Supply cannot be assumed
Meeting demand needs a long-term plan

Mythbusting concrete
Decarbonise, don't demonise

Gone to pot
Funding holes in local roads

Quarries and nature
50 years of biodiversity gain
**WELCOME**

Sometimes problems are not all bad. As the economic gathes strength and business confidence increases, mineral products activity is not only recovering to pre-Covid levels, but is surging ahead due to the release of pent-up demand.

This is good news as it reflects the shift from a suppressed market in 2020 to a growth market in 2021. However, it also strains supply chains and capacity to supply, particularly where stocks have reduced when production was sub-optimal during various phases of lockdown. The recent and ongoing shortages of both bagged and bulk cement has attracted media attention and raised construction industry concern. This is less a matter of shortages per se but more an issue of increased demand outstripping the supplier’s ability to increase production and delivery capacity at the same rate. The industry has had no option but to share the pain by extending delivery times and using allocations to try and ensure customers are treated fairly until demand and supply can be more ‘in sync’. Whilst the situation will progressively ease, it is likely to last for most of the year as economic momentum gains force. A difficult problem materialising because of a positive situation.

The question is how long will pent-up demand last before it wanes, and the market stabilises within the more normal market envelope experienced in recent years? Time will tell, but right now the outlook for the next 12 to 18 months looks pretty positive barring any major reversion due to new or more virulent Covid variants. However, the big ‘take away’ from this exceptional period over the last year or so is the need for a wider appreciation of how complex and sensitive essential supply chains are. Not just in terms of production capacities, but logistics models, availability of drivers, space and replacement parts, and plant but also planning permission for new primary mineral resources. With lead times for converting new reserves into economically recoverable reserves that can supply markets typically taking 10 to 15 years from identification to supply, it is no wonder that exceptional increases in demand can stimulate ‘shortages’. Given the already worryingly low replenishment rates for new aggregate reserves, plus the current review of the planning system (just the latest in an endless stream of failed reviews) the writing is on the wall that supply cannot be assumed, it has to be planned, monitored and managed.

The industry very much hopes that Government is taking note of the advice it has been given over the 10 years to realise that essential minerals need to be regarded as part of critical national infrastructure and the planning system resources properly to ensure a steady and adequate supply of minerals and mineral products which, after all, are the largest material flow in the economy. Simon Willis, Chairman, MPA

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**Priorities for Government will help deliver ambitions**

Government aspirations for improved infrastructure, affordable housing and a green industrial revolution rely on policies to create the right conditions for a strong and sustainable UK mineral products industry.

That’s the message in the MPA’s latest ‘Delivering for the UK’ statement which sets out the Government’s ‘to do’ list for minimising/minimizing/minimising the Prime Minister’s 10-point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution all depend on a steady, local and responsibly-sourced supply of mineral products.

Key issues addressed in the MPA’s Priorities for Government, include the sector’s unique and impressive contribution to improving infrastructure, plus the policy needed to deliver the industry’s plan for concrete and cement to go beyond net zero carbon.

Representing more than 90% of the heavy-side construction materials industry, MPA has called for a collaborative approach, highlighting how the industry’s economic, social, environmental and material contribution can support the Government’s agenda.

For example, the National Infrastructure Strategy, Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, Planning Policy changes and the Prime Minister’s 10-point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution all depend on a steady, local and responsibly-sourced supply of mineral products.

In the report, to which the MPA submitted evidence, it made clear that planning is about more than housing, which it says cannot be treated in isolation from other development such as mineral extraction.

The report identifies the absence of any consideration of the expected impact of the reforms on minerals planning and development – despite the huge volume of mineral products

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**Planning reform must cover minerals, says report**

The Government’s proposed reforms to the planning system need to consider minerals, according to a new Select Committee report welcomed by the MPA.

The Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee report into the future of the planning system in England points out that the Government’s proposals have overlooked the potential implications for mineral planning among other sectors.

Announced in August 2020, the ‘Planning for the Future White Paper focuses almost entirely on housing delivery. Yet the Select Committee’s report identifies the absence of any consideration of the expected impact of the reform on minerals planning and development – despite the huge volume of mineral products

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**MPs form all-party mining and quarrying group**

Members of Parliament have formed a new All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Mining and Quarrying, supported by the MPA.

