

quarrying
today

The magazine of Quarry Products Association

Winter 07-08 Issue 22

Less can be more
when nature takes the lead

Status for slag
it's a product

Sustainable progress
ideas move on

Level playing field
fill crisis for restoration

Safe solutions
chasing the challenge

Permissions sting
costs to spiral?



Funding commitment

ALTHOUGH not covered in the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review, Defra has indicated to QPA that it will continue the Aggregates Levy Sustainable Development Fund. There is, however, a welcome new twist with a proportion of the fund ring-fenced for carbon-reduction initiatives.

The news is particularly welcome for QPA as it not only answers the association's calls for the ALSF to continue, but it also shows that the Government took notice of QPA's demand for dedicated provision for tackling carbon. The association believes that Defra is likely to issue a consultation on the revised funding in due course.

QPA director general Simon van der Byl explains that "the ALSF is the only means by which the aggregates levy actually generates any sustainability benefits". In the four years since it was introduced, ALSF has supported a host of successful community, wildlife and



archaeology projects, including the QPA's own teenage safety research project (pictured above), and the award-winning *Safe Quarry* and *Virtual Quarry* websites."

Although the fresh commitment to ALSF is a positive step, it was preceded by news that the aggregates levy itself is set to increase by some 22 per cent in April 2008. While the industry remains opposed to the taxation, the fund provides some consolation in ensuring an outlet for the revenue to be reinvested positively.

Supplement scrapped

QPA has welcomed the Treasury's decision not to progress plans for a proposed Planning Gain Supplement.

In close liaison with the CBI Minerals Group and the Construction Products Association, QPA had been arguing vociferously against tax proposals that did not take into account the stark differences between minerals development and other forms of development, particularly housing. The scrapping of the supplement has

made way for new proposed planning charges which will apply to residential and commercial development and will be delivered through the planning system.

At this stage, it is not clear whether aggregates and mineral operations qualify as commercial development. The industry will continue to press for a clear exemption for minerals from the scope of the proposed changes.

Fenland jigsaw

ARCHAEOLOGISTS have unearthed the tiny skeleton of a 3,500-year-old baby at a quarry near Peterborough – a discovery which is helping experts piece together the jigsaw of life on the edge of the Fens from the late Neolithic period through to the late Bronze Age.



The discovery was made close to the centre of a burial mound at Bardon Aggregates' Pode Hole quarry. The find came just two months after the discovery of well-preserved remains of a Bronze Age man 50 metres away, and points to the existence of an ancient cemetery.

Experts from Phoenix Consulting Archaeology discovered the baby - which was under a year old, or possibly stillborn - during routine excavation work. The child was lying in a grave lined with birch bark with a complete pottery vessel containing an offering of grain or wheat.

Lead archaeologist, Dr Andy Richmond said: "We knew about the existence of round barrows because aerial shots detailed crop growth variations. But over the years, these mounds have been ploughed away, disturbing the burial grounds. To find the skeleton of such a young child was an exciting discovery, and the bones were extremely soft."

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Cover pic: Created by quarrying – WBB Minerals was responsible for this silica sand quarry restoration at Shooting Box Wood near Holmes Chapel in Cheshire

Double trouble

The 2008 calendar from Huntsmans Quarries features photos taken through the four seasons at the Beckford nature reserve which was created by quarrying.

QUARRY operators face more potentially costly legislative headaches if planned EU regulation on soil protection goes unchecked.

With no apparent justification, quarries are being classed as “potentially soil-polluting activities” under the EU Draft Soil Framework Directive, which is the subject of current consultation from Defra. QPA insists the monitoring procedures proposed would be a costly waste of time, with little likelihood of ever identifying any significant threat from pollutants.

It believes existing planning, landfill and groundwater regimes provide adequate means of assessing potential impacts on soil, and says that the new directive would lead to the “increasingly familiar burden of double regulation”.

Past, present and future sites would face onerous requirements if the legislation is passed in its current form. As yet unidentified “competent authorities” would be required to measure concentration levels of dangerous substances at all quarries. Defra estimates that tests could cost £20,000 for a small site, meaning potentially huge bills for larger quarries.

