



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
15th July 2025 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

APPROVED 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 |
| • Richard King (RK) | Great Elm residents' representative |
| • Barry Clark (BC) | Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC) |
| • Andrew Bramston (ABR) | Whatley & Chantry Parish Council |
| • Peter Shepherd (PS) | Nunney Parish Council |
| • Estelle Kirby (EK) | Leigh on Mendip Parish Council |
| • Ian Kirby (IK) | Leigh on Mendip Parish Council |
| • Vince Pitt (VP) | Heidelberg Materials, Area General Manager – South Region |
| • Kyle Smith (KS) | Heidelberg Materials, Unit Manager, Whatley Quarry |
| • Kirstie Gibbon (KG) | Heidelberg Materials, Project Manager, Westdown Quarry |
| • Alexandra Hemming (AH) | Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect |
| • 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 |
| • Colin Arnold (CA) | Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC) |
| • Andrew Gunn (AGU) | Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC) |
| • Ann Crowcombe (AC) | Cranmore Parish Council |
| • Will Palmer (WP) | Whatley & Chantry parish council |
| • Simon Clegg (SC) | Nunney Parish Council |
| • Trystan Mabbitt (TM) | Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager |
| • 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 |
| • Charlotte Rushmere | Somerset County Council (unable to join electronically) |

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)
- Blasting
- Feedback (SS)
- Community giving update (SS)

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

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

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

- Westdown Proposals

6. Any other business

7. 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 arising – Blasting update is outstanding. Currently in hand.

2. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview:

- VP provided an update on production and sales volumes year-to-date.
- Production and sales are above plan. This is helped due to continued destocking.
- HS2 have now stopped its funding for 2025, so volumes by rail have slowed over the last quarter.

Capex

- New electric locomotive is now arriving in August – Whatley will be the first quarry in the UK to be using one. VP advised it will only be used in the shunting yard.
Whatley would like to hold a competition with the local primary schools to name the Loco. This will be initiated when the school return in September.
- Track replacement work within the quarry should finish in August.

Projects

- The tip recycling project is ongoing – Heidelberg Materials to provide detailed update at the next meeting.
- The new viewing platform on the 'loop' footpath has been installed at the far west of the quarry. Works to the footpath around the quarry are also now complete. Information boards are in development and will also be installed once design has been approved.
- 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 of the quarry are now complete.

Recruitment

- Electrical apprentice (16yrs+) starting in September 2025.
- 4 Year 10 (15/16 yrs) students are carrying out work-experience in mid-July.
- 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 has also had approval for 3 Mobile Plant Apprentices. These roles include college days to allow the completion of qualifications.
- AH advised also a graduate Landscape Architect has been recruited – based in Frome.

Noise Committee

Purpose:

- 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.
- Initially identified areas of improvement and now implementing adaptations.
- Committee continues to meet monthly.

Quarry Actions.

- Mobile plant is limited to certain times when moving between levels
- Implementing rubber lining on material bunkers is now in the pricing stages
- Asphalt plant has submitted investment papers for new feeder
- Training currently being organised for operators on noise reduction techniques
- Non-essential plant components causing noise pollution have already been removed

Rail Actions completed:

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 on Capex.
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.

Rail Further actions:

- Replace Diesel loco with electric to reduce engine noise. Delivery expected: w/c 04.08.2025
- Right first-time approach - pushing backloaded trains to reduce overall train movement:
- C25 weigher installed end of March. Now looking at a different machine to adjust wagons on tracks 1 and 2.

VP advised the noise committee was created to focus on how to operate as quietly and efficiently as we can. Limiting noise from all Load and Haul, blasting and crushing operations.

ABR asked if there are metrics, a benchmark to quantify the reduction. VP responded that there is noise monitoring on site, and issues generally get dealt with right away.

ABR suggested it would be good to have something to measure against. VP said that he would investigate how this information and improvements made could be shared.

ACTION – VP to provide benchmarking and improvements at next meeting

There was a discussion regarding other sources of noise in the quarry such as rail tracks needing to be greased. There was also a discussion regarding the charging capability of site for the Loco, and the fact it will only be used on site, not on the mainline. When questioned about using electric dumpers and shovels, VP advised the capacity to charge these is at least 5 years away.