This cross-party group will help to keep the Communities and Local Government Committee and other parties from different parties and from around the country elected as vice-chairs including Jane Hunt.

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**Outlook positive but the stakes are high**

UK construction’s demand for big-volume mineral products like aggregates and concrete showed resilience in the first quarter of 2021, despite lockdown restrictions, Brexit, and wet weather hampering activity.

That’s according to the latest MPA survey data which warns that a continuation of the wet weather will “led to a lot of invoices going unpaid”.

The report, due to be released in the autumn, will look at the impacts of Covid-19 on the market and how the industry can drive growth in the recovery.

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**Precast concrete merges with MPA**

The UK’s precast producers will be represented for the first time in one trade body, helping accelerate the industry’s journey towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

British Precast, the trade body for the country’s precast concrete producers, will merge with MPA from 1 January 2022. The combined association will encompass both ready-mixed concrete and precast concrete products, from building blocks and paving slabs to structural flooring, drainage systems, railway sleepers and other construction components.

The merger will enable a more integrated approach as the UK concrete and cement industry implements its ambitious ‘Roadmap to Beyond Net Zero’ responding to the urgent industry implements its ambitious ‘Roadmap to Beyond Net Zero’

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**NEWS**

**As the UK recovers from the impact of Covid, we are seeing progress on key deliverables of the Prime Minister’s 10-point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution all depend on a steady, local and responsibly-sourced supply of mineral products.**

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“Told you! It should be no surprise that with so much pent-up demand being unleashed at once, that pre-Covid supply capacities and rhythms would be tested as the economy recovered.

But for the mineral products industry and its family of essential materials, that’s mainly affecting bagged cement for builders who buy from merchants. To put this in perspective, that particular material ‘flow’ represents about three days in the annual pipeline of overall mineral reserves, supplies and production. And because the three days, admittedly, because of the amplifying effect it has across the domestic home improvements and landscaping network, I have every sympathy with clients, builders and merchants as they all struggle to recover from the rigours of the last 15 months by investing in their homes or businesses and our industry is doing all it can to ensure that their demand is met.

The situation forms part of a far bigger picture. In the UK we consume around 15 million tonnes of cementitious materials per annum, around 3 million tonnes in bags and the balance of 12 million tonnes in bulk, it sounds like a lot. But it’s not cement that should be our sole worry. It is the aggregates that mix with cement to make concrete and mortar and with bitumen to make asphalt for our roads. In a typical year we consume around 250 million tonnes of aggregates, a million tonnes for every working day – one million tonnes extracted from quarries, processed, stacked and delivered, mainly loose and in bulk. Eighty times the tonnage of cement currently in focus.

And so, the ‘essentials’ of aggregates and quarrying was born and over the years has evolved the Managed Aggregate Supply System or MASS. The system has worked reasonably well over the last 45 years but as local authority planning departments lose minerals expertise, capacity and capability, and more planning and environmental constraints emerge in a constantly changing (and some say falling) planning and permitting system, operators have to play their cards slower and more carefully. Planning applications typically cost between £100,000 and £1 million and planning determinations can typically take up to three years to be made. In the event that your proposed site is included in the minerals local plan, and you time your application right and actually secure a planning permission, the pair of Environment Agency permitting and licensing kicks in, adding duplicated costs and wasted time.

The system has become a ‘can’t do’ process rather than ‘can do’. Many Ministers have attempted to ‘fix a broken planning system’ mainly predicated on trying to sort out housing under provision but they have all failed and probably will always because as fast as they preach growth and talk a good game, ‘localism’ slows it all down.

Consequently, replanning rates for sand and gravel quarries have been running at around 60% for the last 18 years and even the larger more strategic and rail-linked rock quarries are having to invest more effort and resources to extend their lives. Ultimately you can’t replan indefinitely without supply strains, particularly as MPA estimates that around 3 billion tonnes of reserves will be required to supply the demands created by society up to 2030, while it is not.

“We consume around a million tonnes of aggregates every working day.”

