



**Whatley and Westdown quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
14 October 2025: 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

DRAFT MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SC)
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Peter Shepherd (PS) Nunney Parish Council
- Ken Lovage Nunney parish Council
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Area General Manager – South Region
- Kyle Smith (KS) Heidelberg Materials, Unit Manager, Whatley Quarry
- Kirstie Gibbon (KG) Heidelberg Materials, Project Manager, Westdown Quarry
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- Jacob Smalley Heidelberg Materials, Graduate Trainee Landscape Architect
- Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers) Somerset Council
- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council (SC)
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials Regional Transport Manager
- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

- Welcome and Chair introductions
- Apologies
- Review of minutes from last meeting
- Matters arising from last minutes

2. Whatley quarry update (Vincent Pitt, Area General Manager, Mendip and Masters and Kyle Smith, Unit Manager, Whatley quarry)

- Great Elm residents' meeting re water levels
- Operational overview
- Logistics (including road and rail)
- Blasting
- Feedback
- Community giving update

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

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

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

- Westdown Proposals

6. Any other business

7. Dates of next meetings

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

- The Chair asked all attendees to introduce themselves as there were a number of new faces around the table.
- The Group reviewed the matters arising from the previous meeting and confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters arising:
 - An update on the work of the noise committee as well as recent noise monitoring are an agenda item for today's meeting.
 - A meeting has taken place with Great Elm residents re water levels in Nunney Brook and this is also on today's agenda.
 - Wild Trout Trust to be asked to a future meeting – outstanding action.

2. Whatley Quarry update

Great Elm residents' meeting

- VP set out that representatives from Heidelberg Materials (HM) Aggregate industries (now Holcim) and the Environment Agency (EA) had met with Great Elm residents on 28 August.
- A summary of the meeting had been shared with Richard King and HM is now reviewing his feedback on this.
- VP set out that, since the meeting, the Whatley team have been working closely with Holcim's Torr quarry to ensure that enhanced monitoring of the stream is introduced and that greater collaboration takes place between the quarries re managing water discharge.
- Steps taken include the development of Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) and improved communication channels with Torr quarry, as well as setting up a Whatley site working group. TM is also developing water model with EA to better understand local water courses. This will be shared in due course on completion. ACTION
- RK thanked VP for his and other's input at the August meeting, which he noted was attended by Anna Sabine MP and around 12 residents. He thought that views had been exchanged constructively and that residents' were impressed with the outcome, though they still had reservations about aspects of Holcim's approach.
- Discussion took place about the impact of the dry summer on water levels across the area.
- TM said that there was now increased awareness of both upstream and downstream issues and conditions and that HM is working to support the EA where it can. He also set out that during drought-like conditions there may not be enough water to 'go around' and that it would be about finding a balance.

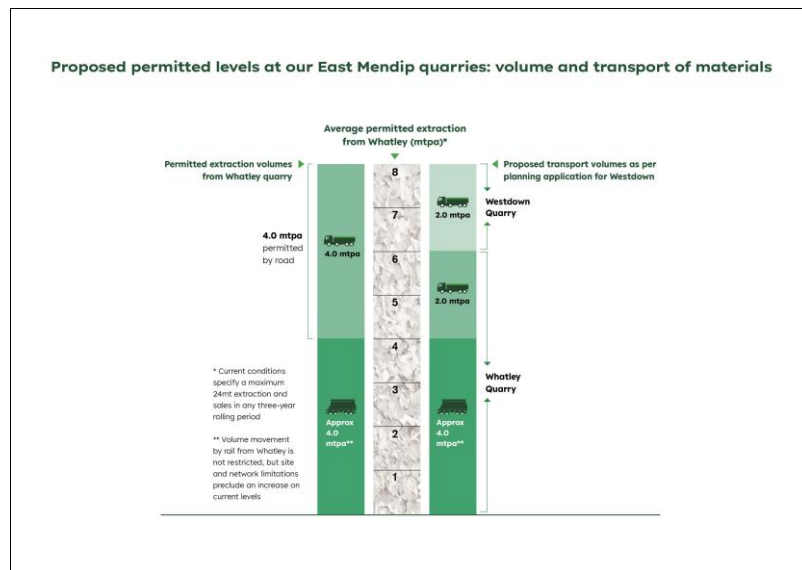
Due to RK having to depart by a set time, AH then covered activity at Vallis Vale:

- AH set out that the second and last monitoring visit of Mells Valley SAC bat cave in 2025 showed that 2 lesser horseshoe bats using the cave in July and 4 in October.