VP also explained that C25 investment will reduce rail movements and enhance efficiency. Ideally loads are 'right first time' – not too heavy or light and therefore cutting down the need for adjustment.

Whatley quarry team take on Three Peaks Challenge – and win!



VP set out that a team from Whatley quarry have completed one of Britain's toughest outdoor trials, the Three Peaks Challenge, to raise funds for The British Heart Foundation, in memory of late colleague Pat Orman. Despite severe weather conditions, the team completed the 24-hour challenge with 63 seconds to spare. Fundraising efforts have exceeded £7,000, supported by Heidelberg Materials' charity matching scheme.

Blasting Operations:

VP provided an update on quarry blasting:

- 61 blasts so far in 2025 with average vibration of 2.48mm/s PPV.
- Highest blast PPV recorded on 03.07.2025:
 - 2.05mm/s PPV (Chantry Church)
 - 4.05mm/s PPV (George Cottage)
 - 6.2mm/s PPV (Old School House)
- 98.3% of blasts have been 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 were within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.
- There are plans to move the blasting away from the Chantry side of the quarry.

VP explained that the blast on 03/07/2025 was 220K tonne (kt) blast which was planned to make it more efficient and reduce the number of blasts per week. The team was confident that the blast could be carried out under the 4.5mm/s PPV we voluntarily work to, wherever possible, on the south side of the quarry (regulatory limit for Whatley quarry is 9mm/s at 95% confidence). However one of the four off-site vibration monitors recorded 6.2mm/s PPV.

ABR and RE were both on holiday at the time of the blast however they were contacted by dozens of people with complaints and feels this has created ill will towards the quarry. Some of the questions received were: What are they doing? What are their intentions going forward? What implications going forward if the blasts are this big?

ABR expressed that it was understood that testing is necessary and that it would have been fantastic if it had worked.

RE suggested perhaps increasing the blast size in smaller increments would have been better. He added that it was a shame to receive such negative feedback about the blast which is a shame after all the good work done by the quarry.

ABR asked will we be sent a warning if the blast is bigger? Rumours were going round that it was the largest blast in UK or even Europe. Also queries about this going to be a normal blast size going forward.

RE added it was good to receive immediate results. VP confirmed that, while this was a bigger than usual blast for Whatley it was not the biggest ever in the UK.

VP confirmed he gets results email right away, but these are not accessible to all the team as they have to be checked and verified. RE suggested if results are sent immediately after each blast, people can associate the blast with their most recent experience.

ABR said he was hoping the numbers are a fair representation of what's going on, as someone in the church yard said they felt it was huge. The blast noise doesn't worry people, it's the feeling of the blast that bothers them. If this was a 6 what would a 9 feel like?

ABR said they appreciated the explanation then asked if the vibrations monitors are calibrated. VP assured they were. ABR then added that the general concern is that it could get worse again.

RK asked if this was just experimental. VP responded it was a large blast looking at double and triple decking on a large scale, which is usually done on a smaller scale. Blasts are usually between 40-120kt, average of around 50kt, whereas this was 220kt. VP added that there are no further plans to blast at this volume at present.