Another new requirement for “soil status reports” to be prepared when potentially soil polluting activities have taken place would mean more hurdles for quarry operators. It would subject restored quarry land to another raft of unnecessary testing to form the basis for the reports. Once again, the industry would be facing another unjust bill.

The QPA’s position is largely shared by Defra which has voiced “strong concerns about the provisions on soil contamination which are prescriptive...and have serious cost consequences”.

Surfacing contractor FM Conway Ltd has landed a 2007 Kent Business Award for its commitment to Sustainable Development.



The Welsh Assembly building in Cardiff – built using ground granulated blastfurnace slag

Slag success

IT’S official – the steel industry by-product blast furnace slag is not a waste. The anxiously awaited announcement from the Environment Agency cuts away costly red tape and means that some three million tonnes a year will now come into the market for use as a secondary aggregate and cement substitute.

The EA decision follows intense lobbying from the QPA with welcome support from recently published European Commission guidance

quoting BFS as an example of a by-product.

Air cooled blast furnace slag is widely used as a construction aggregate, while ground granulated blast furnace slag is used as a cement replacement which improves concrete’s durability and reduces its carbon footprint.

The industry is now awaiting a regulatory decision on steel slag which is used in highways surfacings. Encouraged by the ruling on BFS, the industry is hopeful that a similar approach will be taken.



Roehampton indoor tennis arena – built using ground granulated blastfurnace slag



Commitment to care

Dr Steve Hill is deputy chief executive of The Environment Council and has more than 22 years' experience in managing sustainable development. He has led QPA stakeholder workshops designed to encourage dialogue.

PUBLICATION of QPA's new sustainable development report is to be applauded – but not just because it represents an important three-year milestone in the industry's programme of measuring its impacts. What impresses me about this particular initiative is that it has a strong element of stakeholder engagement. This is one industry that very evidently cares what people think.

Sustainable development strategies have evolved considerably over recent years and it is in the area of engagement that the good ones stand out from the crowd. QPA's larger members already produce their own reports on this crucial issue, so it is heartening to see their trade association leading by example in seeking to understand external values and priorities.

A sectoral sustainable development report for an entire industry is no mean feat. With over 100 QPA members covering a broad church from very large to quite small, the practicalities of collecting, assessing and interpreting a mass of data are substantial. It is inevitable that some smaller members are not yet able to participate in the same full way as the larger ones but the association is doing well to capture data from companies producing 70 per cent of the UK's primary aggregate output.

Having gathered the information, QPA is then very open in the way that it has communicated it on a collective basis and using key performance indicators as a benchmark for subsequent progress. After three years of reporting, this forms a strong backbone for long-

term reporting on a meaningful basis. The approach was a key reason for QPA winning the Environment Award at the Trade Association Forum's Best Practice Awards in 2006.

I am in as good a position as any to judge the industry's performance on sustainability because The Environment Council has worked closely with QPA over the past two years to assist with its stakeholder engagement. The association knows that it does not have all the answers and is prepared to take on board ideas and suggestions from those who are able to judge the industry's performance from the other side of the table.



Digging in to achieve dialogue

Politicians, planners, environmentalists and consultants are amongst those who have contributed to this dialogue in a meaningful way, first through a Sustainable Aggregates Forum and then via two workshops in which The Environment Council acted as facilitator.

For those not aware of The Environment Council, I should explain that it has nearly 40 years' experience of raising awareness, training, facilitation and providing a forum for dialogue in the overall quest to find a more sustainable future. We believe that a healthy environment is

essential to the sustainable future of the planet – and that better mutual understanding will lead to better decisions.

Dialogue is all the more important when, as with quarrying, there may be contentious issues in play. There has to be a balance that protects our environment while giving us the construction materials that we demand and it is right that we all have the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

The workshops have, I believe, been particularly valuable not just in evolving QPA's approach to sustainable development but in creating wider opportunities for cross-working with other organisations. The approach is a collaborative one that employs partnership to identify sustainable development goals. Beyond all else, I think it has built greater understanding, from which flows trust and a recognition that all parties can benefit from collaboration.

