



**Whatley and Westdown quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
12 May 2026 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC) (Chair)
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- John Henderson (JH) Mells Parish Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Peter Shepherd (PS) Nunney Parish Council
- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Chris O'Connor (CO) Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager Mendips & Masters aggregates
- Kyle Smith (KS) Heidelberg Materials, Unit Manager, Whatley Quarry
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
- 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
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip resident
- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Sally Foster (SF) Nunney parish Council
- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies And Travellers) Somerset Council
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Area General Manager – South Region
- Kirstie Gibbon (KG) Heidelberg Materials, Project Manager, Westdown Quarry
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials, Regional Transport Manager
- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

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

2. Environmental update – Alexandra Hemming, Principal Landscape Architect (South)

3. Planning update - Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager

- Westdown Proposals

4. Whatley quarry update - Kyle Smith, Unit Manager Whatley quarry

- Operational overview –Logistics (including road and rail)
- Blasting
- Feedback
- Community support update
- Wider company news – Padeswood CCS

5. Westdown Quarry update - Kirstie Gibbon, Project Manager – Westdown Quarry

6. Any other business

7. Dates of next meetings

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

- It was advised that the audio of the meeting was going to be recorded for the purposes of completing the minutes and then deleted once complete. Nobody had any objections to this.
- The agenda order is also to be adjusted as CA and AH will need to leave early.
- 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 from previous meeting:
 - PS asked why PPV was used rather than PGA: CO advised that his own research into the matter highlighted that it was because PPV is more applicable to measure impact on disturbance to buildings. CO asked if a more detailed response from HM's blasting specialists was needed at a future meeting. PS advised he was happy with this information.
 - Attendance of Wild Trout Trust (WTT): AH did not ask the group to attend because of the change of meeting's date. In addition, given the travel requirements etc, Alex believes there would be little benefit to their attendance. She assured the group that she can address any queries that come up.
 - RK asked about the water model, which was discussed on the village hall meeting. TM advised that Heidelberg Materials has been involved in building a comprehensive model over the past couple of years which brings together other local quarry operators. Hydrogeology is a key requirement of future Westdown operations and could possibly form part of the discharge conditions. TM can give updates at future meetings.
 - BC asked CO if the sustainability and noise monitoring meetings are closed to just quarry staff. KS suggested liaison group members may be able to join one of the meetings in the future.

2. Environmental Update

Vallis Vale

- Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy is 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

- No updates for Whatley.

Asham Wood

- The second draft of the Woodland Management Plan is being sent for approval to the new Natural England officer. Key points are:
 - Upland Plateau – different compartments are coppiced, but not sections comprising Oak.
 - Valley sides – thin canopy to ensure waste benefits the ground flora.Not much more to update, we **are** coppicing Ash, but retaining those which are showing resilience to disease. It's important to keep doing it so we don't lose diversity in the range of types of trees.
- Dormice have been found, which we have never had before. Tor quarry has also found them in field hedgerows. They like a sunny habitat and we need to look at how they can get into the wood. SWT are passionate about this.
- Coppiced wood goes to firewood and becomes cost neutral.
- Ride Management, periodic coppicing & flailing.

Planning Egford Brook riverbank & footpath repairs at Vallis – Footpath degraded by use and previous flooding . There will be a temporary closure of the path for around six weeks. The work was delayed until on 01 June because of fish spawning season.

Part of the car park on the access road to Vallis Farm will be used as a contractor's compound during the project. This means that parking facilities will be restricted and AH stressed that it is strongly advised that alternative parking locations are used until the work is finished.

Local communications activity will advise of the closure and request nobody uses the car park while the works are underway. The footpath design is sustainable, using Whatley stone, woodland stakes and stone to create a resilient bank.

RK asked if we are still looking for young oaks to plant in the beds. AH responded it's ok to come in and plant them in the beds at Whatley quarry

Vallis Vale is regenerating nicely following previous licensed felling due to ash dieback, with only a handful of trees needing to be removed (13 in the SSSI). BC asked about the tree removal, do we cut what NE tell us to cut down or do they come to site and advise on what is being done. AH replied that they come to site and go through the plan with the contractor.

Information boards – the info has been sent to the internal team to progress. AH will chase again – hoping to have more information and graphics to keep it interesting and accessible to all.

3. Planning update

- Update from Colin Arnold, Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council

CA advised the S106 has now been issued for Westdown quarry, where the scheme now falls into a six week judicial review period for any procedural matters.