Given the significance of mineral products as the largest physical flow in the economy one might have imagined that Government would be more pro-active in ensuring supplies are secure, particularly as they are predominantly indigenous, and the import risk is low. It may be right, as fashionable, to aspire to lithium mines in the South West, but the first aim should be to support the extraction sites we already have whether aggregates, cement, china clay, ball clay, silica sand, dimension stone or industrial or agricultural limestone. No surprise then that the industry had to develop a UK Minerals Strategy in 2018 which was supported at launch by BIS, and which is aimed at keeping the strategic role the industry plays in the minds of policy makers and addresses the future long-term provision of minerals and mineral products.

“Most people don’t get that without a flow of aggregates construction, manufacturing and many other sectors would really, really struggle.”

As local planning authorities increasingly declare climate emergencies and local politicians and opposition groups drop the net from ‘stone’, carbon-based opposition to future quarries and quarry extensions is likely to increase making stocking supply chains even further particularly in periods of high demand.

If the current temporary shortages of bagged cement have demonstrated anything it is that only when the construction industry can’t be served does it ‘make the link’ to its supply chain and makes what it takes. Disruptive as longer lead times and allocations currently are, imagine how much worse this would be if just one of our major rail linked rock aggregate quarries delivering millions of tonnes per year becomes either not replaced or cannot secure the next extension. We have not permitted one large major rail linked rock quarry for well over a generation and no obvious new ones are in the pipeline. From quarry concept to operation for a major new quarry would take between 10 and 15 years to become a reality. There are no quick fixes, not even imports.

The major rock producing and exporting regions such as the South West and East Midlands pop up demand in London and then the South East so ‘localist’ is not really a sensible approach to a generally strategic national supply network. Where local land-sourced sand, gravel and crushed rock can’t supply recycled and marine aggregates fill the gap, but they too are not without their own challenges.

Our current MASS based supply model knits all these factors together. It is a genuinely effective strategic approach to a fundamental need of the economy and society yet barely registers in Government as worthy of investment in data and adequate resources.

For Government, planning means housing, with no shortage of both data and resources, although the link back through housing’s supply chain is not made and permanently housing targets are not met (even in a subsidised sector)

In truth aggregates mineral planning (as well as underpaid and undervalued local authority planning officers) should be acknowledged as being critical to national infrastructure as should all mineral products. There is an old industry maxim ‘if you can’t grow it, you have to dig it’. Do we really contemplate life without minerals? In reality essential minerals and mineral products may be more critical than we think. This will not just be about rare earths for batteries and electronics. Understanding supply chains is going to become an increasingly important feature of our national decarbonisation debate as we try to work out how to best meet our economic needs and have a decent quality of life on the way to net zero by 2050.

“80 years of SAMSA”

A specialist association established in 1941 as part of the war effort is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.

The UK’s silica sand producers are marking 80 years since the launch of SAMSA, the Silica and Moulding Sand Association, now a constituent body of the MPA.

Silica sand is an essential raw material in a variety of industries including glass, foundry, ceramics, sports and leisure, paints, plastics, sealants and adhesives, oils and gas, horticulture and agriculture. SAMSA was founded during World War Two to co-ordinate the UK’s silica sand resources and ensure the industry was able to provide along with the sand to make optical glass for periscopes and to create casts for components needed for machinery used in the war.

Living with Minerals 7

The seventh Living With Minerals conference takes place in July 2021, organised by MPA on behalf of the CBI Minerals Group.

The conference reviews progress of the UK Mineral Strategy three years after its publication. The strategy is designed to ensure that UK demand for minerals and mineral products is met sustainably for the next 25 years.

Dirrector General of the CBI Tony Durrer is the keynote speaker along with the Managing Director of the British Geological Survey Dr Karen Hanghøj and a wide variety of speakers with an interest in the industry, its contributions to the economy and society, and its progress in key environmental areas.

Planning a green recovery

Nearly 300 professionals from over 150 different organisations attended the annual Mineral Planning Conference in June.

Jointly hosted by the MPA and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTP), the largest professional body for planners, the event was themed around ‘Planning for a Green Recovery’.

The conference considered the role of mineral planning in responding to the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, alongside the emerging reforms being proposed for the planning system. Opening remarks were given by RTP President Wei Yang FRTP and the keynote address was provided by Simon Gallagher, Director of Planning for MCHLG. They were joined by a line-up of eminent speakers from across the sector.

“Never assume supply”

VIEWPOINT by MPA Chief Executive Nigel Jackson

VIEWPOINT

NEWS

PACKED
Hard Facts & Home Truths

The UK has the technology and the economic capability to achieve net zero by 2050, but mixed signals from Government are derailing investment and progress.

