



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
14th January 2025 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Will Palmer (WP) Whatley & Chantry parish council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Area General Manager – South Region
- Kirstie Gibbon (KG) Heidelberg Materials, Project Manager – Westdown Quarry
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
- Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers) Somerset Council
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Simon Clegg (SC) Nunney Parish Council
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials Regional Transport Manager
- Jess Bloomer (JB) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials
- 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 (Vincent Pitt, Area General Manager, South Region)

- Operational overview
- Logistics (including road and rail)
- Feedback (SS)
- Community giving update (SS)

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

4. Planning update (Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager)

- Westdown update

5. Any other business

6. Dates of next meetings

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

- The Group confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters held over are addressed by today's agenda.

2. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview:

- VP provided an update on production and sales volumes year to date. There were higher sales, heavily driven on the rail by HS2, alongside road sales for Hopkins Estates.
- VP was asked to explain how there were more sales than production. He explained that this is from de-stocking, there was an excess in 2023 that had been produced and stockpiled. Some has been used for sales in 2024, however a lot is dust (0/4mm aggregate) produced in the production process – for which demand is lower. There is a significant amount in the tip which is being recycled and turned into something usable.

Capex

- New welfare facilities due to be complete by March.
- New electric locomotive is arriving in June – Whatley will be the first quarry in the UK to be using one. IT was asked where it will be used. VP replied in the shunting yard.
- £300K will be spent on further track replacement within the quarry.

Projects

- Tip recycling project ongoing. We will share photos of the recycling project in the next meeting.
- New viewing platform on quarry footpath to be installed Spring 2025. It will be at the far West end of site. There will also be works to the footpath around the quarry as there are parts missing in Mells Green. An information board will also be installed.
- Rail operations efficiencies project is focussing on the correct weighing first time, preventing unnecessary movements and causing inefficiencies.
- New ramps in the quarry on the Chantry side and will be blasting in the middle. The focus will be on the central and back towards the tip, under the old lagoon. Currently on Level 6 however can go to Level 11.

Restructure

- VP has now taken on an Area General Manager position, responsible for Batts Combe in Cheddar, Masters in Wareham, Whatley and Westdown Quarries. Chris O'Connor will be the new Operations Manager for these quarries in March.
Kirstie Gibbon is the new project manager for the opening of Westdown quarry, looking to open in 18 to 24 months' time.

Recruitment

- Looking to recruit 2 engineering apprentices in 2025.
- Continuing recruiting for a number of roles, including 2 in maintenance team (nights) – Which is tricky to recruit permanent night shift staff.
- Details at: www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/careers
We have a total of 101 permanent staff on site, most who live within 30 mins of site. 38 permanent contractors and other ad hoc contractors. Around 180 total.

Blasting Operations:

VP provided an update on quarry blasting:

- Installed additional vibration monitoring in Whatley and in Mells – no triggers to date.
- 2024 YTD: Average highest PPV recorded: 2.58 mm/s (average for 2023 2.74 mm/s)
- Of the 119 blasts in 2024 91% were at, or below, 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry). All that went over were between 4.5 - 5 mm/s PPV
- 100% of blasts were within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.

RE queried the massive blast at Christmas and asked if the blasting data can be shared post blast. SS said she is investigating if the current system will allow anyone who gets the blast warning to also get a data follow up message. It was mentioned that it is hard to gauge the measurements. SS explained it's all about context, research shows you might feel a 1.5 mm/s PPV blast more than a 5 mm/s PPV depending on where you are. RE asked if people sent real time feedback from certain parts of the village as transparency helps to understand how we are working together. TM replied it all depends on where they are blasting.

ACTION – VP to investigate real time reporting.

RK mentioned that the percentages make things seem better, however these figures show 1 per month is over 4.5 mm/s PPV. PH asked what '95% confidence' means. SS replied that there is a 5% allowance for geology anomalies or development blasts. In other words, 95 out of 100 blasts need to be within this vibration level. RE asked if going into the centre will be a lower reading. VP said it would be predicted less, as blasting a sink shot dissipates below across all directions.

