

quarrying  
**today**

Spring 2002 Issue 11

**Paving the way**

biodiversity action plans

**Quarry Showcase**

Making the link

**Planning**

Sorting the system

**Tax**

Now make it work

**Legislation**

Good vibes on  
campaigns

**Careers**

No two days alike

## TAX



Recycling – what cost to achieve increased market share?

# Now make **it work**

**WITH aggregates tax starting to flow into its coffers, the government faces the challenge of turning revenue into solid environmental achievement.**

The industry, which has resolutely fought the tax for nearly five years, has knuckled down to the task of collecting it and has invested heavily in putting the necessary systems in place. It continues to be concerned about the impact of heavy additional costs on construction projects and on jobs – but it also remains to be convinced that the levy will achieve its objectives.

The government has claimed that the tax will result in an additional 10 million tonnes of recycled aggregates finding their way into the market. This 3.5 per cent increase in market share would be achieved at a cost of £380 million – an incredible £40 burden for every tonne recycled.

“That makes it a dreadfully inefficient mechanism,” says QPA economist Jerry McLaughlin. “It is just one example of a tax for which there are no environmental benchmarks or targets of any sort.”

The QPA would like to see evidence of real environmental improvements in the local

communities affected by quarrying. “We believe that the £29.3 million sustainability fund should be administered independently rather than through existing Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs programmes,” says Jerry McLaughlin. We also feel that at least half of it should be spent within three miles of quarries, and that local councils and organisations should be closely involved.

“All the indications are that the funds will simply disappear into a national pot and there are no signs of any sort of measurement devices that will allow anyone to judge the outcome against the supposed objectives. If that is the case, you have to conclude that the tax is simply a revenue generating device.”

He added: “If it is a true environmental tax then it must be fair to expect that as the impacts of quarrying reduce then the tax will be reduced. If it follows the upward route of most taxes then it clearly has no direct link to environmental impact.”

Meanwhile, financial secretary to the Treasury, Paul Boateng, has been forced to admit that the level of aggregates tax in the UK is at least four times higher than any other comparable tax in Europe.

# Sorting the system



*The system should recognise the industry's environmental achievement*

**MAKE the planning system simpler, more effective and nationally consistent, says the QPA in its written response to the Green Paper: *Planning: Delivering a fundamental change.***

The association's response points out, however, that care needs to be taken in making changes because a system that is redesigned to deal with housing or retail issues will probably not work for minerals, a fact recognised by the Stevens Committee's 1976 report on minerals planning.

It is recognition of this key distinction that leads the QPA to support retention of the present minerals and waste planning system at county or sub-regional level. The association believes that only counties are of sufficient size to support fully experienced, expert minerals and waste planning teams.

Strong support is also given for retention of the system of planning policy guidelines

(PPGs) and mineral planning guidelines (MPGs), although the view is put forward that there is scope for streamlining to avoid overlap and to speed the review process. Both, says QPA, should retain their "material importance" as quasi circulars.

In submitting its views, QPA emphasises that UK minerals is one of the country's few remaining significant manufacturing industries and is, moreover, one with a recognised and continuously improving environmental record.

It also notes that, in terms of planning, minerals can only be extracted from where they are found, and that patterns of resources or supply will never match administrative boundaries.

The association voices strong objection to the various proposals contained in the Green Paper for fees, charges and tariffs including those for section 106 obligations. It calls for adequate funding of local authorities through

council tax and business rates and points out that, for the aggregates industry, such charges would be doubly offensive as they would be in addition to the new aggregates tax.

QPA also lodges an objection to the suggestion that planning permissions would lapse after three years unless a start is made. In most cases it would be impossible to achieve for minerals, says the association.

It sounds also a note of caution over the suggested harmonisation of the planning process with other authorisation procedures – in particular those administered by the Environment Agency. The EA's remit is considered very different to that of the land-use planning system and should not be allowed to encroach, or exert disproportionate leverage over planning matters.

A complementary response is also being made in respect of the parallel consultation by the Welsh Assembly Government.



## Swords to **ploughshares**

Newbury MP David Rendel was one of the guests at the QPA's Quarry Showcase, which we feature on pages 6 and 7. Here, he talks about the award site that meant most to him.