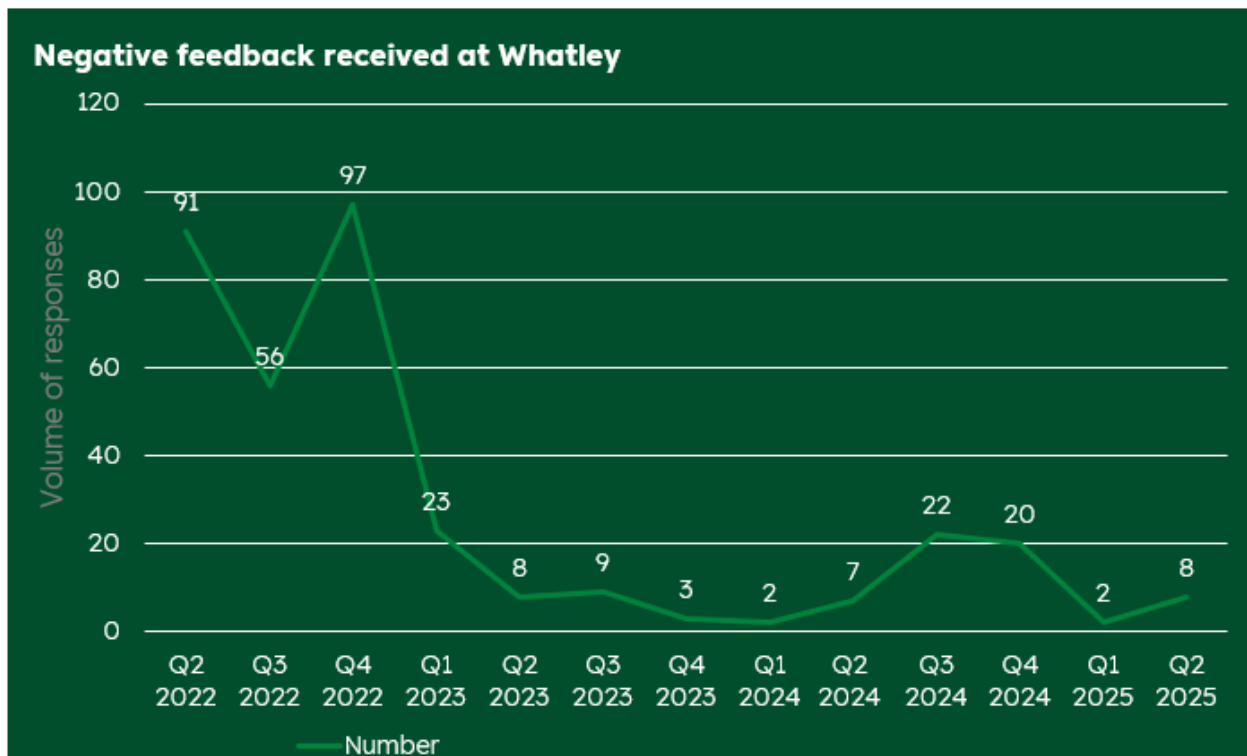
ABR asked about the drone footage. VP confirmed every blast is filmed. ABR then asked if the drone footage could be shared. ACTION – VP – Arrange to share the drone footage of the 03/07 blast.

18:07 - RE Left the meeting.

Feedback

SS provided information on feedback received: The data shared indicates an uptick in negative feedback in Q2 2025. See diagrams shared at meeting below:

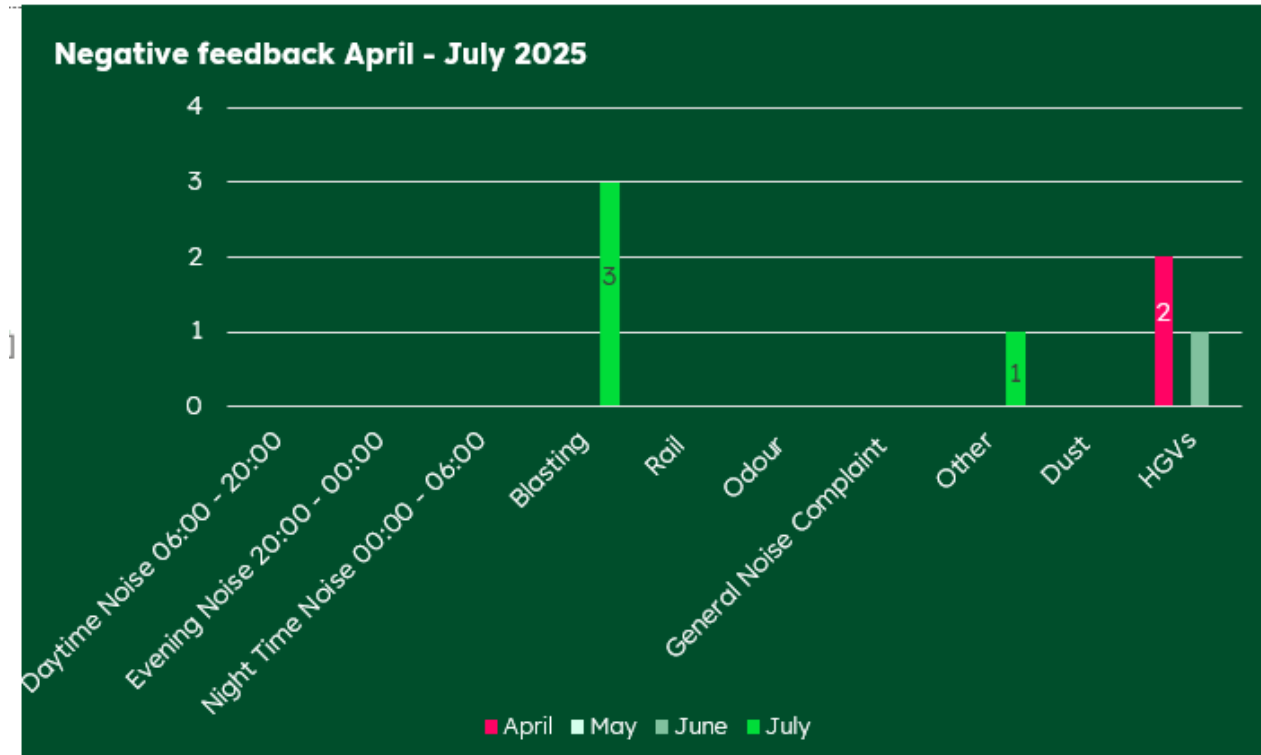
Negative feedback received Q1 2022 – Q2 2025



Negative feedback April - July 2025

8 pieces of negative feedback:

- Blasting: 3
- HGVs & traffic: 4
- Other (Environment): 1 Whatley Brook

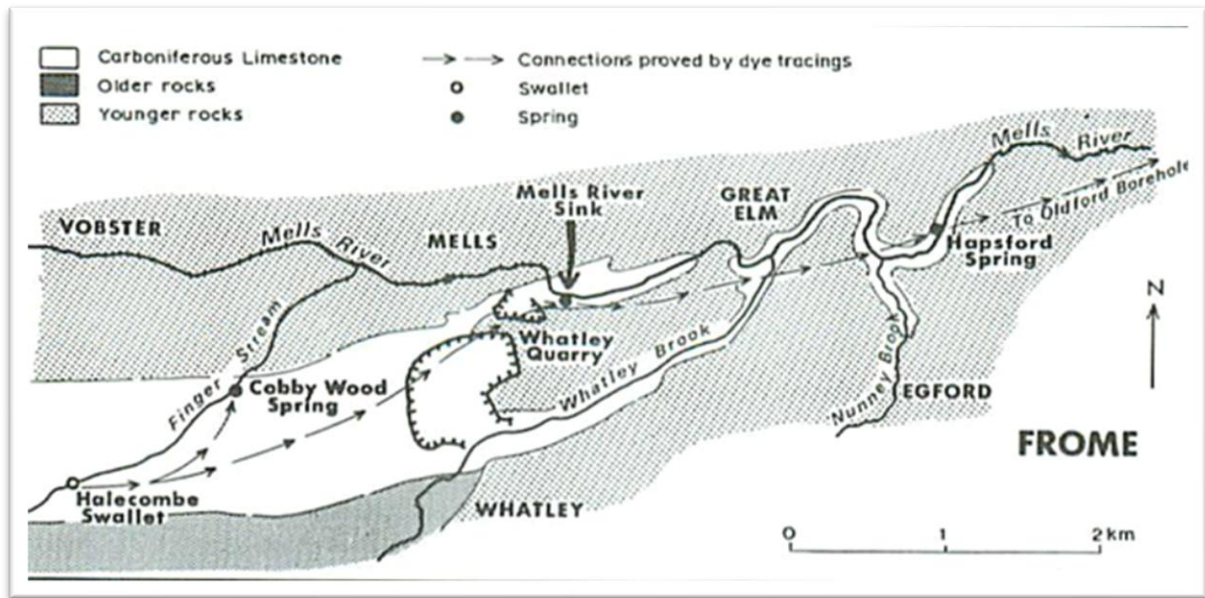


ABR asked ref the 3 complaints for blasting. SS appreciated that ABR and RK have been fielding many complaints however this table is based on direct contact. ABR said that as long as its not part of a long-term plan they will leave it for now, however it might be an issue if it continues.