- AH explained that an increase in bats numbers has taken place which is positive. However, the final results of the 2024 static bat detectors are still awaited due to the sheer amount of data collected. AH added that HM has been advised by the ecologists to repeat surveys every other year – so in 2026 not 2025 – as having surveys a year apart is costly and won't add much to the data set.
- AH set out that Egford Brook riverbank and footpath repairs project proposal has been submitted to the EA and Natural England (NE). NE has approved the works but HM is still awaiting the permit from the EA. As a result, the works have had to be postponed until June 2026 due to the fish spawning season.
- AH said that a repeat hazardous tree survey has been completed and there are an additional 47 trees to be felled across the SSSI and non-SSSI areas of Vallis Vale. This work will be tendered and timings will be shared at a later meeting. ACTION
- A site meeting has been requested with NE to discuss latest hazardous tree survey and ongoing management of the woodland.
- Four fenced off coupes have been installed to protect natural regeneration alongside the tubing already in place.
- KL asked if the fencing is to protect the area from deer. AH confirmed that yes, this is the case. She added that deer can cause a lot of damage to young trees etc. However, HM and NE are keen to protect the natural regeneration of the area following Ash dieback, hence the need for the fencing and tubing of 350 naturally regenerated trees. .
- AH confirmed that 100 acorns have been collected and planted in pots as it is a mast year (when oak trees produce an unusually large number of acorns, a phenomenon that typically happens every 5-10 years and is triggered by a combination of weather conditions.)

Operational overview:

- KS provided an update on production and sales volumes year-to-date.
- Production and sales are above plan. This is helped due to continued destocking.
- Rail distribution of materials accounts for 61.5% of all materials leaving Whatley.
- AB asked about the split across road and rail volumes and how this would change once Westdown quarry reopens.
- RK added it was his understanding that rail volumes would not increase to extend the life of the quarry.
- TM reiterated the commitment previously shared not to increase permitted volumes across to two site above the current permitted levels for Whatley. Later in the meeting he shared the diagram below to reaffirm the information previously shared:



- VP set out that market demand will continue to impact on overall volumes across both quarries. He added that while there is a market for @4mtpa for markets served by rail (e.g. South East and areas without their own hard rock reserves), local demand/South West demand by road is unlikely to reach 4mtpa.

Capex

- KS set out that the new electric locomotive is due to arrive later this autumn, with Whatley the first quarry in the UK to be use one. VP advised it will only be used in the shunting yard.
- Whatley has held a naming competition with local primary schools to name the Loco. A winning entry has been decided upon and the schools will be informed soon. The winner and family will be invited to future naming ceremony.
- KS detailed plant upgrades underway ahead of supply to nationally significant infrastructure project.

Projects

- The tip recycling project is ongoing – Heidelberg Materials to provide detailed update at the next meeting. ACTION

Recruitment

- Electrical apprentice (16yrs+) started in September 2025.
- Continuing to recruit for a number of current roles, including 2 in the maintenance team (nights). Details at: www.heidelbergmaterials.com/en/careers
- Whatley is also recruiting for a mobile plant apprentice.
- Earlier in the meeting AH had introduced recent joiner Jacob Smalley (JS), Graduate Landscape Architect. JS is a Manchester University graduate and is originally from Frome. JS explained that he met AH when carrying out his dissertation on ash dieback disease and the management of it at Vallis Vale, before subsequently applying for the graduate role.

