



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries  
Community Lison Group Meeting  
16th July 2024 - 17:30  
Whatley Quarry**

APPROVED MINUTES

**ATTENDEES:**

Philip Ham (PH)	Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
Barry Clark (BC)	Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
Steve West (SW)	Mells Parish Council
Richard Evans (RE)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Richard King (RK)	Great Elm residents' representative
Andrew Bramston (ABR)	Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
Ian Kirby (IK)	Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
Estelle Kirby (EK)	Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
Ian Strachan (IS)	Heidelberg Materials, Strategic Development Manager
Trystan Mabbitt (TM)	Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
Kyle Smith (KS)	Heidelberg Materials, Whatley Quarry Unit Manager (for VP)
Samantha Stagg (SS)	James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials
Jess Bloomer (JB)	James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

**JOINED ONLINE**

Colin Arnold (CA)	Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
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**APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Martyn Ford (MF)	Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers) Somerset Council
Ann Crowcombe (AC)	Cranmore Parish Council
Simon Clegg (SC)	Nunney Parish Council
Vince Pitt (VP)	Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager
Alexandra Hemming (AH)	Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
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
Andrew Gunn (AGU)	Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council

## Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair
  - Welcome and Chair introductions
  - Review of minutes from last meeting
  - Matters arising from last minutes
  
2. Whatley update – Kyle Smith Unit manager, Whatley quarry
  - Operational overview
  - Logistics (including road and rail)
  - Blasting
  - Feedback
  - Community support update
  
3. Environmental Update – Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect
  
4. Planning update: – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager
  - Westdown proposals
  - Whatley ROMP
  
5. AOBs.
  
6. Date of next meeting.

## **MEETING MINUTES**

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

#### Welcome & Apologies:

- The Group confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters Arising – AH to provide update on development of information boards. To be carried forward to next meeting.

### **2. Whatley Quarry update**

#### Operational overview:

- KS provided an update on production and sales volumes year to date. Due to de-stocking sales came in higher than production for Q2.

#### Capex

- Track replacement due to finish end of Q3.
- Dust suppression project on-going.
- New welfare facilities due to be complete by end of the year.
- Wash plant upgrade completed.

#### Projects

- Planned repeat river clean volunteering in autumn.
- Supported Whatley Loop (annual event?)
- Attendance at Norton School Careers Day

ABR mentioned that access can be difficult around the Whatley loop for prams etc.

KS added there are plans for info points around the loop. RE suggested we gauge interest in making it a bigger event. Keen to get together to see what can be done.

RE added perhaps a nature trail, more viewing platforms. ABR suggested at the end of Mells lane in Chantry. Maybe use the parish fields for events.

SS and RE to meet early autumn with a view to discussing activity for a 2025 loop walk.

#### Recruitment

- Continuing recruiting for a number of roles, including 2 in maintenance team.
- Recruitment of two Mechanical Engineering apprentices. Appointed one 17-yr old from Frome to date.
- Recruiting engineering graduate: September 2025.
- Details at: [www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/career](http://www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/career).
- Martin Symons has now semi-retired after 48 years-service and is now working two days a week, including supporting community related activity.

**Blasting Operations:**

KS provided an update on quarry blasting:

- 2024 YTD (until end of June): Average highest PPV recorded: 2.71 mm/s (average for 2023 2.74 mm/s)
- Of the 58 blasts in to end of Q2 91% were at, or below, 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry)
- 100% of blasts within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.

RE mentioned that he really felt the blast on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. SS said there were no stats on this as yet. KS said it was a standard blast. ABR added that monitoring was showing very different readings at different locations. The blasting in the south impacts Chantry on Level 7. SS said that VP is seeking another monitor to be installed in Whatley, as someone had contacted the quarry about experiencing vibrations. TM asked if we are sharing live data for transparency from EPC. Should be using data following the blast, to correlate back to the notification.

**ACTION** – SS pick this up with VP.

SS advised that they can now adapt the text to be sent as an email and can add data to this.

**Feedback**

SS provided information on feedback received: There was an uptick in negative feedback in Q2 2024, related to HGV issues.