Whatley quarry discharge requirements

VP set out quarry discharge arrangement following issues with reduced waterflow in Whatley Brook:

- Whatley quarry has two dewatering permits in place:
 - 021242 (dated 1st May 1983): “Dewatering to Whatley Brook”
 - 101476 (dated 24th June 2001): “Augmentation to Mells River”
- **Neither permit has a condition stipulating a minimum discharge level.**
- However, our Section 106 Legal agreement with Somerset Council sets out that we will discharge certain levels to **Mells River** in line with an agreement with the Environment Agency (EA).
- **Whatley Brook:**
 - Average discharge rate: 740,000 litres a day.
- **Mells River:**
 - Average discharge rate: 12-15 million litres a day.
 - Minimum requirement levels: 8 million litres a day.



- Discharge to Whatley Brook represents a fraction of the volume discharged by Whatley quarry to the Mells River.
- We understand that Torr quarry usually discharges in the region of 8 million litres to Whatley Brook a day – more than 9 times the volumes pumped from Whatley.
- Whatley quarry now investigating if we can maintain higher flows to Whatley Brook in dry summers, subject to maintaining the required levels to Mells River.

VP explained that on 05 July, sections of Whatley Brook dried up. A few people from the quarry walked the river to Railford following receipt of calls on the matter. They checked the discharge points and found it not up to the usual flow coming from Holcim's Torr quarry and slowly came to a stop at the rail sidings.

VP contacted Torr Quarry's environmental contact, Dave Roberts, who confirmed that only one of the usual two pumps was running, but that they could switch on the second pump. This resulted in the refilling of the brook. Whatley quarry is waiting for an update on what caused this.

Caz Lane from the EA attended Whatley quarry on Monday 07 July and checked the discharge points and pumps and she asked for readings on that day. She confirmed that was happy that Whatley quarry was fully complying with the S106 agreement.

RK asked if we could ask her to attend the next meeting. VP agreed that Heidelberg Materials would ask a representative from the EA to attend.

ACTION – VP to invite EA contact to next liaison meeting

VP stressed that Whatley quarry is fulfilling obligations for discharge to Mells River and is also continuing to discharge to Whatley Brook and will continue to do so. Understandably, the propriety has to be to Mells River, as per our agreements with the EA.

RK asked why Torr only had one pump running. VP said he hopes the report from EA will shed some light on this as it's a matter for the EA and Torr quarry.

RK has been given some questions that might be asked in a meeting with residents.

- Fordbury water seems to be entirely dependant on both quarries. Potential harm to the environment if not working together. What happened to Chantry Pond?
- Questions around 'Why did it happen?'
- What can be done about it?
- Will there be permanent damage to fish etc.
- What are the long term aspects of this?
- What reports have been commissioned regarding water and going below the water table.
- What impact will it have on the surrounding areas if the quarry stops pumping. 2040 when they stop operations.

RK added that hearing from Torr quarry would be great, as well as some detailed geology info regarding river beds, and talk of an underground sinkhole. VP said that Torr quarry would be invited to attend a joint meeting with Great Elm residents as important both quarries set out their obligations and approaches re Whatley Brook so that residents get to see the wider picture of how discharge to Whatley Brook is managed.

ACTION - VP to set up meeting with Great Elm residents and ask Torr quarry and EA to attend

AH added that she works closely with the Wild Trout Trust (WTT) who have suggested there is no reason why the trout won't still survive. The population will contract and then will rebound to inhabit the size of the area. WTT can advise if anyone has any queries.

ABR said people are sceptical and need someone with specialist expertise to explain the situation. VP advised that the EA representative said a lot swam up river so the population should be ok.

AH suggested that a member of WTT could be asked to attend a future meeting.

ACTION – WTT to be invited to Great Elm residents meeting and/or next liaison meeting.