That’s according to Prof Tom Burke, chairman of independent strategic political think tank E3G, who was among the key speakers at last week’s Mineral Products 2021 conference. Bringing the event to life with fascinating insights, thought-provoking ideas, and compelling hard facts and home truths.

Moderated by BBC Television producer Samantha McAlister, the online event ‘Respect the Water, Balance the Issues’ saw 300 delegates hear a line-up of leading experts explore the UK’s political landscape, economic outlook, climate change realities and the mineral products industry’s response to the decarbonisation challenge.

MPA Chief Executive Nigel Jackson opened the event on location from MPA member J & J Franks’ sand quarry and waste facility in Surrey.

Emphasising the importance of diverse geology in countries like Surrey in meeting the need for essential mineral products, he talked to Franks’ Managing Director Peter Crate about the challenges and opportunities of securing planning consent and obtaining permits when setting up a new site.

Opening the formal proceedings was Prof Vernon Bogdanor CBE FBA of the Centre for British Politics and Government at King’s College London who provided a captivating insight into the UK’s political landscape as the country emerges from the pandemic and gets to grips with life after Brexit. He was followed by Dr Gemma Tetlow, Chief Economist at the Institute for Government, who gave an interesting overview of the economic environment and explained why Government needs to focus on its key priorities and not spread itself too thinly.

Next to the ‘stage’ was Ecologist Economist Prof Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development at the University of Surrey and author of ‘Post Growth – Life After Capitalism’, who put forward a thought-provoking argument that decoupling economic activity from environmental impact was ultimately the only way to achieve sustainable development.

Mike Thompson, Chief Economist at the Climate Change Committee, an independent advisory body to the Government, explained the UK’s Climate Change Act and Carbon Budget, discussed levers to prevent carbon leakage and outlined the case for carbon capture, use and storage. He said: “Government has grasped the scale of what needs to happen to achieve net zero but getting the policy in place and the infrastructure built – it’s a big process, it takes time and it needs to move quickly. I have no doubt that net zero can be achieved – the programme is designed with the constraints in mind – but we have to work together to get to the goal.”

Then came Rachel Wolf, Founding Partner at public policy and research specialists Public First, who discussed the challenges and opportunities presented by decarbonisation, emphasising the importance for all industry sectors to have a credible roadmap to net zero with proposals aligned with policy.

Turning to practical progress within the mineral products sector, Steven O’Mara, Mines & Quarry Manager for Hitachi Construction Machinery UK, and Toni Hagelberg, Director of Sustainable Power Systems at Volvo Construction Equipment, talked about innovations designed to reduce the carbon impact of mobile plant.

The session concluded with an overview of the ‘UK Concrete and Cement Industry Roadmap to Beyond Net Zero’.

Closing the event, Nigel Jackson said: “Each year the UK consumes 400 million tonnes of mineral products – more than 1 million tonnes a day. We’re the biggest flow of materials in the economy, providing essential materials without which construction, manufacturing and many other industries would struggle. I’m very proud that working with our members we have been able to develop a roadmap for concrete and cement to go beyond net zero by 2050. Early action to reduce carbon means that today UK concrete and cement emissions are around 1.5% of the total UK carbon emissions. Now we need Government, the construction industry and other sectors to play their part to help the UK go beyond net zero.”

“First things first: We are not running out of minerals. The UK has an abundance of mineral resources thanks to its diverse geology,” says Mark Russell, the MPA’s Executive Director for Planning & Mineral Resources. “And that means that unlike steel, timber and plastic products, most of which have to be imported, we are virtually self-sufficient in high-quality aggregates, the core commodity from which concrete, asphalt and many other products are made.”

According to Mark, the problem lies in the fact that little or no consideration is given to the quantities of material required for future construction and redevelopment. “The further up the supply chain you go the less interest there is in where raw materials might come from or how they might be delivered efficiently – a steady and adequate supply is simply assumed.”

“Combine that with the unwieldy and under-resourced systems for accessing and managing the country’s resources – systems that have been neglected for too long and are no longer fit for purpose, and then sprinkle with a dose of intervening knee-jerk politics and the whole thing threatens to unravel.”