See diagrams shared at meeting below:

**17 April - 30 June 2024:**

5 pieces of negative feedback:

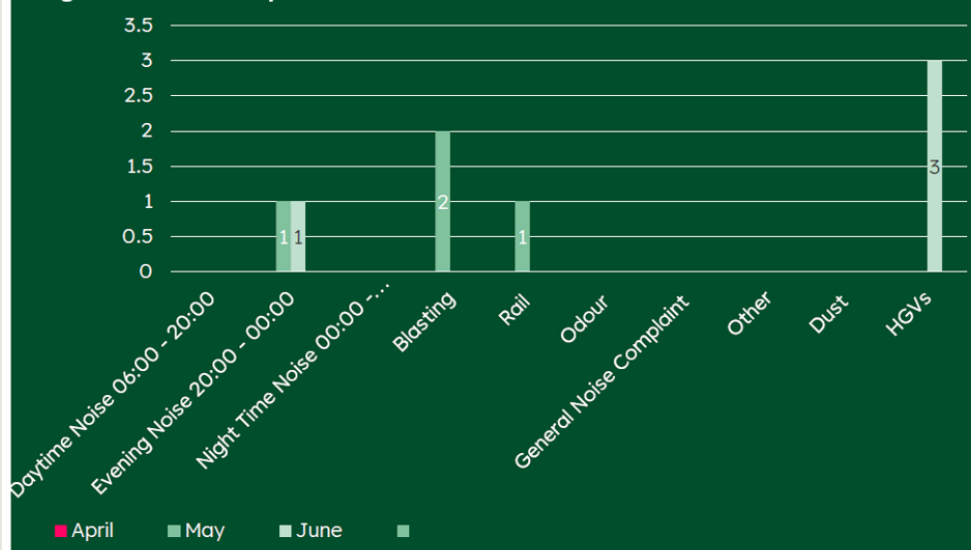
Noise: 2

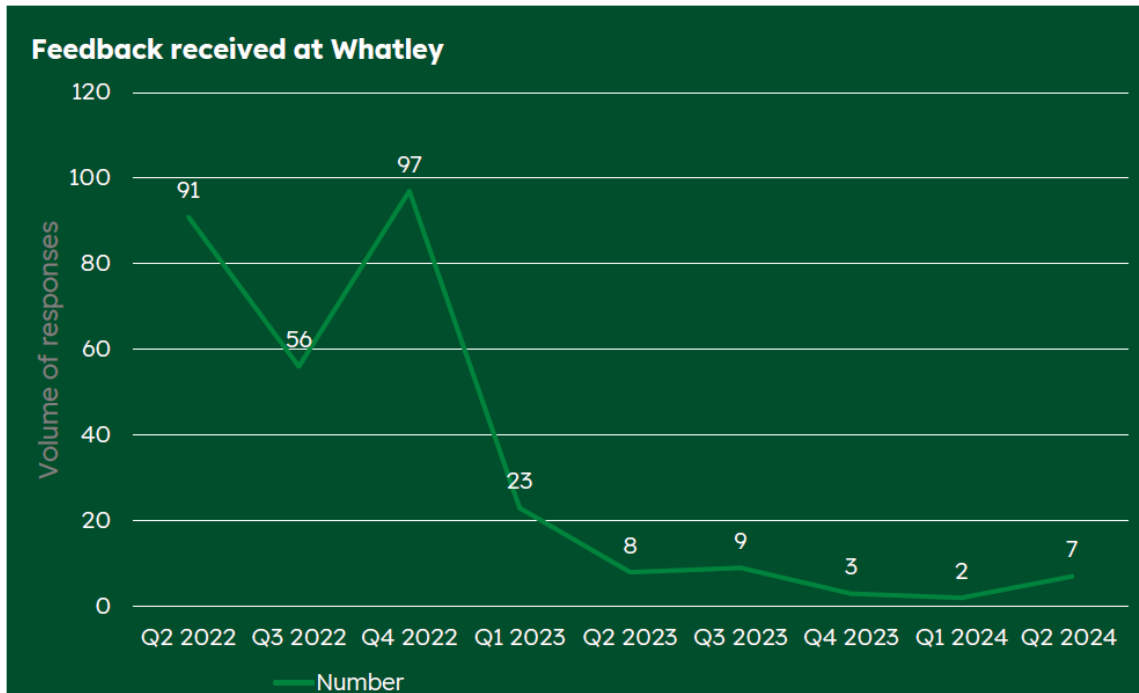
Blasting: 1

HGVs 3

Vibration 1 (rail?)