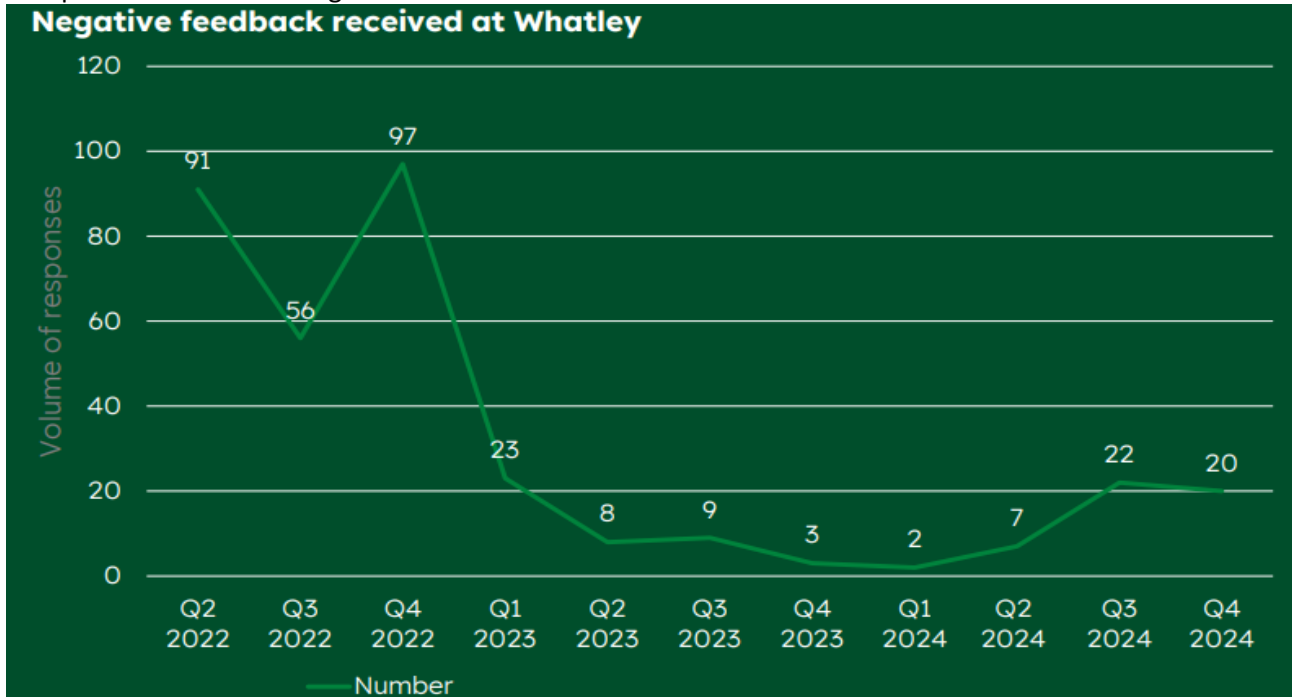
Can we explain what has been done with EPC mapping the area?

ACTION – VP to provide update on EPC's review.

Feedback

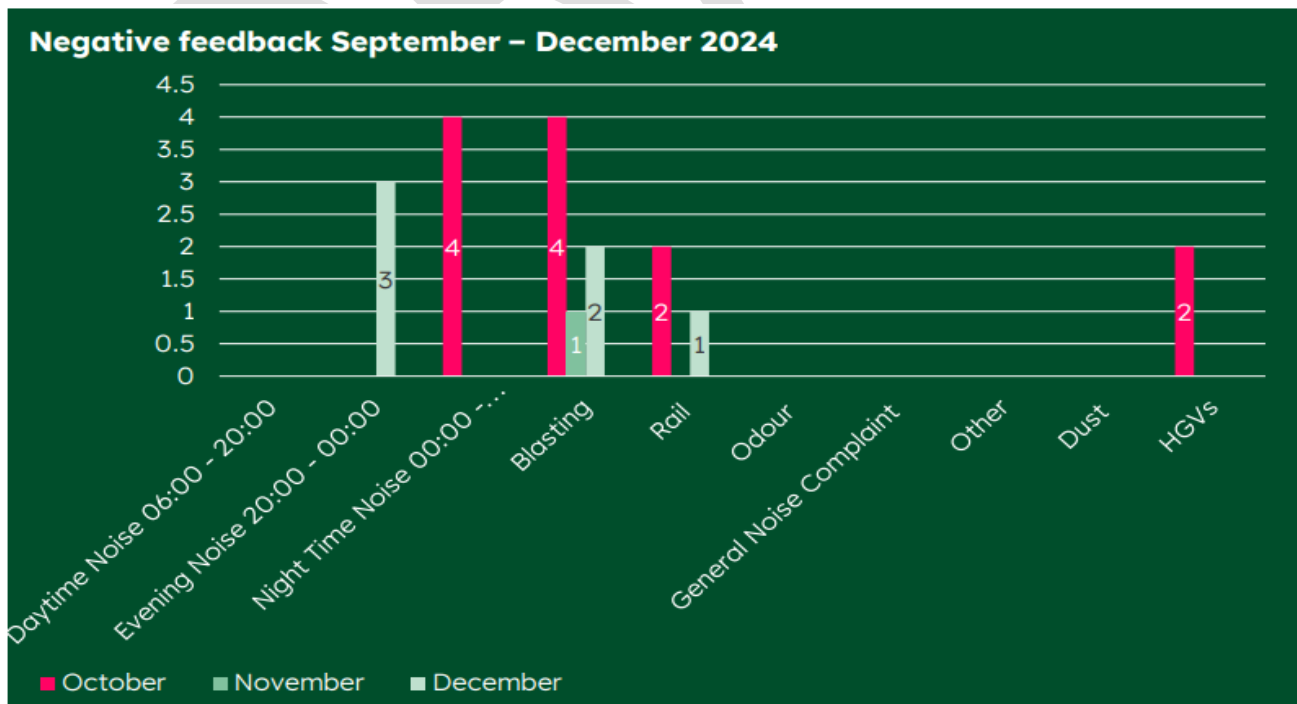
SS provided information on feedback received: The data shared indicates an uptick in negative feedback in Q2 2024. See diagrams shared at meeting below:

Complaints have been rising in Q3 & Q4 2024.



Negative feedback October – December 2024

- 19 pieces of negative feedback:
- Daytime Noise:0
- Rail/nighttime noise: 10
- Blasting: 7
- HGVs: 2



HGVs

VP asked if there had been any improvements with the HGVs as we have done a lot of work to mitigate it. TM mentioned an updated induction pack and leaflet to hauliers and customers. PH added some were due to road diversions. VP mentioned that a lot were using car Sat Navs not HGV specific, which was sending people through the villages.

ACTION – Request to share the driver induction pack at next meeting.

Community update

SS gave an update on charitable contributions.

- Leigh on Mendip benches for cemetery extension area.
- Donate IT –WP shared that they have been able to distribute 250 donated devices around Frome in the past 2 years.
- Christmas tree and lights donation Whatley church. WP thanked the quarry for this.
- Contribution towards Nunney playground refurbishment.



£38,500+ committed in 2024. Lots of pledges from 2023/2024 are now coming to fruition.

2025

- Committed to supporting Whatley walk: summer 2025
- Working with Somerset Earth Science Centre (SESC) and The Engineering Trust re supporting work experience opportunities for x3 Year 10 school students.
- Supporting acquisition of new transit for Earth Science Centre.
- Material donation to Mells Tithe Barn.
- Bags of salt to Mells Primary school when the pavements were frosty.

RE asked what date the 2025 Whatley Walk is on. VP said we will need to get together to discuss dates and SS has said she will help to arrange it. We have lots of ideas for what to put on the walk.

All the quarries in the local area make a significant contribution to SESC every year, and they must do around 20-25 school visits to the quarry per year. We also use the centre for meetings. The more it is used, the better it is for local people.

TM asked for a breakdown of the material values as he had a value of £60K. SS advised this could be a difference of the pledge to actual donations. BC asked if it's possible to also have a breakdown summary between villages. ACTION SS to provide.

Environmental update

AH has had lots of discussions with Richard and Trystan on site.

Regarding average population of bats, AH has worked on this with surveyors and will do another survey in Westdown.

Vallis Vale

- 250 naturally regenerating saplings in the vale were protected with tree shelters.
- Seedling beds for collected oak trees set up in the car park if you wish to plant anything in there then please liaise with Vince.
- Ongoing repairs to fences and gates have been carried out.
- Monitoring of Mells Valley SAC bat cave in 2024 showed that there were 2 greater horseshoe bats and 2 lesser horseshoe bats using the cave. We are hoping these numbers will increase with reduced trespassing into the cave and monitoring will be carried out again in 2026 as advised by our ecologists. Every 2 years is more than sufficient. Awaiting results from the 2024 static bat detectors but survey effort will again continue in 2025 to build up a picture of how bats use the site.
- 2 tawny owl boxes have been put up. Data from tawny owl detectors show that in 2024 there were over 40,000 calls detected which indicates the site is still very well used by tawnys. It is worth noting that tawnys do not call very much in the summer months.
- The project proposal has been received from the Wild Trout Trust detailing the bank and path repairs required on the Egford Brook and a meeting is scheduled with the new NE officer this month to discuss the approvals with an aim for work hopefully commencing in Q2.
- A repeat hazardous tree survey is scheduled for this Summer to ensure the ongoing safety of the users and residents of the site.
- A new Natural England (NE) officer is in post and a site meeting will be held in the Summer after the tree survey is updated to discuss the ongoing management of the SSSI and planting proposals.
- A thermal drone survey will be carried out this week to assess the deer population and identify if any deer management is required on the site in liaison with NE.