Shortages of building materials have hit the headlines recently, shedding new light on concerns about longer-term replenishment of essential minerals – not because the country is running out, but because supply is assumed.

That issue has led to very real concerns about the decline in availability of consented, permitted minerals at a time when the Government’s ambitions for infrastructure, housing and green energy are the greatest in a generation. All of this requires hundreds of millions of tonnes of mineral products.

“Minerals and mineral products represent the largest flow of materials in the economy,” said Mark. “These materials underpin our way
Another example is the recently announced 
material. And that's before you consider the 
country's day-to-day need for building 
that could easily impact the rest of the 
conserved minerals reserves in the ground. 
"Take, for example, a major infrastructure 
meeting the demand, most of which is generated 
by quarrying, from initial design, through responsible and efficient operation, to quarry 
production and distribution systems run at 
the industry needs advanced warning – at 
least a decade – so it can get organised to meet demand, whether 
that's working on plans for additional reserves or investing in new plant and equipment. 
Producers are not likely to invest based on the mere possibility of additional demand – they 
need early certainty and economic stability.

"It's clear that Government departments, 
authorities, consultants and lead contractors 
assume that mineral supply is effectively 
available 'on tap', even though the volumes are 
strained and for that requires for delivery but extensive discussions to consider the waste arising. The rumoured 
one million houses in this project will require 
around 200 million tonnes of aggregate, and 
that's before taking on board other 
infrastructure, utilities, schools, hospitals, etc.

We've been trying to explain that UK's mineral 
production and distribution systems run at 
close to optimum efficiency: so there is little 
scope to increase capacity. This is further 
compounded by the diminishing aggregate 
reserve replenishment rate – 75% for crushed 
rock and 66% for sand and gravel.

"In short, new quarries and extensions are not 
being consented anywhere near the rate 
that the country is consuming minerals: It 
won't be long before diminishing supplies 
could start to have knock-on consequences for 
infrasstructure, redevelopment and 
regeneration."

The good news is that this can be avoided with 
some strategic foresight and forward planning. 
The industry needs advanced warning – at 
least a decade – so it can get organised to meet demand, whether 
that's working on plans for additional reserves or investing in new plant and equipment. 
Producers are not likely to invest based on the mere possibility of additional demand – they 
need early certainty and economic stability.

"So there's an urgent need for material 
resource assessments and supply audits to be 
part of any project evaluation for major 
infrastructure and big development projects. 
That would provide visibility to allow the 
industry the time to plan for replacement reserves and to consider capacity."

Equally, mineral planning authorities need to 
have the same visibility so they can plan ahead 
through their mineral plans.

"Most mineral planning authorities tell us they 
also are unable to quantify the impact of 
demand from major construction and building 
schemes in their Local Aggregate Assessments (LAA). Like the industry, they don't have 
visibility on total aggregate demand for major 
projects, or which regions might be supplying the material.

"The current arrangements for supporting the 
Managed Aggregate Supply System (MASS) are 
not fit for purpose and do not properly identify 
likely real future demand. Local authorities do 
not have the resources, skills or the political will 
to properly forecast future demand for the 
aggregates produced from their area – 
particularly where these may be supplying 
market demands elsewhere around the country."

Rather than taking a strategic approach, there 
is a reliance on average past sales to assess 
future needs, based on historic data. In recent 
times that has given a false impression of 
falling demand due to the last recession and 
quarries running out of consented reserves.

"Apart from the occasional blip, the industry 
has seen its output and availability stable 
but it begs the question 'with what?'"
Decarbonisation not demonisation

Concrete is coming in for some stick for its environmental impact, especially carbon emissions. But much of the criticism is based on misunderstanding and misinformation. With climate change higher on the agenda than ever, we dispel some of the most popular myths about concrete.

Modern society cannot operate without concrete and its key constituent cement. Making cement requires heating limestone and shale to 1450°C which not only requires a lot of energy but also releases carbon dioxide in the process. Yet contrary to popular belief concrete offers huge sustainability benefits over other building materials.

Concrete has innate properties of strength, durability, resilience and versatility. It is locally available almost everywhere, relatively affordable, requires no additional finishing or treatments, and has thermal mass properties that lower the energy needs of buildings.