**Negative feedback April – June 2024**





Re HGVs

- Writing to all hauliers today, including London based ones involved in recent transgressions.
- Reviewing driver site induction information.

Noise

- Contact via Mells PC.
- Primary continues to be shut off at 23.00.
- Increasing handheld monitoring in the area.
- Will share results of handheld monitoring at the next meeting.

Re vibration

- Arranging visit to local resident to better understand as timings don't relate to blasts.

RE mentioned the HGVs going through Chantry. Said they were all together and looked confused as they turned into the road. BE asked if they were contractors. RE suggested they might be more inclined to risk it. Asked if we could use a sign to avoid this. KS said we could put a ban in place as long as we know the reg number. IK said Halecome quarry will ban drivers going through Leigh on Mendip. TM added that we are looking at a new induction pack, which will be rolled out to all drivers. TM suggested 3 strikes and you're banned. KS agreed if a reg is caught 3 times.

ABR said it was a dangerous road and has seen lorries coming out with sheeting. KS said this should be monitored at the exit bridge. IS said it's a requirement on the roadways and will take it as an ACTION.

Noise feedback came from Mells PC. KS said nothing has changed on site. SW asked what time the primary started up. KS advised 6am – 11:30 pm. SW asked if it could be moving stock around. Do they move all night? Noise was on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

ACTION KS will check if it's second crushing. SW asked if there is a lot. KS said it's a fair amount.

A Whatley resident complained about vibrations, but the timings don't correlate with the blasting, so VP is to go and see them once they are free of Covid.

ABR also mentioned CCTV to deter fly tipping – Parish Clerk to monitor. IS advised that they would need a SIM card for monitoring, so it would depend on the signal wherever they are placed. TM asked if there was any signage about CCTV. ASBR said no, but it's not a parish initiative. 1-2 residents have private CCTV but only monitoring their own spaces.

#### Community update

SS gave an update on charitable contributions.

- Contribution to Friends of Chantry church re installation of lighting and seat cushions.
- Funding new bench for Mells nursery school for when people collect their children.
- Contribution towards art competition at St Andrews Church Mells.

£27,500+ committed so far this year.

#### Environmental update

Vallis Vale

- The seedling beds for collected oak trees is set up and if residents wish to transplant their seedlings to these beds in the car park then to please liaise with Vince. Requested a sign could be made up to put in one of the beds to indicated it was for Vallis seedlings. ACTION VP to organise.
- Our contractor has been on site carrying out repairs to fences and kissing gates on site with a small amount of work left to do which he is in liaison with SCC rights of way officer.
- Large amount of debris has been removed from the footbridge at the confluence between the Mells River and Egford Brook. Comment was received from a resident about other blockages on the Mells River however these have been inspected and they are not our trees but have come from the landowners of the opposite bank. Another blockage was reported downstream of the Egford Brook weir, but this single stem is being retained at the request of the EA and Wild Trout Trust to improve the river habitat for invertebrates.
- No further comment has been received from NE regarding the complaint made to them but AH will check with them.

- Monitoring of the Mells Valley SAC bat cave is ongoing and currently returning low numbers of greater and lesser horseshoe bats using the site in 2023 and low numbers of greater horseshoe bats so far this year.
- 6 static bat detectors have been deployed on site to start to record and understand how bats are using the Vale. Statics are being used instead of walked transects as they gather more robust and plentiful data.
- Awaiting details from First Ecology (now Somerset Wildlife Trust Consultancy) of what further wildlife boxes we can be putting up in the Vale for birds, bats, owls and raptors.
- The Wild Trout Trust are progressing the proposal to repair the Egford Brook footpath and bank erosion with anticipated works commencing in quarter 2 2025.
- Vegetation strimming has been carried out adjacent to the De La Beche geological feature and vegetation removed from the face. Plans in place post bird nesting to install a series of steps up to the feature from the old landing yard area to aid access.
- Some minor repairs are to be carried out to the footbridge upstream of the duck pond where high water levels have eroded the adjacent land.
- Giant Hogweed seedlings have been removed from around the Egford Brook weir.
- Temporary repairs to the Egford Brook weir to be carried out in liaison with our geological function and the EA with permanent repairs to be carried out in conjunction with the footpath and bank repairs in 2025.