Noise monitoring

- VP gave an overview of the findings from the recent noise monitoring at Whatley quarry:
 - First noise monitoring implemented since significant reduction in operating hours in 2022 and previous investment in plant upgrades etc.
 - Noise conditions based on average dB over one hour period: L_{Aeq} (dB).
 - Db measured on logarithmic scale.
 - Noise conditions for Whatley quarry:
 - Daytime limit: 47 dB (06.00-20.00)
 - Night-time limit: 42 dB (20.00-06.00)
 - Noise monitoring carried out at 5 defined noise sensitive receptors (NSR) in June – ahead of many recent noise committee changes outlined being implemented.
- VP set out that the monitoring was the first carried out since significant reductions in operating hours introduced.
- SW asked about the level of noise complaints and if the quarry had heard from a Mells resident on the issue. TM confirmed that there had been one noise complaint in the last quarter but not from the Mells resident VP had met earlier in the year with SW.
- SW to forward correspondence that Mells PC had received allowing the quarry to respond on the issues raised.
- VP and TM summarised the findings of the noise monitoring:
 - Monitoring covers all sound – including bird song, planes overhead, traffic etc.
 - Full compliance at 4 NSRs (see map below) across both daytime and nighttime operations.
 - Some marginal exceedances during night-time only at Forty Winks, located close to the rail-siding.
 - Exceedances by small margins only, sometimes 1-3 dB, (which is imperceptible to human ear) and occasionally up to 4 dB (5 dB considered perceptible).
 - Understanding is that exceedances attributed to cumulative impact e.g. dawn chorus combined with quarry activities or combination of quarrying activities.
 - Key sources of quarry noise in periods of exceedances due to combination of quarry activities: wheel screech associated with freight train movements, vehicular noise, rocks falling onto stockpiles.
 - Findings helping to inform work of noise committee going forward.



- It was commented by PH that 30 years ago the noise limits were >70 dB.
- Further discussion followed on noise relating to blasting, whether more larger blasts will be carried out and if blasts are heard more in Nunney on cloudy days.
- TM set out that during the study one of the exceedances reported was attributed to the sound of the blast Alarm which is a safety requirement.

Noise committee

- KS provided an update on the work of the quarry noise committee first outlined last meeting. The committee was set up to focus on identifying and reducing noise pollution across all aspects of on-site activity. The committee continues to meet monthly and to date has identified a number of areas of improvement and now implementing adaptations.
- KS detailed the areas across the quarry that had been identified for adaptation/investment:
 - The quarry team is working closely with suppliers to see what reductions may be made to new mobile plant coming in to service on site in comparison to old machinery.
 - Installation of rubber lining on material bunkers has been agreed and is expected to be carried out in early next year.
 - Movements of certain machinery is now only being allowed during certain parts of the day. For example, drilling for the drill rigs involved in blasting operations now only takes place between 07.00 - 19.00.
 - The asphalt plant has submitted investment papers for a new feeder.
 - New training is being developed for noise reduction techniques on plant and equipment
- KS and VP also summarized the steps that had been taken at the rail head setting out that the noise monitoring had taken place before improvements implemented:

- Installation of new greasers on tracks to reduce the wheel screeching for train movements.
- Replacement run-round road – worn out tracks previously causing extra noise.
- Welded the joints on tracks to reduce movement of the tracks.
- Tamped the siding tracks, again to reduce movement.
- Developed a 10-year maintenance plan for planning priority works.
- Produced a list of noisy activities in Freight Liner L Loco workshop – resulting in reduced night activity, with others moved to Merehead.
- Examined how to keep doors closed in the wagon workshop. Doors now being shut as much as possible, with daily checks.
- Removal of Buck-eye wagons: these types of wagons must be banged together when being connected to others. 32 removed from Whatley at the end of February.
- They highlighted that the following steps are in development/being rolled out:
 - A diesel loco is to be replaced with an electric loco (the first in the UK) to reduce engine noise.
 - Right first-time approach – pushing backloaded trains to reduce overall train movement (This has been facilitated by a C25 weigher being installed at the end of March. A Capex paper is being now being developed for a brand new machine. A new rail weighbridge has also been purchased and is awaiting installation.)
 - Back bunker lining – quotes submitted into HPC capex.
 - Acceptance alarm to be changed to a light at night. Quotes obtained, waiting for installation.
 - Mainline locos to trial start/stop technology.
 - Insulation panels for workshops.
 - Insulation panels for loco engines.
 - Introduction of a silencer for shunter.
- EK asked if HGVs had tachographs to monitor performance/speed. This was confirmed.
- AC commented that Wainwrights carries out frequent speed monitoring.
- TM set out HM would be seeking to reduce speed limit on Bulls Green Link road to ensure safe movement of vehicles into and out of Westdown. This would include changes to signage which he would expect would be covered by a S278 agreement with Somerset Highways.
- AH asked about potential future improvements to the Beacon junction on the A37, supported by all the area's quarries. PG confirmed discussions on possible improvements with Somerset Council have taken place, but he was not sure what possible next steps will be. Lots to consider, including issues around the width of the road.
- VP confirmed the quarry worked hard to ensure HGVs drivers followed protocols, with recent activity including the sharing of HM's driver tool box talk with other Mendip Quarry Producers. This training documentation includes details of the HGV routes to follow.

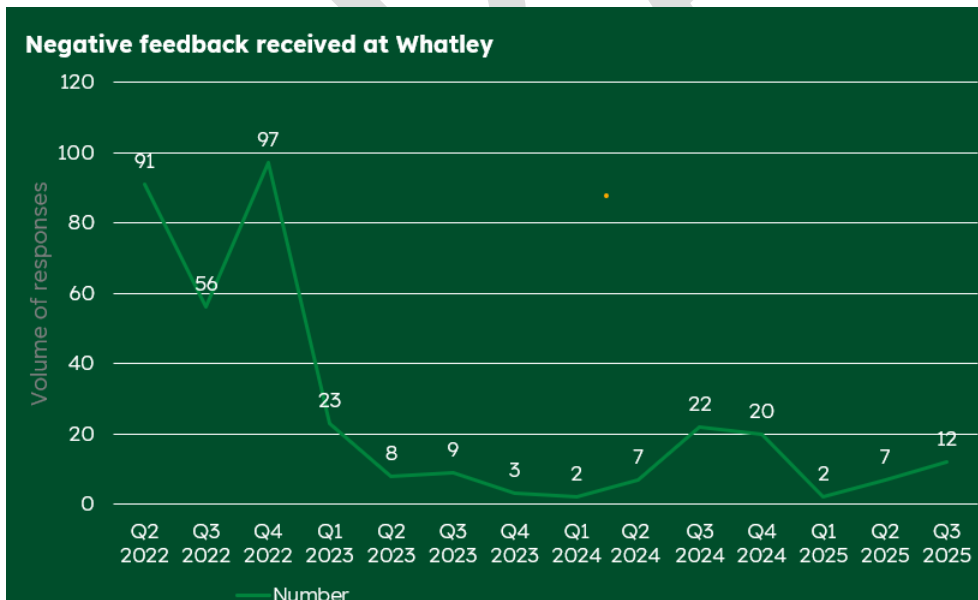
Blasting Operations:

- KS and VP provided an update on quarry blasting:
 - 86 blasts so far in 2025 with average vibration of 2.64mm/s PPV.
 - Highest blast PPV recorded on 03.07.2025:

- 2.05mm/s PPV (Chantry Church)
 - 4.05mm/s PPV (George Cottage)
 - 6.2mm/s PPV (Old School House)
- 98.84% of blasts have been at, or below, 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry).
- 100% of blasts were within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.
- KL asked if Peak Ground Acceleration (PGA) was used to measure blasts. PGA used in the design and construction of infrastructure to monitor vibration. It measures how much the earth shakes at any given point.
- VP responded that PPV measurement was a requirement as part of the quarry's operating conditions. He added that he would speak to EPC (blasting specialists) to better understand why PPV used not PGA. ACTION
- AB said that the reduction in blast vibration was noticeable as reflected in the reduction in the number of complaints. Chantry are, in the main, only now aware if on the south face and over 4.5mm/s PPV.
- AH asked about work on Spring Gardens. This was confirmed to be Network rail activity. SS to forward contact details to AC. ACTION