TM commented that, with Westdown taking around seven years in planning and the work done to ensure compliance, the company was confident of its position and the process undertaken to date.

CA also advised that there is a new part-time planning office starting in June and, in addition, Somerset Council is also seeking to appoint new enforcement and monitoring officers, as there are currently only eight or nine in the county.

- Update from Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Heidelberg Materials

As above, TM has been working with CA and the local authority & legal departments to finalise the S106 conditions (following Somerset's previous approval at committee) - which is now completed.

TM reiterated Heidelberg Materials' commitment on vehicle movements - with a cap at 2MT via HGV from Westdown and 2MT at Whatley to be included in the legal agreement with Somerset Council.

ABR asked about the freight routes to be used. TM replied that we will commit to using assigned routes as much as possible, with Heidelberg Materials having agreed to include this in the section 106 legal agreement.

ABR then queried if access will still be at the top of Stoneway Lane. TM advised this was to be the case given how the existing access to the site before the brow of the hill was considered treacherous - hence the need to close it. So, whilst there is still a lot of work to do a new access through Section 278 of the highways act will be sought. It is a work in progress, and we haven't got the sign off yet and there are also H&S requirements and security to consider.

ABR commented it is an incredibly fast link road providing access to Halecombe quarry where lorries accelerate down the hill to get some speed to go back up the other side.

BC asked if there was anything left to do that might stop progressing with plans on site. TM advised there are 49 conditions to clarify before we can start which he will submit to CA, all subject to approval. TM has the principle and detail agreed. BC asked if there were any showstoppers, nothing he could anticipate would halt it? TM replied there's a team of specialists all working behind the scenes on different disciplines to get this finalised and he is confident they can help meet the requirements to develop what is a key operation for the company. Once CA has the conditions, he will send for further scrutiny and will sign off if it's

OK. TM added that it is expected to be around 18 months before Westdown is operational. He acknowledged that although behind schedule, it was important to carry out work in the correct seasonal windows.

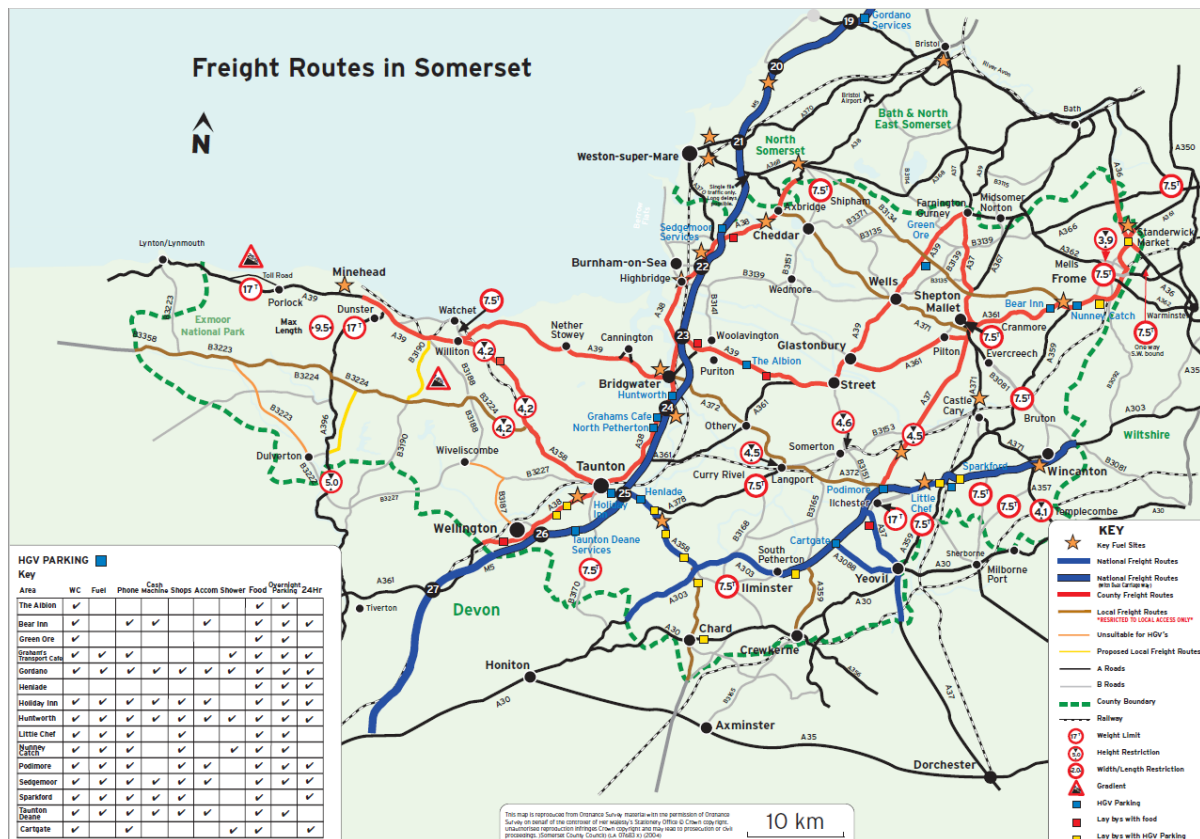
TM also confirmed – following some recent local speculation – that Asham quarry void overburden will remain contained within existing former quarry and that **no** overburden from Westdown quarry will be stored in Asham quarry void – in line with the agreed plans.