### Whatley

- The bridge in our fields at the bottom of Railford in the dip from Chantry is to be repaired having received approval for the works from the EA.
- Footpath repairs are to be carried out in late August to combine with works to repair footpaths in Asham.
- A single, very large dying ash tree on Lime Kiln Lane near to Finger Farm is to be turned in to a monolith due to severe ash die back.
- A series of 8 new bat boxes are to be put up around the perimeter within our plantations.

### Asham

- Ride management works are ongoing in the woodland to create graded woodland edges from grassy verges to scrub to woodland to benefit invertebrate, dormice and bats.
- Existing 2 coppice blocks are nearly finished and in the process of being fenced to prevent deer browsing.
- Deer management works have commenced with some animals already removed.
- A draft update to the woodland management plan is expected in the next 6 weeks which will be discussed on site with NE and the FC as well as Somerset Wildlife Trust.

- Bridleway repairs along Fordbury Water to be carried out in late August in liaison with NE.
- Monitoring of the old conveyor tunnel in Asham Quarry is ongoing with low numbers of greater horseshoe bats this year and low numbers of both lesser and greater horseshoe bats in 2023.

EK asked if we knew why there were a lower number of bats now. ABR thought it might be the weather and lack of insects. His bees have not produced any honey. TM advised he would check with Alex and report back if there is anything underlying.

### **Planning update**

TM provided an update on the planning application to update conditions for Westdown quarry:

- The team has been busy after the strategic planning committee meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June and is now tying up various obligations following the successful determination.
- We are aware that some members stood against the approval, and for us this is the beginning not the end of engagement with all, including those who had reservations about the scheme. Going forward we'll continue to share information, and we recognise that some valid points were made, such as expanding the blast monitoring zones. We are now looking at this.
- As the scheme progresses we'll continue to provide updates to ensure everyone has the facts as we appreciate that sometimes it's the unknown that is concerning.

ABR said there would be an invitation to the village meeting in September. An opportunity to present to Chantry PC what Section 106 means and to explain the condition process etc.

BC asked if we had an expected date for reopening. TM advised that it would be a 12-month lead in. There is lots of data required with surveys over the next wintering period - a lot more to do. IS added that there will likely be some disruption on the road such as traffic lights. Just wanted to warn everyone.

### **Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP)**

TM advised the plan for Whatley is exactly as stated previously. The review of Mineral Planning (ROMP) from 2012 remains undetermined. In the meantime, work has been taking place on updating out of date surveys and liaising with Somerset Council re pre-applications.

We have also been looking at what reserves remain in the west and south west (tip) and the floor of the quarry. Info is available on website



[www.communities.heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/en/whatley-and-westdown-quarry-community-page/faqs](http://www.communities.heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/en/whatley-and-westdown-quarry-community-page/faqs)

Also advised happy to come back with more detailed plans. IS added there is no hidden agenda, nothing has changed, and will be doing all as planned.

BC asked about the ROMP. TM advised legislation is looking at 2030. ABR asked if the company structure will change.

IS replied that TM is heading the project, IS will stay involved and will be helping TM. Also looking for someone to help with Land & planning. IS Said he wanted to follow through and finish what he started. VP remains Operations Manager at Whatley and will take the role to Westdown too.

TM added he's been doing this for 6 years and is keeping the continuity. IS added they've come a long way since the start. Lots of good work and momentum.

**AOB**

PH wanted to say thank you to everyone for what has happened, it was difficult at the beginning but it has gone well.

**Next meeting date**

The next meeting will take place on TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> October 2024 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:

15<sup>th</sup> October 2024

14<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Meeting Ends 18:35