity, which has previously been transformed into a community use space, also with our support.



The team tackled a range of tasks including removing ivy and moss from the church walls and trees, pruning branches, raking leaves and weeding the area.

"The volunteer day was a huge help and will enable us to do more community activities in the church," said Andrew Bramston, Chair of Chantry Parish Council.

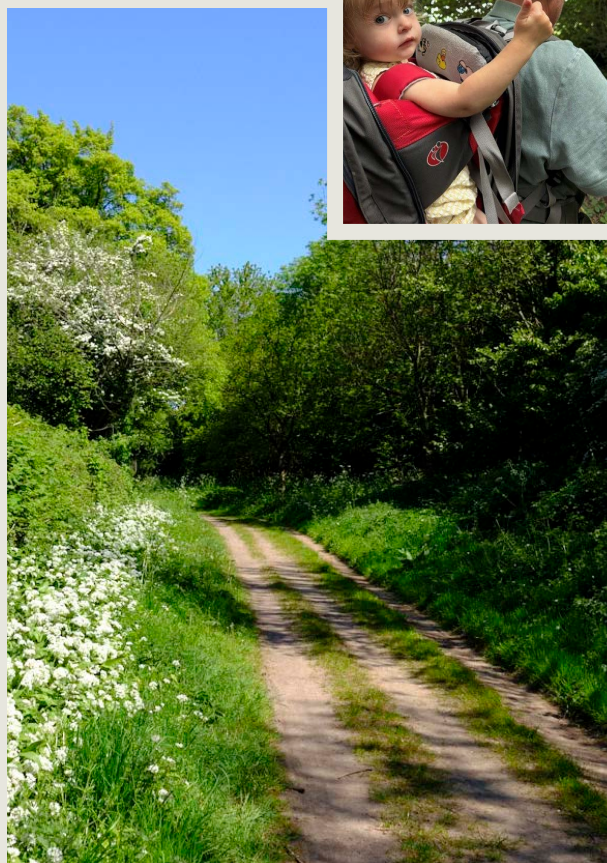
"We really do appreciate all that Whatley quarry does for our community," he added.



A number of other local charities and community groups have also benefitted from support via our community support initiatives in recent months. These include:

- A donation of stone and sand to **Kilmersdon Church School** to upgrade its outdoor play area. The improved space will provide pupils with a safe, stimulating environment, including improved surfacing, new play equipment and seating areas.
- Building and installing benches for the outside area of **Mells village shop** and providing two benches and tables to **Friends of Whatley**.
- Supporting the **Friends of Whatley** and **Friends of Chantry** groups by hosting their third annual summer Whatley quarry loop challenge. More than 70 local residents took part in the 4.5-mile walk around the quarry, clocking up a total of 337 miles. Heidelberg Materials' donation for each loop completed will be split equally between the groups to help fund community projects.

In addition, our long-running support for monthly parish magazine **5 Alive**, continues.



Information on our community support programme, including how to make an application for funding, materials and/or volunteer support, is available on our community website.

heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/whatley

Ask the manager:

Kyle Smith, Unit Manager at Whatley quarry, talks about some of the recent investments made to improve our operations and mitigate impact on our neighbours and the environment.



Q. What investments are being made at Whatley to support growing demand for construction materials?

We are continually assessing where investment can help us keep pace with demand, reduce carbon and mitigate impact. At the moment we are looking at potential upgrades to existing plant to support supply to a nationally significant infrastructure project.

Enhancements are expected to include new linings to hoppers, which receive excavated stone, plus improved site cleaning capacity to mitigate noise and dust.



Q. When you're deciding where to invest, what are the key factors that influence decision-making?

Improving efficiency, reducing carbon emissions and minimising impact on our neighbours are all at the top of the list. We also look at how an investment will support the long-term future of the quarry and help us to operate sustainably and responsibly for years to come.

Q. Can you give us an example of how recent investments have benefitted the local community?

We're aware that operational noise can be an issue for our neighbours at times so, to address this, we have set up an internal noise committee to pinpoint areas where we can invest in improvements.

Recent examples include adding rubber bucket liners to new mobile plant and we are looking to introduce silencers on drill rigs in the future. And, at the railhead, new greasers have been added to the rail tracks to reduce wheel screeching, and the track joints have been welded to reduce movement. Some nighttime activity has also been switched by rail operator Mendip Rail to Merehead.

Q. Are there any other areas of your operations you're looking to improve?

We're currently reviewing blast design to help reduce air over pressure – which is often responsible for the noise associated with blasts.

We're also investigating the use of acoustic heat maps to understand and target high noise areas. And, as part of our continued drive to reduce noise, we are working to cut idling times on all site vehicles, including by introducing automatic shutdowns on machines idling over a set period of time.

Footpath repairs at Egford Brook

Repairs to the footpath adjacent to Egford Brook are now complete and the area has reopened.

The work addressed the riverbank erosion caused by increased footfall and high winter river flows. New flow features have also been installed that will help shore up the banks and provide enhanced and more varied fish habitats.

"We know the footpath is popular for dog walks, so dog-dipping areas have been created to help reduce further riverbank erosion, while still allowing access to the water in specific places," said Alex Hemming, Principal Landscape Architect.

The project was carefully planned to avoid disrupting fish spawning cycles and was guided by input from the Environment Agency, Natural England and The Wild Trout Trust, with necessary consents secured.



Blasting notification service

Local residents can sign up to receive our blast notifications, which include a weekly update setting out planned blast times for the week ahead, plus a follow-up approximately half an hour before each blast takes place.

To receive the free notifications, email us at: whatley.quarry@uk.heidelbergmaterials.com and advise us if you would like to receive a text message (please provide the number) and/or an email.

Westdown quarry update

Works at Westdown quarry are due to commence this autumn, ahead of the site's reopening in late 2027.

This follows a Section 106 Agreement being finalised with Somerset Council, which will shape how the site will be operated, as well as the council's full planning decision notice being issued.

"There is still a lot of work to be done and, even after Westdown becomes operational, it will be some time before the quarry reaches permitted extraction levels," said Project Manager Kirstie Gibbon.

"As part of this preparation stage we are now readying the relevant management plans and license applications needed to allow us to discharge planning conditions, appoint contractors and prepare the site.

"We expect this preparation phase to take around 18 months to complete, but some work, such as vegetation clearance, must be carried out seasonally, which may affect timings."



Once fully operational, Westdown quarry will focus on supplying local demand, with Whatley quarry focusing on supplying national markets by rail. This approach will help cut our carbon footprint and reroute vehicles away from local villages.

With both quarries in operation, the number of HGV movements and extracted volumes of aggregate will be the same as the current permitted levels for Whatley.

Production will start in summer 2027 to establish stock levels in advance of customer activity and the formal reopening of the site. Somerset Council's Decision Notice for Westdown quarry can be viewed in full on our community website.



To find out more about our Whatley and Westdown quarries, and to keep up to date with news, please visit our community website.

heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/whatley