Feedback

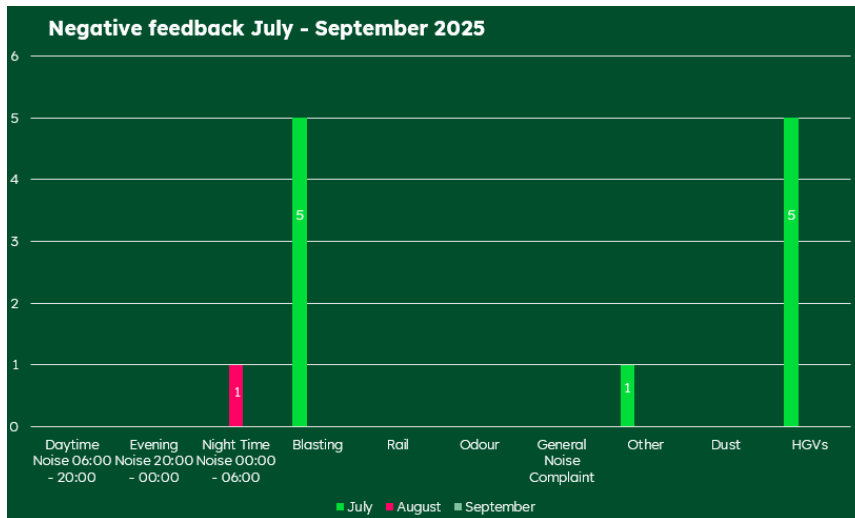
- SS provided information on feedback received: The data shared indicates an uptick in negative feedback. See diagrams shared at meeting below:



Negative feedback July - September 2025

8 pieces of negative feedback:

- Blasting: 5
- HGVs & traffic: 5
- Noise: 1
- Other (Environment): 1 Whatley Brook



- SS confirmed that most of the blasting complaints related to the blast on 3/07/25 discussed at the last meeting. The other related to a blast with a PPV of < 2mm/s.

Community update

- SS gave an update on recent charitable/community contributions.



- 3x picnic tables to Mells community shop and café
- Olga's Wood material donation
- Mells Digital
- Christmas tree for Whatley church and Mells

3. Westdown

KG sent apologies. A full update will be provided next meeting. Detail pertaining to Westdown also in sections 4 and 5 below.

4. Environmental Update

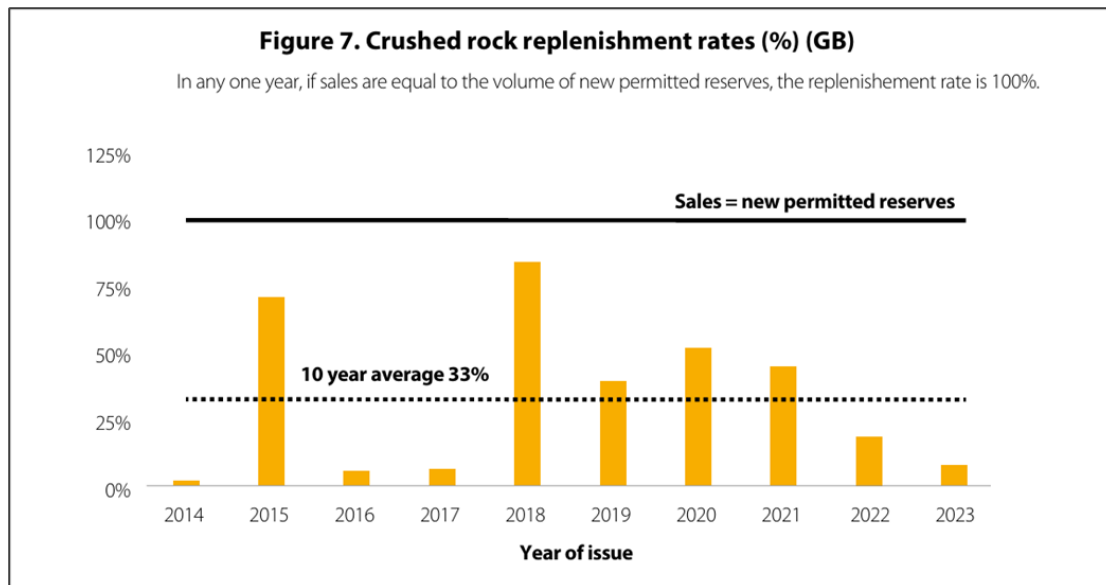
Vallis vale update given earlier in meeting.