In specific terms, QPA has been able to refine its key performance indicators and targets. The last workshop was particularly helpful in helping the association to understand stakeholder perspectives on carbon monitoring and reporting as it sets out to establish what its members can do to address climate change.

Engagement of this sort isn't always easy and demands open-mindedness and a willingness to accept the rough with the smooth. Sometimes, the best that can be achieved is an agreement to disagree. My experience with QPA and its stakeholders is that there is commitment and sincerity on both parts. Long may it continue.

Three times the leader – best in Europe

USE of recycled and secondary aggregates in the UK has topped 70 million tonnes a year, now accounting for 26 per cent of the total market, and more than three times higher than the European average of eight per cent.

The achievement is one of the headlines from the QPA's third *Sustainable Development Report*, which has just been published and offers an insight into how the industry is performing across each of the four key social pillars: social progress; economic protection; natural resources and economic prosperity.

Other headlines from the 2006 data include:

- Health and safety performance continued to improve in the industry, with members recording a further 23 per cent decline in reportable injuries and well on its way to "target zero"
- More than 86,000 jobs were dependent on the industry, 36,000 of them directly employed
- More than 35m tonnes of aggregates were moved by rail and water, with road delivery distances for aggregates averaging 29 miles, for asphalt 26 miles and ready-mixed concrete less than six miles.

The commitment of QPA members to reporting on and improving the sustainability of the sector is illustrated by the fact that the report includes data from companies responsible for 70 per cent of primary aggregate production in the UK (from

more than 1,800 locations). In 2004, 64 per cent of production was covered.

Simon van der Byl, director general of the QPA, said: "I'm delighted that commitment to this reporting process remains positive amongst our membership. This document further refines and builds upon the data we collected for our first and second reports, and we continue to gain meaningful insight into how we operate as a sector."

This third SD report covers the same headings as the previous two, but includes an extra focus on carbon reduction, reflecting emerging QPA policy.

The QPA's Carbon Reduction Statement of Intent was formally unveiled by chairman Lynda Thompson at the association's tenth anniversary *Showcase* earlier this year, where a pocket-sized "Carbon Card" was launched setting out both



Committed to recycling



UK carbon statistics and suggestions to operators for action. The QPA also launched a "Carbon Zone" outlining a range of resources and advice to help tackle carbon reduction – www.qpa.org/carbon.

The SD report found that there was an average carbon dioxide emission of 7.71kg per tonne of output of aggregates and value added products. On-site emissions in the aggregates sector accounted for 0.52 per cent of the UK total.

With reporting now in its third year, the QPA's SD strategy has matured into an important tool for regulators, opinion-formers and operators alike. Feedback is welcomed on the new document, which is to be circulated widely to industry stakeholders.

Simon van der Byl added: "Looking to the future, there will continue to be significant demand for aggregates and quarry products created by high profile projects such as the Olympics as well as the multitude of schemes which generate over £100 billion worth of construction activity every year.

"In meeting these requirements we know that there will be plenty of challenges ahead in all the areas covered by our core values. We will continue to look for opportunities to work with our stakeholders in order to make progress in these areas and to play our full part in relevant debates."



Make the field level

When it comes to returning quarried land to beneficial uses, the UK's sand and gravel operators have a reputation that is second to none across the world. But this fundamental aspect of their work has been jeopardised by legislation that can make it difficult to attract the inert waste that is a vital restoration medium.

THE Trent valley between Burton-upon-Trent and Nottingham is one of the UK's most prolific sand and gravel producing areas, with a network of busy quarries that give much to the life of the region. But the fact that progressive restoration has for so many years gone hand-in-hand with extraction means that it also has some fine examples of "borrowed land" returned with interest.

From the Attenborough nature reserve just south of Nottingham to the nearby National Watersports Centre at Holme Pierrepont and a host of smaller wildlife, leisure and farmland restorations – all bear testimony to an industry that gives value to the natural and leisure environments as well as to the built one. While water areas are much in evidence amongst older restorations in particular, there is also a need for large quantities of inert fill material – mainly soils and excavation wastes.