PS asked about Hydrology issues and the waterline. TM advised there are some schemes we will need to submit. The Plan is to go below the water table at some time in the future, and we have a duty to maintain the existing abstraction conditions and boreholes etc. Part of that obligation is to monitor locations in Westdown and as part of the Mendip Model so we will be able to see a wider picture in years to come.

TM advised that Thomas Cox will be starting with TM in June, to assist with progressing the project.

ACR asked about access to the A361, if there are going to be any improvements around The Bear. Lorries often go through the village to get to the A361. TM said he didn't think there are any plans to make improvements as all quarries are using it as part of the Somerset Freight Routes. TM added that the existing freight route past The Bear to get to Bristol is to go through Shepton Mallet. This is within the S106 issued. PS asked if the S106 is publicly available. CA replied yes, it has been for a while.

ACTION TM To add S106 link to community website.



ABR

ABR asked if there are any continued issues with Motorbikes at Westdown. TM confirmed that there were, however, there is security on site and it will be built into the work package going forward. TM also set out that necessary safety requirements are needed as people still use it as a through route for Asham Wood.

4. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview

- CO provided an update on production and sales volumes for 2026.
- Sales and production are slightly above plan, with the majority going via rail. RK asked if this means there will be more trains. KS replied yes, average of 5 more trains per week, going from 55 to @60 .

Capex

- 08e electric shunter locomotive has arrived. Naming ceremony with local primary schools' competition winner took place in April. The winning name was Battery Bill.
- Further plant upgrades planned ahead of supply to nationally significant infrastructure project on-going.

Projects

- The tip recycling project is ongoing. We have gone from recycling 20% to 38% reclaiming stone and processing it through the plant.



Work Experience

- More placements than ever before with six local students confirmed and multiple applications received.

Recruitment

- Currently recruiting for Plant supervisor, and Maintenance Fitters (day and night positions) Details at: www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/careers
- If anyone knows of any engineers/apprentices who are currently looking, please encourage them to reach out to us.

Noise monitoring

Purpose (as previously set out):

- Whatley quarry is committed to continuously improving environmental sustainability and mitigating the impact on our neighbours.
- The 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.

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

The Committee meet monthly.

KS set out that:

- The quarry is awaiting approval for the rubber linings to be installed in the remaining dumper buckets not yet lined.
- All operators on site are receiving training on the noise charter.
- Work with the blasting team continues and is looking at heat maps for noise, to support the implementation of sequencing to help reduce noise and vibration.

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 L 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 removed from Whatley at the end of February.

Blasting Operations:

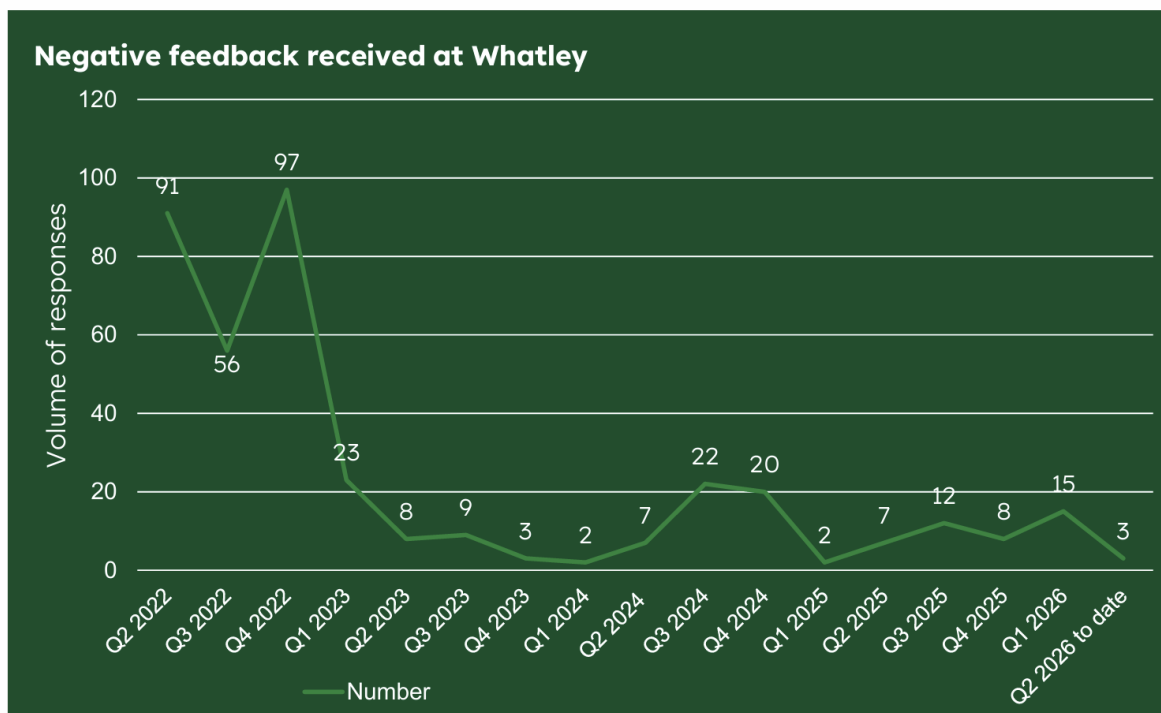
KS provided an update on quarry blasting:

- 46 blasts so far in 2026 (to 22/04/26), with average vibration of 2.92 mm/s PPV.
- For the smaller blasts we are looking at sequencing
- There has been an issue with reliability with our blasting contractors so we have sometimes had to move the time of blasts in the day, which those signed up to notifications will be informed about. KS advised that he is working to reduce the need to change the schedule at late notice.

Feedback

- SS provided information on feedback received: The data shared indicates a slight increase then a drop in negative feedback so far in 2026. See diagrams shared at meeting below:

Negative feedback received Q2 2022 – Q2 2026 to date



18 pieces of negative feedback: Q1 January – March 2026

Blasting: 2

HGVs & traffic: 4

Noise: 4

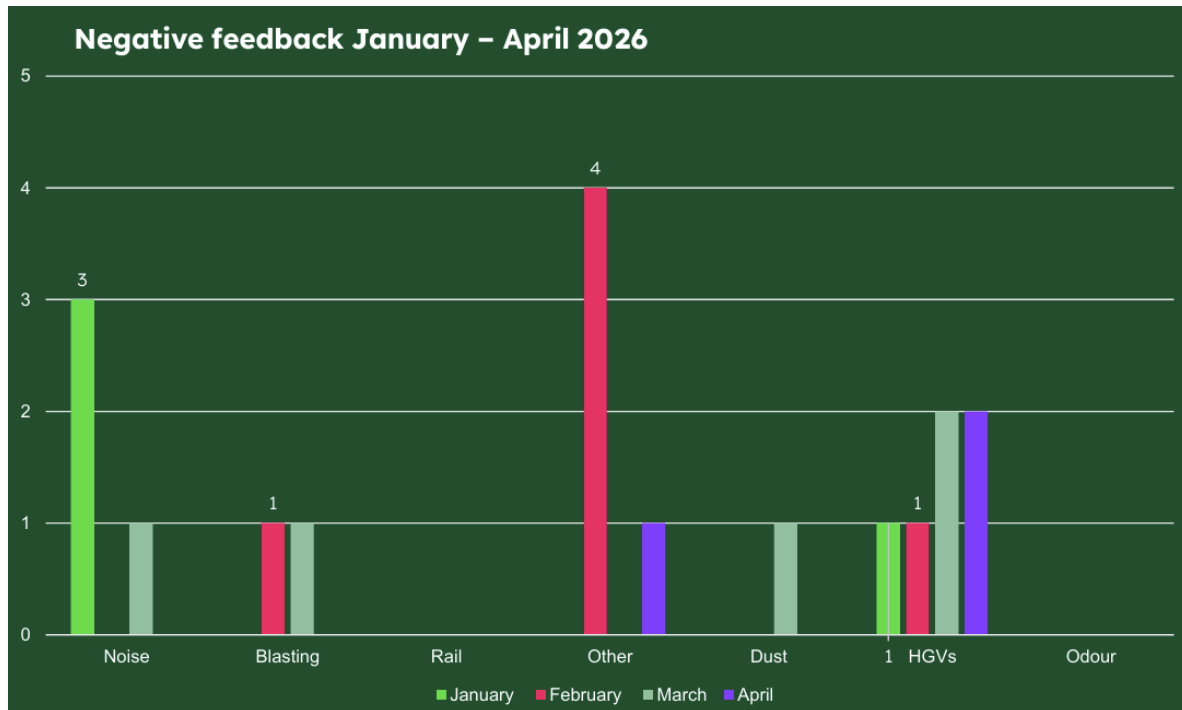
Other (Potholed roads outside quarry & blast notification error): 4