Furthermore, quarrying the abundant raw materials needed for concrete requires minimal and temporary use of land which can then be restored for permanent biodiversity net gain. Concrete also absorbs carbon dioxide during its lifespan and at the end of life can be recycled and reused again and again.

Low carbon and zero carbon concretes have been available for many years, using secondary cementitious alternatives. Work is well underway to push these innovations further and faster. Early engagement with architects, specifiers, developers and contractors also enables minimisation of carbon in concrete. The industry is seeking changes to product standards to ensure the lowest carbon products can be specified and is working on a set of generic EPDs (Environmental Product Declarations) to enable the right choices to be made.

Concrete’s environmental performance also depends on how and where it is used in construction. Indeed, the whole life performance of concrete buildings over long lifetimes can offset the impact of construction through superior energy efficiency and reduced maintenance requirements. Concrete’s durability, longevity and resilience are critical characteristics that mean concrete structures remain fit-for-purpose for generations.

### Myth 1: Concrete is bad for the environment.

**Reality:** Concrete is an ‘umbrella’ term for hundreds of different products with a range of impacts and benefits, depending on numerous factors. The concrete and cement industry takes its environmental obligations extremely seriously and has, since 1990, reduced its carbon outputs by 33%, decarbonising faster than the UK economy as a whole. It is also working hard to reach net zero.

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### Myth 2: If the concrete industry were a country, it would be the third largest carbon emitter in the world.

**Reality:** The same could be said for many of the world’s essential industries. And besides, concrete isn’t a country, it’s a product that shapes our built environment. Concrete generates around 8% of global carbon emissions. This is because concrete can be made in almost every country of the world and it is the most useful, versatile, cost-effective and locally available building material. Given concrete constitutes around half of the world’s manufactured materials by volume (due to its popularity) its 8% footprint seems modest compared to transport (16%), heating/cooling of buildings (16%), agriculture (12%) and others. Equally, if other materials such as timber were used in the same volumes as concrete their carbon footprint would be enormous. And in the case of timber we’d rapidly run out of trees.

In the UK concrete and cement manufacture accounts for 1.5% of UK’s carbon emissions, a reflection of the maturity in the local market but also the industry’s ongoing drive to reduce carbon (53% reduction since 1990 with a roadmap to go beyond net zero by 2050). There is a huge difference between concrete produced in a well-managed, controlled environment like the UK compared to unregulated developing parts of the globe.

There are numerous sources of information about the true benefits of concrete. Here are some places to visit for further reading:

- www.sustainableconcrete.org.uk
- www.concretecentre.com
- https://www.istructe.org
- https://gccassociation.org

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- https://gccassociation.org
Inconsistent roads funding leads to quick fixes rather than the long term solutions that are required.

That’s the key finding of this year’s ‘Annual Local Authority Road Maintenance (ALARM)’ survey, published in the spring by the Asphalt Industry Alliance (AIA).

The independently verified annual survey, which compiles data provided by local authorities in England and Wales, shows that a legacy of inconsistent funding is still preventing highway engineers from being able to provide long-term, cost-effective maintenance improvements for local roads. And campaigners say that the lack of funding flies in the face of Government aspirations to encourage more cycling.

Local authorities report that, despite the increase in budgets, target road conditions still remain out of reach. If they had enough funds to meet their target across all road types, there could be an additional 14,400 miles of local roads in a good state of repair and 2,000 fewer miles in need of urgent repair.

“Potholes are a nuisance and not only cause expensive vehicle damage but can also lead to serious injury or even worse. The Government must now change tack and ring-fence a small proportion of existing fuel duty revenues over a five-year period so that local authorities are able to plan routine maintenance properly and get our local roads up to a fit and proper standard,” said flick Green, Chair of the AIA.

While the extra funding in 2020/21 was welcomed, using it to repeatedly fill in potholes does nothing to improve the core resilience of the network. It is clear that a longer term approach to local road funding is needed, similar to the five-year commitment made to the strategic road network, to allow local authority highway engineers to plan ahead and implement a more proactive, sustainable and cost-effective whole-life approach to maintaining the network.

“What this commitment is vital to the nation’s post-pandemic reset in which we will rely on our local road network to support recovery and underpin active travel and levelling-up ambitions,”

The RAC’s Head of Roads Policy, Nicholas Lyes, said: “The AIA’s report lays bare the pressure on local authorities who are grappling with crumbling road surfaces.