**GREENHAM COMMON** achieved notoriety during the cold war years because of its association with the military and with public protests against nuclear weapons.

Recently, after 60 years of being closed off to local people, the land reverted to public open space – a wonderful example of swords being turned into ploughshares.

But a flat, two-mile long runway with associated aprons, hangars and fuel tanks makes an uninteresting site for public recreation. Moreover, it was a much less ecologically attractive site for all forms of flora and fauna than the original heathland, which some of my constituents can still remember from their pre-war childhoods. So the challenge for the local council has been to

renew the landscape, restore a good quality local environment, and create a variety of habitats for wildlife.

The discovery of a layer of gravel just below the surface of the old airbase opened up an opportunity (metaphorically speaking!) to kill two birds with one stone. After the surface material was scraped off and used to build the foundations of the Newbury by-pass – yet another project to benefit the environment – extraction of the gravel has provided both a re-contouring of the landscape and funds to pay for the project.

The common now boasts ponds at many different levels and of different depths, with resting sites along the banks, areas for low-lying heathland plants, and a huge variety of

insects. It is already being used more and more for walking, riding, cycling, picnicking, and all other forms of outdoor recreation. A large part of the common has already been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Tarmac was chosen as the operator for this important restoration project, and I was delighted to see it win an award from the Quarry Products Association for its work. It deserves congratulation from all those who care about ecology and the environment.

This project has demonstrated the vital role which, given the right opportunities, the quarrying industry can play in improving our environment, working in partnership with local communities.



## A special **site**

The Minerals and Nature Conservation Forum is to have its own website designed to help realise the full potential of the quarrying industry's commitment to biodiversity and geological conservation.

The forum's new website at [www.quarrying.info/natureconservation](http://www.quarrying.info/natureconservation) was in the final stages of development as this issue went to press. It comes courtesy of the forum's partners - QPA, English Nature and Silica and Moulding Sands Association

(SAMSA), whose joint commitment to biodiversity was set out in a joint statement of intent in 1998.

Since then, the forum has produced a biodiversity handbook to guide quarry operators on the best ways in which to use the opportunities presented by their work to create new wildlife habitats. A similar handbook is being developed for geological conservation.

# Double whammy

good vibes on key campaigns



photo courtesy foster-yeoman

*Proposals could have reduced shift times to two hours*

**THE Quarry Products Association is on the verge of success in its campaigns against proposals for unworkable noise and vibration controls that could have crippled the industry.**

The problems arose when European Parliament rapporteur Helle Thorning-Schmidt from Denmark proposed amendments to new EC directives governing noise and vibration in the workplace. She has now accepted the arguments put to her in a meeting with QPA health and safety manager Martin Isles and has since withdrawn the most contentious of her amendments.

On the noise front, her amendments would have meant that workers on a busy motorway site would only be able to work a maximum of four hours a day – even if no construction or surfacing plant was anywhere near. Her vibration proposals could have forced companies to reduce shift times to as little as two hours. Research commissioned by the Quarry Products Association from specialist

consultancy Vibrock revealed the scale of the problems created by the Danish MEP's late-stage amendments to the Physical Agents (Noise) Directive.

The research showed that, in a medium-sized rock quarry, 40 per cent of operatives work at higher noise levels than would have been allowed under the amendments. On a typical road-surfacing project, 80 per cent of workers experience higher limits – and that figure climbs to 100 per cent in a typical pre-cast concrete products facility.

"The European authorities now seem ready to accept that it is more logical and sensible for noise limits to be measured with the benefit of hearing protectors," says Martin Isles. "In these days of multi-skilling where patterns of work vary widely, it is sensible for limits to be measured as a weekly rather than daily average," he added.

The proposed changes to the Physical Agents (Vibration) Directive would have threatened

thousands of jobs in the UK and throughout mainland Europe.

The European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee had accepted Ms Thorning-Schmidt's amendments for new and drastically reduced exposure limit values for whole body vibration. But research by the QPA in conjunction with RMC, proved that this amendment would have put thousands of quarrying industry jobs at risk in the UK and throughout the rest of Europe.