SW stated that 3 quarries all pump into the river, but with no rain recently there just isn't water to pump.

AH mentioned that it's a climatic situation, the groundwater goes through leaky river beds with fissures and cracks, and has always managed to maintain a flow due to the fact the quarries had sufficient water to pump. There was then a discussion about it being an Ephemeral river meaning it sometimes dries up. AH added that the quarries use a joined up approach to groundwater studies.

RK suggested that evidence seems to indicate that something happened at Torr quarry and wanted to know what systems can be put in place. PH said that whilst Torr reservoir was completely full in Feb, if there's not been any rain, and the water goes down, nothing can be done.

RK asked if the S106 is public record. SS advised it's available on Somerset Council's website

RK wanted to thank Vince for his immediate response to the issue.

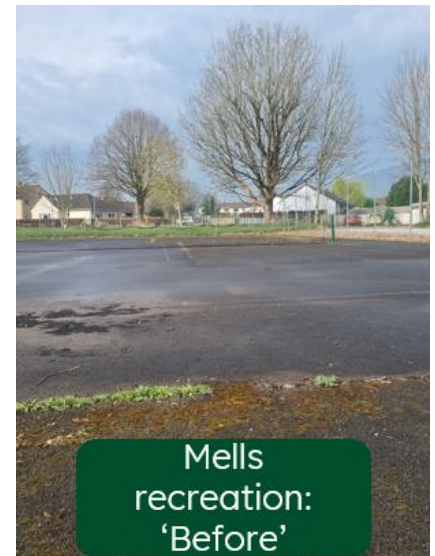
Community update

SS gave an update on charitable contributions.

Recent commitment:

- **16/17 July:** Resurfacing of Mells recreational fields re resurfacing tennis/basketball court. Providing materials and contracting expertise.
- Whatley Loop sponsored walk.
- Coleford Flower festival
- Leigh on Mendip – cemetery pathway

£10k pledged so far this year. This excludes Mells playground project where work and materials has been valued in excess of £15,000



ABR commented that the Whatley walk successfully achieved the 100 laps they had aimed to complete. PH added that some people turned up for the walk a week early, but were happy with the walk and nobody got lost.

IK said that they are grateful for the visit by 2 people regarding the cemetery pathway advising what they can and can't do.

ABR said the Chantry concert went well and was a really great event.

3. Westdown Quarry Update

- Meetings with larger customers regarding the site setup have been a success.

KG advised she has been talking to customers to find out how to make Westdown work best for them to keep traffic flowing and reduce queues.

- Oolite is in demand from customers; there will be no need to store on site anymore (apart from amounts required for the creation of screening bunds and restoration purposes)

There has been an increase in demand for Oolite, which means this can be removed from Westdown before any blasting takes place. Farmers like it as it's softer on hooves.

- Security remains onsite at weekends.

Following reports of the rave last month security dealt with it very quickly and the site was cleaned up and they were gone. There will still be security though.

- Mobile crushing meetings starting to take place.
- Meetings on site to plan vegetation clearance phases (timing to be confirmed).

Vegetation clearance will be subject to ecological licenses. They will dictate how and when it will be done. We will do everything to stay within the law and keep the habitats.

ABR asked when the quarry will start extraction. VP advised sometime in 2026. ABR asked if the planning was approved, how come the Section 106 isn't complete? AH replied that the S106 needs to be worked through to comply with the finer details of the planning. There are 7 different sections of the compliance, some are amalgamated and others are more user friendly.

PS asked if there will be any further public consultation. AH advised that Heidelberg Materials had carried out two rounds of consultation, as had Somerset Council, as part of the planning process. AH added the detail of the agreed conditions will be available to view once finalised with Somerset Council.

PS then asked if they aren't open to public view, what is the likely timescale for reopening the quarry. AH advised 6-12 months.

4. Environmental update

AH gave an update on the environmental work going on across sites.