High ground water levels in many sand and gravel sites mean that filling with anything other than inert waste is not an option. And large newly-created water areas can be a bird strike problem for neighbouring airports.

Inert fill is, therefore, essential. It has, however, become a major issue for the quarrying industry, not just in the Trent valley but in other key quarrying areas of the UK. A QPA study has shown that of the estimated 30



Inert fill is vital to restoration of agricultural and other sites

million tonnes of inert waste needed each year for restoration, only about 14 million tonnes are currently available. In the Trent valley the annual shortfall is estimated at around one million tonnes.

But the concern goes beyond the shortage of fill, because it also affects the fundamental ability of the industry to continue to satisfy the nation's need for aggregates. Winning permission for new mineral reserves brings with it a commitment to progressive restoration. If the operator fails to meet that obligation, further permissions will not be granted.

QPA estimates that around 30 million tonnes of aggregate production a year is at risk if quarries cannot get the inert waste they need for restoration. In the Trent valley alone up to 3.5 million tonnes of annual sand and gravel output is said to be at risk.

The problems have arisen because of failures by Government to recognise that the use of inert waste for restoration constitutes recovery of that material rather than disposal. This has meant that sites are treated as landfill with a host of controlling legislation and attendant costs. QPA describes the bureaucracy as a "burden of disproportionate and excessive regulation that bears no relationship to the risk inert waste presents to the environment".

As long as a fill operation is treated as disposal (landfill), operators must have a Pollution Prevention Control (PPC) permit which requires that waste is only accepted if it is on an approved inert list or is proved to be inert using what is known as Waste Acceptance

Criteria (WAC) testing. The cost of around £350 per sample and the often lengthy turnaround times inhibit companies from taking material that comes up at short notice and may only be available for a short time.

QPA members estimate that they have experienced a 30 per cent decrease in the amount of material accepted at their PPC licensed sites as a direct result of the testing requirements.

Construction and demolition waste contractors are similarly inhibited by the cost of tests on low value materials. In addition, there is an insistence on lining inert landfill sites with clay just in case of a rogue load that proves not to be inert.

"We need a level playing field if we are to meet the requirements of our planning conditions"

The regulatory burden and costs are in complete contrast to the minimal controls that are in place under Waste Management Licensing Regulation exemptions for the same wastes put to similar uses.

Alan Sheppard chairs the QPA waste legislation committee. "If you are a golf course importing inert fill the process is treated as recovery and is exempt from licensing," he says. "But if you are a quarry using the same material to restore land for leisure or agriculture then you face the full impact of legislation and substantial costs.

"The process is clearly the same and should be treated in the same way – we need a level

playing field if we are to meet the requirements of our planning conditions and achieve the new permissions that are needed to satisfy society's needs."

Exemptions are sometimes available from the Environment Agency but that can be a lengthy process. The Canterbury-based Brett Group has had problems on three sites in East Anglia. Development plans manager Lillian Harrison says that restoration of the shallow sand and gravel operations has been stalled or completely halted by the inability to gain exemptions.

The problem reared its head two years ago when all three sites were refused exemptions," she says. "I did some research and discovered that the regulations were being applied differently in individual regions – a completely nonsensical postcode lottery.

"We need a long-term solution which recognises restoration with inert waste for what it is and a level playing field with other operations types of inert fill".

QPA is hopeful that this long-term solution may become a reality as the industry moves into 2008. Defra has been reviewing policy following the association's evidence outlining the inequity in inert waste regulation which was submitted to the Davidson Review in 2006.

The review will ultimately outline the department's solutions to the ongoing problem of over-regulation. *Quarrying Today* will feature the review findings and industry's reaction in the next edition.



Safety turnaround

Ennstone safety crew – Julian Smallshaw (left) with Haydn Hunt

The UK quarrying industry has now moved ahead of its construction cousins in the determined drive to eradicate accidents and has its sights firmly set on zero. We visited one QPA member who has made dramatic safety strides over the past two years.