- AH continued her environmental update outlining recent activity at Whatley:
 - Hazardous tree survey update carried out which has highlighted 113 trees that required felling across the Whatley landholding and the rail sidings.
 - One large ash tree has been felled near Finger Farm under ecological watching brief and 3 bat boxes will be erected to compensate for the loss of bat features identified in the tree
- AH also set out that at Asham Wood the first draft of an updated Woodland Management Plan has been reviewed and site visit held. HM's consultant is to now going to update the plan and we will then engage with Natural England (NE) Forestry Commission (FC) and Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) on the proposals. The main objectives are to manage ash die back, reinstate and improve the ride network to allow dormice to penetrate and use the woodland.
- AH confirmed that the ongoing management of Asham Wood falls outside of S106 arrangements for Westdown.
- EK asked about Ash dieback, with AH confirmed that trees are only felled if absolutely necessary, for instance if the tree is hazardous. Different agencies and different areas take a different approach. She confirmed that the very dry summer had not helped ash dieback regeneration in the Mendips.

5. Planning update

- TM confirmed that HM continues to work through the Section 106 agreements for Westdown quarry – 16 months after receiving approval to reopen it from Somerset Council at committee.
- He restated the commitment to volumes across the two sites (see page 4).
- He confirmed there was still a security presence on site at weekends at Westdown to deter access such as the illegal rave earlier in the year.
- He set out that, given the preparation work required on site, including the time sensitive nature of scheduling lots of the ecological work such as tree felling etc which is time sensitive, operations are now unlikely to commence at Westdown until late 2026/early 2027, placing more pressures on reserves from Whatley.

- He outlined to get to this juncture has taken 5 years in the planning process, plus work internally ahead of that.
- TM shared information from the Minerals Products Association (MPA) to highlight the supply gap in the aggregate sector (see below).



- TM went on to explain that, given this backdrop, attention within HM is turning to Whatley, where the 2011 Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP) remains undetermined by Somerset Council.
- Given the current 2030 end date and considerable additional reserves, much of which are not currently consented, HM is now talking to Somerset Council on how to move things forward. The intention will be to combine the ROMP with an quarry extension both in terms of time and excavation area – though remaining within the existing red line boundary of the site.
- TM reiterated company's approach to be open and transparent and more information will be provided at future meetings, including how HM will seek to consult with local people ahead of making any application.
- EK sought reassurance that there would be no more lorries on this road. TM referenced the commitment of 8 million tonnes per annum across the two site, with no more HGV volumes for both Whatley and Westdown than currently permitted for Whatley. (see page 4).
- PH asked about the link with Somerset Council's local plan. TM responded that the council needs 10 year supply of mineral. PH commented that he had not heard anything about an updated plan but would seek details from the Council.

6. AOB

- PS reiterated previous thanks for HM's donation towards Nunney playground which had recently been recognised with a Somerset Council award.

Summary of actions

- AH to share details of ash dieback tree felling.
- Wild Trout Trust to be asked to a future meeting
- TM to share water model being developed with EA on completion.
- VP to speak to EPC (blasting specialists) to better understand why PPV used rather than PGA.
- Heidelberg Materials to provide update at the next meeting re tip recycling project.
- SS to send NWR details to AC. (complete)

7. Next meeting date

- The next meeting will take place on **TUESDAY 20 JANUARY 2026** at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Meeting Ends

DRAFT