"I think Helle Thorning-Schmidt is to be congratulated for listening to the industry case," said Martin Isles. "Our efforts were greatly augmented by other UK and European industry bodies as well as organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Confederation of British Industry."

The Construction Products Association had also played an important role, not least in affording shadow rapporteur Liz Lynne, MEP for the West Midlands, an opportunity to hear at first-hand the results of the QPA research. She subsequently described the proposed amendments as "barmy and unworkable".

Martin Isles added that the QPA found the original proposals on noise and vibration "challenging but broadly acceptable". It was the late amendments that created difficulties.

"We fully endorse the importance of providing safe and healthy working conditions for employees and contractors within our industry," he said, "but proposals for change have to be practicable to be attainable and hence enforceable."

"There are still a number of formalities to go through before we can hang the flags out, but the prognosis is good."



# Quarry showcase

*Premier restoration award winner, Villa Farm Quarry*

**MORE than 400 people took a QPA-chartered armchair tour of the country to see for themselves how well quarry operators restore the sites they have worked.**

Their conclusions were best summarised by BBC newscaster and journalist George Alagiah, who admitted to knowing little about quarries when he agreed to host the *Quarry Showcase*. "I had no idea that you do what you do to this standard," he said after the video trip around the 11 sites vying for the QPA's coveted Cooper-Heyman Cup for restoration. "I am very impressed."

Government minister, Nigel Griffiths, was similarly appreciative as he presented the awards. He paid tribute to the industry's

achievements in helping the nation to meet its goals over the last five years including:

- 10 new hospitals (90 more are planned)
- 2,000 new classrooms
- homes for 732,000 people.

"Today, we are recognising that your members have, as we have always known, helped with the building of Britain," said Mr Griffiths. "These awards celebrate the fact that you are also helping with the conservation of Britain. With members from the Lizard in the south, to Shetland in the North, there is no one in Parliament who does not realise the contribution you make."

Another guest at the event at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London said: "What the *Quarry Showcase* achieved was to help a large

and influential audience to make the link between our individual need for aggregates, the ways in which those needs are met and the fact that the land involved is then given back."

The *Quarry Showcase* brought the association's restoration awards and its annual lunch together into one high profile event. The award scheme has been running for 33 years. In that time, it has recognised more than 400 sites across the length and breadth of the UK totalling over 24,000 acres of land returned for beneficial after-uses.

Four of the eleven sites entered for the 2001-2 awards received special commendations. The Cooper-Heyman Cup went to the Essex-based Alresford Sand & Ballast Company.

## The winners

### Cooper-Heyman Cup

Villa Farm Quarry, Essex

Alresford Sand & Ballast Co Ltd

A superb nature lake bordered by meadow and heathland.



Nick Gant and Peter Orrock of Alresford Sand & Ballast with George Alagiah

## Highly commended

**Aymestrey Quarry, Herefordshire**

**Hanson Aggregates / Mr & Mrs William Gee**

Deep excavations restored to agriculture and woodland with no sign that quarrying ever took place. (1)

**Brandon Nature Reserve, Warwickshire**

**Lafarge Aggregates**

**Warwickshire Wildlife Trust**

An 80-hectare nature centre that attracts 50,000 people every year. (2)

**Cassington Quarry, Oxfordshire**

**Hanson Aggregates**

Transformed from intensive farming to a nature lake with diverse habitats. (3)

**Dinmor Parc Quarry, Isle of Anglesey**

**Lafarge Aggregates**

An old coastal quarry now blended into a beautiful coastline. (4)

**Berkswell Quarry, Solihull**

**RMC Aggregates Western**

**Packington Estate Enterprises**

A nature reserve created from farmland that had lost much of its botanical interest. (6)

**Brookhouse Farm Quarry, Cheshire**

**WBB Minerals**

A sand quarry worked and restored in a matter of months to farming and nature. (7)

**Greenham Common, Berkshire**

**Tarmac Southern / West Berkshire Council**

A controversial missile base now being returned to heathland. (8)

**Marston's Pit, Suffolk / Allen Newport**

An area that has naturally regenerated as short acid grassland habitat. (9)

**Mountcastle Quarry, Fife**

**Hanson Aggregates**

Restored to habitats ranging from broadleaf woodland to wetland margins. (10)

## Awards

**Beckford Quarry, Worcestershire**

**Huntsmans Quarries**

A small nature reserve on the edge of a picturesque Cotswold village. (5)



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

# Nurturing nature

*Limestone pavement*

*High brown fritillary*

The UK quarrying industry has a restoration record to be proud of and nature has been one of the main beneficiaries. But now companies are going an important stage further by developing their own biodiversity action plans.