IT may be an old saying, but the phrase “accidents will happen” will be consigned to the bin for ever if Ennstone plc has any say in the matter.

No-one would blame the company, which has 1,177 employees in the UK, for throwing a veil over the accident incidence rate which occurred in its quarries at its peak in 2005. But, following the implementation of a dynamic package of

initiatives, health and safety is now something of which Ennstone is proud. It was a turnaround which helped the company to win a special award for most improved performance at the QPA Health & Safety Awards in October (see page 11).

Ready-mixed concrete, quarrying, asphalt production and manufacturing already achieved the holy grail of zero reportable incidents in the

first six months of this year. In fact, the company as a whole had only two ‘over three-day’ reportable accidents in that period (in its contract surfacing businesses).

And the overall accident incidence rate for all activities for the first six months of this year is just 541 (calculated on the standard rate per 100,000 employees) - below the industry average of 677 and streets ahead of last year’s 750. The 2007 figure is a 73 per cent reduction from 2005.

Breedon and Cloud Hill Quarries in Leicestershire are just part of the group of sites which has made an enviable improvement in its health and safety record. The quarries, just half a



Ennstone's Cloud Hill quarry

mile apart, have a combined staff of 26 and a production rate of 1.5 million tonnes a year at Cloud Hill and 30,000 to 40,000 tonnes a year at Breedon. The last reportable accident was in February 2006 and quarry manager Julian Smallshaw aims to keep it that way.

Julian took over as manager in January 2007. "Health and safety is paramount," he says. "People do make mistakes – everybody's human – but we talk about problems and put them right. Our chairman is keen to see us talking about safety more and developing a safer place to work all of the time."

So what are the major contributing factors to a safe quarry?

According to Roger Baines, director of health, safety and environment, it's a combination of factors, with the biggest being improved communication from senior management to the workforce.

He says: "Senior management get out there and talk to the guys at the sharp end, getting across the importance of being seen as a safe company and listening to what they have to say."

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That safety message is also being driven home by an initiative in Scotland, which is shortly to be rolled out throughout England – a safety roadshow in which health and safety is put through its paces first in a presentation by MDs of the relevant management teams, and then in an open forum for employees.

In fact, the whole health and safety message emanating from Ennstone is very people-centric. An initiative introduced earlier this year for anyone who has an accident resulting in time off work is a 'return to work interview' designed, as Roger says, "to make people feel valued".

Ennstone even sends a safety newsletter to every employee's home address six times a year, and a revised and expanded health and safety handbook landed on their doormats this spring.

But it doesn't stop there. Employees are regularly "nudged" to use what

Roger describes as a very useful tool for driving down accident rates - the *Safe Quarry* website www.safequarry.com - and there is a regular

Digging in for safety

health and safety section in the group's quarterly newsletter.

At Breedon and Cloud Hill Quarries, another influencing factor in cutting accident levels has been an £8 million investment in new plant,

which has brought in the latest technology. A new traffic management system has also been introduced.

As for the future, Ennstone will keep driving forward a stronger company safety culture to ensure it is a safe place to work.

Chairman Vaughan McLeod sums up: "We are pleased that our drive to create a health and safety culture and to get the key messages out to our workforce is working well. From the top down and the bottom up, our strong health and safety culture reaches every part of our business."

"We are a caring company and in the event of an incident we don't look to point the finger and blame individuals. We look carefully at the causes and work hard to drive out the mistakes before they happen. Our motto is simple – 'think safe, be safe!'"

Your safety tool: www.safequarry.com

Picture: George H Higginbotham



For the birds

THE hunt is on for quarries with sand martins in their cliff faces or little ringed plovers on their shingle spits.

Such attributes are welcomed for the *Business Bird Challenge*, a bi-annual competition, run by the British Trust for Ornithology to find the best business sites in the UK for conservation, birds and community involvement. Previous years have

seen intense competition between quarry sites, which have achieved considerable success in attracting birds through conservation initiatives and restoration projects.