Vallis Vale

- A thermal drone survey was carried out to assess the local deer population- results show a high density of deer in Vallis which will be negatively impacting the woodland habitat. Options to manage the population will be reviewed in liaison with Natural England (NE).
- Further scrub clearance was carried out on the lime kilns.
- Several reports of Giant Hogweed were reported to us and were removed. Possibly washing down from up-stream.
- The first monitoring visit of Mells Valley SAC bat cave in 2025 showed that 2 lesser horseshoe bats using the cave. Sadly the grille covering the cave has been badly vandalized, this is due for repair in the next 2 weeks.
- Still waiting results from the 2024 static bat detectors due to the sheer amount of data collected. We have been advised by the ecologists to repeat surveys in 2026 not 2025 as having surveys a year apart are costly and won't add much to the data set.
- The Egford Brook riverbank and footpath repairs project proposal has been submitted to the EA and NE for approval and awaiting feedback. Hope to get approvals in place to carry out the works in September to avoid school holidays and fish breeding season. Looking to create a channel to improve fish habitat.
- A repeat hazardous tree survey is scheduled for August to ensure the ongoing safety of the users and residents of the site.
- A new 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.

RK asked about the signs in Vallis Vale. AH advised they are near completion and will give info regarding the river bank and Vallis Vale history

Whatley

- Railford footpath repairs now complete, thanks to volunteering days from the Quarry.
- New viewing platform installed at Finger Farm.
- Memorial bench and native wildflower bulbs planted in remembrance of our colleague Pat Orman.

- Circular walk up and running with positive feedback from users. Gates have replaced most of the old stiles to improve access and Whatley Circular Walk and way markers have been installed along the route.
- New picnic benches made from reclaimed wood have been installed down by the river.
- Hazardous tree survey update to be carried out in August to ensure ongoing safety.

AH updated that following Batts Combe winning a quarry life award with a bug hotel in the shape of a dumper, there are also plans to build one Railford, working alongside a local group of Men's Shed, a mental health partnership.

Asham

- A further 2 days of coppicing volunteer days were funded for the 18th January and 22nd February.
- A further 4 volunteer days will be occurring this winter - sign up on SWTs website.
- A thermal drone survey of the deer population was carried out which showed a high density of deer in the wood which will be impacting the woodland habitat. Deer management works are ongoing to reduce numbers.
- The draft woodland management plan has been received and reviewed internally. This will be shared with stakeholders, NE and FC for comment.
- The FC sent a Forestry Advisor to review the woodland under the National Forestry Inventory Survey with positive feedback on the coppice management and regeneration received.
- Monitoring of the old conveyor tunnel in Asham quarry in 2025 so far recorded 1 greater horseshoe bat.
- Ride management works are ongoing with positive open woodland habitat created. Highways into the woods for dormice.
- Tubing of natural regeneration of tree species in the coppice coupes is ongoing to ensure a future tree canopy in the face of ADB.
- We have been approached by researchers working with the BioSCAN project to set up insect traps in Asham that will be monitored for the next 5 years. The research will study the genetic diversity of flying insects across the UK and will help to inform our management of the site in the future and provide a foundational resource for DNC-based biomonitoring in the UK and the Globe.

5. Planning update

Trystan Mabbitt was not present at the meeting, he will provide an update at the next meeting.

6. AOB

BC asked if he could sit down with Torr/Whatley to get an understanding of what happened re Whatley Brook, as isn't happy with what has been told.

ACTION – VP to come back to BC with dates.

ABR queried if anyone knew about the huge pit being dug above Westdown. Has there been planning, as someone is ripping out hedges on Yeomans field, opposite Westdown. Do we know anything about it?

ACTION – PH will investigate.

EK asked if we can share the last minutes with the parish. SS advised she will upload the approved minutes to the website.

Summary of actions

- VP arrange to share the drone footage of the 03/07 blast.
- VP to provide benchmarking and improvements at next meeting.
- VP to come back to BC with dates to meet with Torr and Whatley regarding Whatley Brook.
- PH will investigate pit being dug above Westdown.
- WTT to be invited to Great Elm residents meeting and/or next liaison meeting.
- VP to set up meeting with Great Elm residents and ask Torr quarry and EA to attend

7. Next meeting date

The next meeting will take place on TUESDAY 14th October 2025 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:

14th October 2025

Meeting Ends 19:04