**WITH an eye firmly on its wider responsibilities, the quarrying industry has been quick to take up the environmental challenge through its restoration work. Now, companies are going a step further by establishing themselves as champions of UK biodiversity.**

Biodiversity may seem to some like just another green buzzword, but it is proving to be an issue that the government and environmental bodies are together taking very seriously.

The term literally means biological diversity – every species of plant and animal and the habitats in which they live. At the Rio Earth Summit, the UK government signed the global *Convention on biological diversity* with over 160 countries to combat the decline of natural habitats and species. A UK Biodiversity Steering Group was formed to further this pledge and has created a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

While the UK BAP provides a nationwide blueprint and a number of targets, the real achievements are expected through local

BAPs, drawn up by a range of interested parties to reflect specific local circumstances and needs.

As custodian of some of the best wildlife sites in the country, the quarrying industry has a vital role to play in maintaining and improving biodiversity – a fact increasingly recognised by the major conservation bodies such as the Wildlife Trusts.

## Partnership

“Partnership with the quarrying industry is especially important” says Dr Simon Lyster, director general of The Wildlife Trusts. “Quarries are amongst the few places where once common butterflies, reptiles and wild flowers can be found. There are great opportunities to create new wildlife habitats such as heathland and reed beds when quarrying activities have ceased, and it is vital that these opportunities are seized.”

The industry has been quick to get to grips with the challenge, none more so than Aggregate Industries UK, which is the first

minerals company to publish its own BAP onto its website. Two years in the making and covering 170 sites across the UK, the plan is the culmination of extensive research and consultation with bodies such as English Nature and the RSPB.

“We wanted to make sure that we came up with something that would fit well with the ethos of the company as well as the minerals industry” says landscape architect, Gail Chambers. “The plan is very much a ‘living document’, which we aim to develop as we learn from our work.”

Having put its strategy together, Aggregate Industries’ priority is to carry out ecological surveys of all of its sites and use the results to provide the basis for site-specific action plans. The company joined forces with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, which carried out the first surveys and will continue to give advice on land management.

“Quarry managers have been positive about our work on biodiversity. Many are already up-to-speed with what the term means and have been pleasantly surprised that parts of



*Limestone pavement*



*Early purple orchid*

photos courtesy David Boag

their sites are precious,” says Gail Chambers. It looks like the company’s hard work is already paying off. At Holme Park Quarry in Cumbria, areas of considerable nature conservation value within the company’s landholding have recently been designated national and local nature reserves.

## Rewards

Clawthorpe Fell National Nature Reserve and Holme Park Quarry Local Nature Reserve are directly adjacent to the working quarry, which produces high quality limestone aggregates.

A partnership developed by Cumbria County Council, English Nature, Aggregate Industries and the local community helped to create the reserves, a move which has already reaped huge rewards for local biodiversity.

The sites comprise priority habitats in both the local and UK BAPs, including limestone pavement, calcareous grassland and pockets of ancient woodland. Limestone pavement is an endangered habitat, only found in Britain and largely restricted to the north west. The

limestone grasslands and its fringe habitats support local and UK priority species, such as the high brown and pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies, which are very rare.

The company is very proud of its achievement and will continue its involvement in the conservation of the site. English Nature now manages the national nature reserve at Clawthorpe Fell while the local reserve at Holme Park is dedicated to the community for them to enjoy.

“We are committed to making lasting contribution to biodiversity,” says Miles Watkins, head of quality and environment at Aggregate Industries.

“This might be through larger projects such as Holme Park, or by making small but significant changes to how a patch of grassland is maintained.