In 2006, over a quarter of the businesses participating were quarry operators. Details of the 2008 event are available at www.bto.org.

Double top

QPA has built on last year's Trade Association of the Year award by landing two further prizes at the Trade Association Forum's Best Practice Awards 2007.

The *Website of the Year* award went to the completely revamped www.qpa.org which was a unanimous victor in a hard-fought category.

Judges remarked that the QPA "succeeded in producing a site that was both educational and a valuable means of promoting the industry that it serves".

There was recognition also for www.safequarry.com, which won the *Social Initiative* award. Judges saw the groundbreaking

site as a "major step forward in communications that is benefiting the health and safety of workers throughout the industry".

The site benefits greatly from QPA members' contributions in sharing health and safety best practice.

The two online resources contribute to the 80,000 visits that the QPA's family of websites enjoy every month - almost a million people a year making the link between quarrying and everyday life.



Sting in the permission

THE cost of winning the permissions that are needed to satisfy the UK's needs for minerals could spiral under the Government's Planning White Paper.

QPA has warned that if plans to remove the current £50,000 cap disappear, even a small variation to an existing permission could cost an operator more than £100,000. Costs for planning applications would rise by at least 40 per cent for smaller sites and by well over 100 per cent for large ones.

The proposals also open the door for individual mineral planning authorities to levy their own charges rather than basing fees on a national tariff.

Alongside initial application cost hikes, planning appeals could also be subject to unwelcome fees, increasing the cost of securing permissions still further. At a time when replenishment rates on aggregate sites are already running at about half of what is needed to maintain long term supply, QPA sees the costs a counter-productive.

QPA director general, Simon van der Byl, says: "Quarriers are set to suffer from the barrage of new and increasing fees that appear to be arriving from all corners of Government. With the Minerals Policy Statement underlining the importance of our managed aggregate supply system, it beggars belief that the Government is proposing to make aggregate suppliers' lives even more difficult with these unjustifiably high charges."

Johnsons Wellfield Quarries provided the foundation stone which was unveiled at Huddersfield University by HM The Queen during a visit to Huddersfield in May.

Front line careers

THE quarrying industry is targeting forces personnel in its hunt to find quality managers of the future.

Major operators plus QPA, the British Aggregates Association and Proskills joined forces to show what the industry has to offer at a unique careers event in Perth organised by the Ministry of Defence's Careers Transition Partnership. The event was attended by nearly 500 personnel, all looking at new career opportunities as they approach the end of active service.

The industry has taken the initiative after recognising that many of the skills it seeks exist in the forces, notably man-management, technical ability and responsible attitudes. Operators say they had no shortage of impressive CVs to take home with them.

QPA's John Sheridan said the event had been a revelation. "We have been nothing but impressed by what service leavers can offer our sector," he said. "Our three major operators here today have gone home laden with high quality CVs from motivated, technically skilled and highly responsible individuals."

Romana Grant, employment and training manager for CTP in Scotland said: "Service leavers found it really useful to speak directly to an industry sector they might not have considered. It was clearly a win-win situation."

Offering a career change – www.careersinquarrying.co.uk



Safety stars

A RECORD 205 entries came forward for the 2007 QPA Health & Safety Best Practice Awards, almost doubling last year's tally, and underlining the industry's commitment to improving performance. The top awards were:

Special award for most improved health and safety performance - Ennstone plc; Wimpey Minerals Trophy for occupational, health, hygiene & welfare - WBB Minerals Ltd (Moneystone Quarry); Blue Circle Trophy for action on slips, trips & falls - CEMEX UK Materials; EPIC Trophy for management of contractors - Lafarge Aggregates (Shawell Quarry); Trevor King Trophy for action on working at height - Tarmac (Dene Quarry); TUC Trophy for worker involvement - Tarmac (Whiteinch Hot Storage Depot); RBA Trophy for bitumen tank management - Aggregate Industries UK (Topley Pike Quarry); QPA Trophy for other initiatives - Hanson Aggregates (Penderyn Quarry); Sir Frank Davies Trophy for most outstanding health and safety performance in smaller companies - Blasting Services; John Crabbe Memorial Trophy for overall excellence in health and safety - CEMEX.

