

NOTES OF THE MEETING TO DISCUSS MOOTLAW QUARRY PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Meeting was attended by Joe Nugent, Senior Planning Officer, Northumberland County Council and Chris Davenport, Agent for Mootlaw Quarry.

The quarry was mothballed in 2009 due to the economic downturn even though the minerals were not exhausted. Permissions still continued. 4 million tonnes of minerals are still to be worked and an extension of ten years is sought.

The quarry is currently full of water and before extraction could continue this would need to be pumped out to the two discharge points. The Environment Agency would be consulted and the de-watering would be carried out to their requirements.

The plant previously operating on site would be changed to mobile plant.

There is no immediate intention of re-opening the site.

Residents present expressed concerns over the protected species which are now found on the site i.e. Great Crested Newt, Ringed Plover and various bat species. Chris Davenport advised that licences need to be in place to carry out any work where these species are found and further surveys would be undertaken, if necessary. Joe Nugent advised that the NCC Ecologist had sent comments to Chris Davenport requesting further information from an ecology point of view. NCC Planning Department would be looking to extend the deadline for a decision until July/August to enable additional work to be carried out, from a seasonal point of view.

Five objections had been received for application number 14/03883/VARCCM (Variation of condition 1 (period of time of mineral extraction and restoration)). This would now be assessed by the Area Planning committee at their meeting on 3rd February 2015.

It was noted that some areas of the quarry site had been restored (approx 40%) and signed off.

It is proposed that up to 300 lorry loads would be leaving the site which equates to 600 movements in any one day. The quarry would not be looking to increase the workload and would be similar to previous. The traffic would be dealt with as before. The haul road would still be in use. This is a separate planning application and Joe Nugent advised that he would be looking to deal with this application under delegated powers. If the haul road was no longer required then it would be stripped out and returned to agricultural land or it could be retained however new permission would be required.

Concern from Ingoe resident – there is only one way out of the village and the increase in lorry activity would have a negative impact on their quality of life i.e. dog walking, riding, and cycling. Ingoe is on the National Cycle Route and the safety aspect is not dealt with in the Transport Assessment. Joe Nugent advised that a particular route cannot be specified through planning conditions however a transport assessment will state how many vehicles will travel north and south. Chris Davenport advised that most of the traffic is encouraged to travel south. Joe Nugent advised that they could look at mitigation i.e. no vehicle movements at certain times (school runs).

Joe Nugent advised that if the quarry restarts there will be a liaison group set up to deal with issues and complaints. They would normally meet every 3 months and deal with issues such as noise, dust, traffic movements, lighting. Under the existing planning consent there was a community liaison group and this is a standard condition.

Question – Does the restoration plan incorporate the existing bio diverse habitat.

Chris Davenport advised that there is provision in the current restoration plan for the Peregrine Falcon and Ringed Plover.

Question – Is there potential for dialog with the operator regarding the restoration plan.

Chris Davenport advised that the operator is looking to extract mineral and they are bound by the landowner to restore to their requirements however they try to encourage bio diversity.

Matfen Parish Council

Ward 1 – Fenwick, Ingoe, Ryal. Ward 2 – Matfen

Joe Nugent advised that should planning be refused then the quarry have the right to appeal. The appeal would be heard by the Planning Inspectorate, Bristol. What would their view be of a dormant quarry. In terms of operating and restoring a site an extension of time allows a mineral review to be undertaken and the restoration plan would have to be reconsidered.

Members of the public wishing to make comments on restoration of the quarry should forward their comments to Joe Nugent who will pass on to NCC's Ecologist and revisions could be made. Chris Davenport also advised that he would welcome comments on restoration and would pass them onto their Ecologist.

It was questioned whether the quarry was re-opening due to the possible dualling of the A1 where most of the traffic would be travelling north from the quarry. Joe Nugent advised that should this happen then the issue of traffic movements could be raised at the community liaison meetings but there is no legal obligation. As the dualling of the A1 is not guaranteed to go ahead or if Mootlaw Quarry would have the contract then this cannot be taken into account. The quarry already has consent to use the current road network and a large proportion of the vehicles would be travelling south.

Question - Has the control of dust been improved since the last operation of the quarry.
Chris Davenport advised that there is continual dust monitoring and dust control and air quality would be a planning condition. The mobile plant proposed on the site are newer and up to date. Wheel washers would be on site to prevent transfer of mud to the road network.

Question – What are to happen to the existing buildings on site?
Chris Davenport advised that the site office would be kept for the workforce and it is quite possible that the old buildings would be repaired.

Site Visit – Joe Nugent advised that he had authorised for a planning committee members site visit to the quarry and haul road. No date has been agreed as yet. Members of the parish council would be invited to attend but would not be able to ask questions. Anyone else wishing to attend would have to be authorised by the landowner/quarry.

Question – If planning consent is not permitted would the operator have to re-instate the site.
Joe Nugent advised that the operator has a legal obligation to the landowner under the terms of the lease. NCC could look at enforcement for restoration.