“We are looking at a fundamental change to the way our land is managed. This won’t happen overnight but, with our action plan now in place, we can make confident strides towards achieving our goal.”

## Green Chain

An exciting new vision for the restoration of sand and gravel quarries in North Yorkshire is already paying dividends.

The Swale and Ure Washlands Project, supported by companies such as Hanson, Tarmac and Lafarge, as well as English Nature, North Yorkshire County Council and the Environment Agency, aims to make the most of the great potential for nature conservation and biodiversity within the area’s river valleys and former washlands.

The project’s ultimate goal is to create a chain of nature reserves through the careful and sensitive restoration of former minerals sites.

A prime example of how the project’s vision is already becoming a reality is the Nosterfield Nature Reserve near Ripon. A former Tarmac sand and gravel quarry, the reserve is the culmination of five years’ work with local people. It has recently been acknowledged as the most important site in the north for wintering and inland migrating waders. It is also home to 150 different species of bird – with redshanks, lapwings and shovelers all breeding there.

Project officer, Siobhan Walker, is looking forward to the production of a minerals restoration strategy for the area.” Our long-term goal is to produce a blueprint for companies to follow, which will sit alongside the county’s local minerals plan.” she says.

*Nosterfield Nature Reserve*





## Strong sales

The QPA's latest summary of aggregates sector sales volumes reveals strong growth in the final quarter of 2001.

Compared with the same period of 2000, sales of crushed rock aggregates rose by six per cent, sand and gravel aggregates by 11 per cent, asphalt by 14 per cent, and ready-mixed concrete by eight per cent.

For the year as a whole, there was a strong recovery as the year progressed, following a poor first quarter. The end result was a

relatively flat overall picture with sand and gravel performing better than crushed rock because of its greater weighting in busy construction markets in the south east.

Improved asphalt sales indicate that the government's ten-year transport plan may be beginning to impact.

Relatively stable levels of sales are expected in 2002, with public services and infrastructure investment being the strongest driver of the construction and aggregates markets.



## Fishing for fossils

Schoolchildren visiting the BBC's *Walking With Dinosaurs* exhibition in Newcastle-upon-Tyne were given an opportunity to dig for real fossils courtesy of a local quarry.

Lafarge Aggregates' Thrislington Quarry just outside Ferryhill gave the Hancock Museum 20 tonnes of fossil-rich marl slate for a hands-on "fishing for fossils" activity. The

250-million year old rock has proved to be a fine source of fossilised sea creatures. Our picture shows a youngster from Boldon C of E primary school with teacher Mrs Glenda Miller, quarry manager Richard Page and Steve McLean of the Hancock Museum.

The exhibition featured actual models used in the BBC series, spectacular fossils and dinosaur replicas.

## Busy ... but safe

Leaton Quarry has never been busier than over recent months - but its safety standards have never been higher.

Health and Safety Minister, Dr Alan Whitehead, visited Johnston Roadstone's award-winning site in Shropshire to see for himself that concentration on safety need not compromise productivity. It was a focus that helped Leaton to score a double success in the QPA's Health and Safety Awards - for outstanding overall excellence and as the best small to medium enterprise.

Having presented the award last September, Dr Whitehead took up an offer to visit the quarry, where he saw some of its innovations :

- Close employee involvement in policy
- A colour-coded guard system for machinery
- A traffic light system that ensures vehicles do not endanger pedestrian workers
- An occupational nurse visiting the quarry each morning.

Managing director Phil James laid much of the credit for a "revolution in safety" at the door of quarry manager David McClelland. "Not only has he concentrated on practical improvements in safety, he also focussed on the health and welfare of our employees. Perhaps most importantly, he has given employees a say in their workplace conditions by effecting a culture change which resulted in real improvements."

## Digging deeper

The QPA's raft of publications has been further strengthened with the production of a series of four *Quarrying in depth* publications.

The new publications follow close on the heels of *What's in a quarry?*, a broadly-based brochure with complementary video. They are designed to provide a greater level of information about specific issues of the moment:

- Recycling
- Restoration
- Biodiversity
- Archaeology.