As this issue went to press the British Marine Aggregate Producers Association was set to publish its first sustainable development report (see www.bmapa.org).

Issues tour

QPA has helped new senior staff at the Department for Communities and Local Government develop their understanding of industry issues by visiting a variety of operations in the south east. The party, led by QPA chairman Lynda Thompson and director general Simon van der Byl, included DCLG's Sue Bonfanti and Stephanie Hurst, who have recently taken over the minerals and waste planning responsibilities of the departing Lester Hicks.

The visits provided a cross-sectional view of the industry, taking in the Brett Group's Faversham sand and gravel quarry, Aggregate Industries' wharf on the Isle of Grain, the Day Group's recycling operation in Greenwich and the neighboring marine aggregate wharf operated by UMA. The officials taking part on the trip left with a more detailed understanding of the industry and its key issues which will help renew relationships with the department going forward.

Fitting memorial

LAFARGE Aggregates' Alrewas Quarry hosted a royal visit in October when the Queen dedicated a national monument commemorating members of the British armed forces who have lost their lives since 1945.

The restored quarry has been home to the National Memorial Arboretum for a decade, in

which time a productive partnership has grown between the NMA and Lafarge. Education initiatives and sponsored events have since helped raise the profile of Alrewas. So, when Government decided to build a memorial to name those who had lost their lives since World War Two, it was the perfect choice.

The dedication ceremony, attended by 2,500



people, saw the Queen pay tribute to all British servicemen and women who had lost their lives. 16,000 names have so far been carved in the two imposing stone arcs forming the Memorial.



Do less ...
create
more

Picturesque scene at Woodbridge quarry

A CALL to do less is not one that quarrying companies hear too often from environmentalists. It is, however, an approach that Northumberland's county ecologist, David Feige, pressed upon Tarmac executives when they sat down together to develop a biodiversity action plan covering no fewer than seven quarries.

The company's forward-thinking approach to its network of active and closed sites in one of Britain's most wildly beautiful areas has impressed David. He sees huge potential for a wealth of species that are of national significance including skylarks, sand matins, brown hares, peregrines and linnets as well as a wide range of scarce plants and invertebrates. But he believes passionately in letting nature take the lead.

"There is often a feeling amongst quarrying companies that they need to be perceived to be acting swiftly to be responsible," he says. "But an artificial quick-fix habitat is not as good as creating the conditions that will allow wildlife to gradually build. Above all, nature requires patience.

"There is the need for a changing mentality when it comes to the restoring of quarries for their biodiversity. In quarries with potential agricultural futures, you can simply replace the top-soil and it will work well. But in trying to form a natural habitat, it is important to let a more subtle change occur.

David is delighted by the way in which Tarmac has responded to his advice. "The attitude has been fantastic; one which is keen to embrace this change in thinking, to help create the conditions that allow a site to flourish and become established.

"For example, at the site at Woodbridge, the standard under-drainage has not occurred and the topsoil has not been put back. This has been integral in assisting a good natural development which has resulted in the colonization of the musk thistle, a distinctive, strong-smelling and beautiful plant, uncommon to this part of the country."

David talks passionately about Northumberland as a "beautiful county of marked contrasts". He sees quarries as an important contributor to the overall biodiversity picture. The Peregrine falcon, which is scarce in Northumberland, values the rock crags of the local quarries for nesting and its numbers are increasing as a result. But he also welcomes the wetlands created by sand

and gravel quarrying as a superb location for a range of birds, dragonflies and damselflies.

David is in no doubt that what has been achieved in Northumberland could be replicated elsewhere. "Quarries exist throughout the UK and if we can get operators to recognise the need for a more natural approach to restoration then we could between us achieve a significant boost to the nation's biodiversity.

"For this to work, it is crucial for operators to accept the notion of change and adaptation. Many restoration plans were put in place between ten and 15 years ago. Over this time our understanding of what is needed from a nature conservation point of view has progressed."



Plover at Lanton quarry