Whatley

- The bridge in our fields at bottom of Railford in the dip from Chantry has been repaired following approval from EA.
- Footpath repairs in Railford Bottom mostly completed but work was hampered by wet weather so the last items of stoning will be done in the spring.
- A single, large dying ash tree on Lime Kiln Lane near Finger Farm is to be turned into a monolith due to severe ADB.
- A series of eight new bat boxes to be erected around the perimeter, within our plantations.

RE asked if the footpath at Railford bottom can go all the way up to the top. VP said we are looking at using volunteering days in spring to clear up and finish it right the way through.

We have also re-done the footpath through Mells farm, a couple of patches need re-stoning but need the cattle feeder moving as it is pretty much on the footpath.

Asham

- Existing two coppice blocks are finished and are being fenced to prevent deer browsing.
- Ongoing clearance of fallen trees from the rights of way.
- 2 coppicing days funded by HM and run by Somerset Wildlife Trust have been carried out so far with another 2 days scheduled for the 18th January and 22nd February- sign up on SWTs website.

- Deer management works have commenced and an updated thermal drone survey will be carried out this week weather permitting.
- A draft update to the woodland management plan has been delayed due to consultant workload however it is expected in the next eight weeks and will be discussed on site with the new Natural England advisor, the Forestry Commission and Somerset Wildlife Trust.
- Bridleway repairs along Fordbury Water have been completed.
- Monitoring of the old conveyor tunnel in Asham quarry in 2024 showed the site was used by 1 lesser horseshoe bat and 1 greater horseshoe bat. Monitoring will continue in 2025.

Planning update

Westdown

- TM confirmed the documentation on the community website has been updated to the most recent information. It should be user-friendly and in chronological order. This will be updated with conditions and legal agreement when finalised.
- CA added liaison with Somerset Council re conditions is ongoing, with S106 agreement V2 recently shared.
- Commitment to reducing tonnage out of Whatley and Westdown as per the legal agreement – this would mean 8mtpa across both sites when fully operational.
- It was asked when the final sign off is expected. CA advised hopefully 3 months for the S106 agreement.
- Currently looking at schemes of work regarding access. Working to 18 months for enabling works from final sign off.

VP added that he would like to be operating in 18 months' time. (Operational means stone coming out of the quarry for sale.) TM advised that it would be contract crush to start with then fixed plant will follow.

Whatley

TM provided an update on the Review of Mineral Planning:

- The previous ROMP submission (undetermined since its submission in 2012) still remains with Somerset for determination. However, given the need to update surveys and take account of the latest prevailing guidance Heidelberg Materials has sought to develop a new application to incorporate the existing ROMP and that of future aspirations.
- The details of this have previously been shared with the liaison group and are awaiting feedback from the Local Planning Authority with regards to on the scoping approach and pre-app advice that the company has sought.
- Once Somerset Council's feedback is received this will help finalise what will be a new submission and allow the company to undertake further consultation and engagement with the public to inform the scheme prior to its formal submission anticipated for later this year.

All the details re the above are available on Heidelberg Materials website community page for Whatley quarry.

AOB

SW mentioned one villager has concerns about night-time noise. Would VP be able to join SW to go and visit them. It would help when supporting SW to rebuild bridges.

ACTION: SW and VP to coordinate visit

RE said that ABR had mentioned to him about the church boiler. VP has said he will meet with Andrew when he returns.

Summary of actions

- VP to investigate real time reporting of blasting data
- HM to share info on EPC's mapping of area re blasts
- HM to share HGV drivers' induction pack at next meeting
- SS to provide breakdown of donations by village, including materials/volunteering
- Date for Whatley Loop walk to be confirmed and plans developed
- SW and VP to meet with Mells resident re noise issues
- TM to liaise with Langdon Turner regarding relocation of cattle feeder in association with footpath
- TM and SS to check to ensure that the latest information on the previous ROMP submission and scoping documents for Whatley and easily accessible
- AH to provides update re the previous clearance work at Railford Bottom and whether this will continue.

Next meeting date

The next meeting will take place on TUESDAY 1st April 2025 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:

15th July 2025

14th October 2025

Meeting Ends 18:33