On the one hand additional money allows them to fix potholes but the inconsistent nature of this funding often means they focus on short-term quick fixes rather than preventing them from occurring in the first place.

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Edmund King OBE, AA president, said: “While the extra funding in 2020/21 was welcomed, using it to repeatedly fill in potholes which can injure those on two wheels and cause expensive damage to those on four wheels.

The AA has in recent years highlighted the skewing of emergency road repair funding towards restoring the condition of main roads while leaving residential and other minor roads in a poor condition.”

“Government and councils urging more active travel by getting people to switch from car to bicycle doesn’t sit right when local roads are riddled with potentially lethal potholes.”

British Cycling’s Policy Manager, Nick Chamberlin, said: “Poorly surfaced, potholed roads are bad for all users but they can be lethal for people cycling. We urge the Government to consider the AIA proposal to deliver a strategic, long-term settlement to tackle the issue.

Helping people on bikes to feel safer and supporting the Government’s long-term Gear Change ambitions.”

Head of Campaigns at Cycling UK, Duncan Dollimore, said: “Most journeys are either local or start locally, and local transport needs to be prioritised. That means long-term investment and certainty of funding, so councils can plan the repairs and improvements needed rather than just crisis managing road maintenance.”

Institute of Highway Engineers Chief Executive, Steve Spender, said: “This report highlights the need for a more long-term approach to local road funding in order to allow local authorities to develop longer-term plans for maintaining the highway asset.”

The full ALARM survey can be downloaded at www.asphaltuk.org
Setting an example

It is two decades since the first global scheme to promote open and accountable management among the world’s extractive industries was conceived. Today, MPA members are playing their part while setting an example for others to follow.

In some parts of the world, extracting essential minerals to produce energy, everyday objects and the built environment around us has also given rise to corruption and conflict, especially in resource-rich developing nations.

Dodgy deals and a lack of transparency, among other reasons, have meant that the economic benefits of extracting oil and gas, metal ores and other mineral resources does not necessarily contribute to prosperity for a country as a whole.

Prompted by calls from civil society, the idea emerged in the late 1990s to establish a worldwide initiative to set clear governance standards for the extraction of natural resources.

And so the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) was formed (www.eiti.org), promoting open and accountable management in the extraction of natural resources. Its remit includes ensuring the process for issuing licences and contracts is transparent, ensuring the process for issuing licences and contracts is transparent, and ensuring that governments and businesses can be held to account. We are actively involved and fully support the intentions of EITI, and are committed to implementing the standards."

Mining, quarrying and related downstream manufacturing activities make a variety of financial and non-financial contributions to national and local governments and local communities. EITI helps to identify and address some of the gaps in the availability of data essential to inform policy makers and the public about our industry’s unique contributions to the economy and to improving biodiversity, whilst also working towards delivering net zero carbon and beyond by 2050.

For further information visit the UK EITI website: www.ukeiti.org

Return of the sand martins

Industrial minerals specialist Sibelco teamed up with Surrey Wildlife Trust to attract sand martins back to nest in the county for the first time 25 years.

The nature conservation project involved building a giant 20-metre-wide sandbank for the tiny brown and white birds, the perfect habitat to welcome them back to nest at a Surrey nature reserve on restored quarry land.

The nesting bank at Spynes Mere near Redhill was created with the help of professional sand sculptors Sand in Your Eye. Sand martins, the smallest of Britain’s swallows and martin family, visit the UK annually on their return migration flight from Africa.

World first for carbon sequestration

Crushed basalt from a Hanson quarry in Powys is being used in a reforestation scheme to measure the benefit it has on removing atmospheric carbon dioxide.

The world-first project led by The Carbon Community, a charity dedicated to creating forests and accelerating carbon removal, aims to accelerate the sequestration of CO2 in trees and soil as well as improving biodiversity. As part of the project, more than 25,000 trees have been planted on 11 hectares near the Beacon Beacons in Wales.

The initiative – will assess the effects of using live soils from nearby forests to reintroduce microbes and organisms to improve tree survival rates, as well as enhanced rock weathering (ERM) on carbon sequestration.