Train noise: 0

Dust: 1

Q2 to date 2026 -

(HGVs in village & one general)_Train noise: 3



JH set out that there has been a request from a Mells resident for permanent noise monitoring at their property as they feel that the noise levels there are above the compliant levels. TM responded that previous monitoring at noise sensitive receptors (as set out in the operating conditions for Whatley) has shown levels are consistently below the limits set.

PS suggested that a way to prove this would be constant monitoring, which would be a simple way to stop the complaints. The resident says they have a DB monitor which records the levels, therefore if the quarry is compliant the continuous monitoring would refute the claims. BC suggested that perhaps rather than it being on their property, perhaps on the quarry boundary close to the property.

TM said that the quarry recently carried out some comprehensive noise monitoring with our specialist noise consultants – the findings of which were submitted to Somerset Council and the data interrogated. TM added SC confirmed we are compliant, albeit the company's approach is that if we can improve matters, we certainly will seek to challenge the status quo as hopefully is evident from the work done to date with the engagement of the liaison committee.

JH suggested that, while Mells the Parish Council is happy with these figures, can Heidelberg Materials provide data for a specific time/date if there was a query? SS commented that noise is measured as an average over an hour. TM added that we try to work below levels

not to them, so if the level was 10 we would try to work to 5. Can we do better? Yes, and this is why we have the noise committee.

KS then added that Whatley quarry carries out regular monitoring using a calibrated monitor during the day and during the night, and after a complaint we are often asked to take Db levels. It was suggested that perhaps the noise committee could discuss the possibility of 365 noise monitoring and data logging so specific times can be checked in the case of a complaint.

Community update

SS gave an update on recent charitable/community contributions.

- Community Support Co-Ordinator Martin Symons attended St Louis Primary School for 'Aspirations Week'.
- Production Supervisor, Craig Newman visited Norton Hill School for a 'Guess My Job' event in partnership with Bristol WORKS.
- Donation towards a defibrillator located at Great Elm Village Hall.
- Materials pledged to Kilmersdon Church Primary School, Woodland Tribe Frome, and Olga's Wood.
- To apply go to: [Supporting the community | Heidelberg Materials UK](#)

Next time we will talk about the Whatley Loop walk. ABR advised a lot of people are using the loop.

5. Westdown Quarry

KG was not available to provide an update in the meeting. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

6. AOB

RK noticed a signpost referencing a dangerous area that needs cleaning – it's unclear in the dip. The 'Be Careful' sign.

(It is believed this references the sign coming down Hapsford Hill towards Great Elm, just before the left turn into the old Hanson Contracting compound, in which case the sign would be the property of Somerset Highways.)



Summary of actions

- KG will find out from Roger Griffiths if there will be any issues with Nunney Brook if, in the future Westdown quarry will be extracting from below the water table. Ongoing.
- TM To add S106 link to community website.
- KG to provide an update on Westdown activity at the next meeting.

7. Next meeting date

The next meetings will take place at Whatley quarry offices on:

- **Tuesday 21st July at 17.30**
- **Tuesday 20th October at 17.30**

Meeting Ends 18:45.