"They are issues where we feel the industry has a particularly good story to tell and where we need to convince politicians in particular that we are achieving to a high standard," says QPA communications manager Elizabeth Clements. "We hope

members will use them proactively to support their own activities."

Copies are available from QPA or can be viewed at [www.qpa.org](http://www.qpa.org).



## Making minerals matter

Minerals 2002, the Europe-wide initiative to hammer home the message that minerals are an essential part of everyday life, is rapidly gaining momentum.

Conferences have been organised in England, Belgium and Norway and companies such as Hanson and Castle Cement are developing plans for site open days during the summer.

John Mortimer, who is directing the campaign, is urging other operators to follow suit. "Minerals 2002 is not an event that is being organised by somebody else," he says. "Everybody within the European minerals family should make a contribution and one way to do that is organise your own activity."

Sponsorship deals have been concluded with main sponsor Caterpillar and engineering and environmental consultants Wardell Armstrong, who are hosting a seminar and

Parliamentary reception in London in May. More information is available from [www.minerals2002.com](http://www.minerals2002.com).



John Mortimer (right) with Kurt Thiel of Caterpillar

## When kids come to play

When summer comes, children go looking for adventure – and quarry operators throughout the UK step up their vigilance. The QPA will be focusing its annual *Play Safe... Stay Safe* initiative around the Whitsun bank holiday and will be highlighting both the dangers of playing in quarries and the attractions of the many safe places where they can look for adventure. "We don't want to spoil anyone's fun but we do need children to understand the risks they are taking when they climb over quarry fences," says QPA public relations manager Elizabeth Clements. "Our hope is that we can also fire their imaginations by guiding them towards the many safer options."

The association's popular schools resource pack and video will be supplemented this year with a poster that will be sent to schools in key areas. Further information from [www.qpa.org](http://www.qpa.org).



Susan Parker

## Me & my job

Susan Parker is a landscape architect and a member of Hanson’s award-winning natural resources team. Based at Shepshed in Leicestershire, she provides a landscape design and restoration service to 20 sand and gravel and two hard rock quarries.

**“My job covers a range of activities – from preparing planning applications and environmental impact assessments to the detailed site specific landscape design and restoration work, which is required to keep the quarries operational. I’m based in the company’s Central Area, which means that I cover sites from Herefordshire in the west to Cambridgeshire in the east.**

“I always wanted to be a landscape architect. I suppose you have to be quite single-minded about this type of career because it takes seven years to be fully qualified. Landscape architects undertake design work in the urban and rural environment and skills are needed in planning, design and management.

“I don’t have a typical day. I may be working on a number of different projects at any one time. I could be handling the development of a green field site, working with others in the natural resources team on a planning application or designing the soil stripping and restoration proposals for a new quarry phase.

“At least two days each week are spent out of the office at site meetings, catching up with quarry managers on the progress of restoration works or meeting with consultants and council planners. Most sites are within 50 to 90 miles, so journey times are not too excessive.

“When I’m in the office, I work with a wide range of people from other professions, including geologists, estate and land surveyors and project engineers. I like the fact that I get the chance to work in a multi-disciplinary environment. It’s good to work with colleagues from other professions and to learn from their experience. We all have our own strengths to pitch into a project.

“There have been a couple of recent projects that I’m particularly proud of. At Pottal Pool quarry in Cannock Chase, Staffordshire, a 32-hectare extension to the site has recently been approved. A key part of the proposals has been a restoration scheme which proposes to reintroduce heathland and

broadleaf woodland. The success of the work already carried out there has enabled us to demonstrate our commitment to quality restoration and to minimising the impact of the quarry.

“We’ve also just won a QPA restoration award for our agricultural and woodland restoration work at Aymestrey quarry in Herefordshire (see page 7) . Although work has been ongoing for the last 50 years and I have only been involved for the last six years, I am particularly proud of its success.

“I enjoy working for a company that is very committed to the quality of its restoration and to minimising the impact of its operations on the environment and on local communities. It’s great to work on projects where you really do get to see and experience the fruits of your labour.”

More information on the variety of careers in quarrying is available at the QPA website [www.qpa.org](http://www.qpa.org).