ERM takes crushed basalt, a by-product from some quarries, and applies it to the soil to capture CO2 and provide essential nutrients to fertilise trees and the fungi in the soil that support tree growth. Already successful in agriculture, it if works for reforestation the Carbon Community aims to scale up the scheme elsewhere to enhance carbon removal from the atmosphere.

Roman remains revealed

A restored Tarmac quarry has become the focus of international interest after excavations unearthed a Roman mass burial site.

Media outlets worldwide have been following the extensive discovery at the site in Somersham, Cambridgeshire, after a report was published revealing 32 burials, including 17 decapitated bodies, believed to be victims of Roman execution.

Practical steps to net zero

Two UK cement plants operated by MPA members are undergoing multimillion pound investment programmes taking them a big step closer to carbon neutrality.

CEMEX has invested in a new system to replace fossil fuels at its Rugby cement plant in Warwickshire, incorporating green hydrogen in the production process. The new system will enable the plant to operate with 100% alternative energy, which also includes the use of unrecyclable waste materials as fuel. Also seeking to maximise use of solid alternative fuels that would otherwise end up in landfill is Aggregate Industries.

At their Lafarge cement plant in Caudon, Staffordshire, work has begun on a project to build a new pre-processing plant for the storage, handling and feeding of non-fossil fuel materials. In addition, a new chloride bypass plant will be installed, which will ensure quality of the end product and result in no additional waste. Both sites have a history of moving away from fossil fuels and both projects represent important next steps towards achieving a circular economy.

Food fuels healthy chat

A team at Eurovia has been opening up about mental health with a ‘Food & Food’ initiative for employees.

Using tasty dishes as an ice breaker, Eurovia colleagues on the A127 highway works in Essex formed a WhatsApp community group to encourage sharing of anything food-related and mood-related. Workers can also choose to wear a ‘mood card’ in the see-through ‘window’ of their high-vis jacket.

Together the two ideas encourage employees to check in on each other and to talk about how they are really feeling.

Stone for Chinese garden

The new RHS Garden Bridgewater has selected Shire Hill stone from Marchington for their Chinese Streamside Garden.

Showcased on BBC2’s “The Great Northern Garden Build” the garden celebrates the contribution Chinese horticulture has made to British garden design over 300 years.

Working closely with RHS designer, the team from Marchington Stone hosted several quarry visits to carefully select stone of the required size, colour and shape to fit the design brief.

MEBER NEWS

MEMBER NEWS

MEMBER NEWS
The mineral product sector’s best kept secret is still the unique and significant role that quarry restoration plays in long-term nature recovery and conservation.

Maybe that’s because by the time a well-restored quarry scheme has come to fruition, most people have forgotten that the site once provided materials for the places where they live, work and play. In fact, the chances are that your local nature reserve is the result of mineral extraction, as are many of the UK’s flagship conservation parks.

In England alone there are over 2,000 quarries, covering 64,000 hectares (0.1% of the country’s land area) all of which will be restored after quarrying. Each site is an opportunity to create a better landscape, where rare and endangered species can thrive – from wetlands and reedbeds to heathland and grassland, with hedgerows and many types of woodland.

In total, MPA members have already created over 83 sq km of priority habitat with a further 110 sq km pledged in approved restoration plans. Today more than 80 restored quarries make up the MPA’s ‘virtual’ national nature park. Restoration work has also spawned long-standing partnerships with numerous well-known conservation organisations, many of whom take over the running of restored sites as nature reserves for all to enjoy.

This unique ability to create areas for nature to thrive has taken on a whole new perspective since the introduction of the Government’s new Environment Bill which – amongst other things – will oblige all new developments in England to deliver an overall increase – a ‘net gain’ – in biodiversity.

No other industry comes close to being able to achieve this – indeed, the mineral products sector was restoring land to enhance nature decades before the term ‘net gain’ was coined. No surprise then that the MPA was the first trade association to publish a biodiversity strategy.

So this October the MPA will celebrate 50 years since the industry’s first restoration awards, showcasing the variety of ways in which former quarries are restored for the benefit of wildlife and people alike. It’s essential for the industry to recognise the exceptional achievements to date and, perhaps most important of all, celebrate the quarry managers, restoration managers and their teams who continue to deliver a long-standing legacy.

50 years of Quarries & Nature will be formally celebrated in October 2021. Follow @MineralProduct and @Quarries_Nature for news and updates.