

Linhay Hill Quarry Local Liaison Group

Notes of Site Visit

Date and Time: 6 November 2024
10am

Location: On site, see opening paragraph

Present:	Barry Wilson	Glendinning, Managing Director
	Mark Glendinning	Glendinning, Operations Manager
	Cllr Don Distin	Ashburton Town Council,
	Cllr Stuart Rogers	Teignbridge District Council
	Pete Jenkins	School for Inspiring Talents, Place House
	Graham Burge	Alston Cottage
	Dawn Battle	Fine Turf
	Jon Battle	Fine Turf
	Steve Couch-Finnemore	Waye Resident
	Neil Turner	Neighbour
	Philip Vogel	Neighbour
	Helen Staddon	Westcountry Rivers Trust
	Doug Munford	Westcountry Rivers Trust
	Anthea Hoey	Glendinning

1. Venue

The arrangement was to meet in the car park at Glentor and combine into as few cars as possible to travel in convoy through the quarry and up the ramp to Waye Lane. We parked at the top of Waye Lane and from there walked to view the preparatory works in progress before Stage 1a of the quarry extension can start.

Before setting off Barry explained the delay in opening Waye Lane. This is due to a variation in the long term lease of Place House and grounds to the School which started back in the 1990s. The variation occurred about 20 years ago, when the school asked to lease an additional area of land alongside the drive to Place House to form the staff car park. On completion, a fence was erected around the edge of the car park and it was assumed by both sides that the fence was on the line of the leased area. It was only during preparation of the adoption papers for Waye Lane when a detailed comparison was made between the line of the fence and the line of the leased land, that it was realised that the car park hadn't used the whole of the leased area and that part of Waye Lane had been built on the remaining strip of land.

The adoption agreement with DCC cannot be finalised until this discrepancy has been rectified. Both parties are in agreement about what has to be done, but legislation designed to control the sell-off of school playing fields means that the School cannot relinquish any part of its land without consent from the Secretary of State for Education. Following this the Land Registry records have to be updated, and these two steps are the cause of the delay. Meanwhile the adoption agreement with DCC has been drawn up ready to sign as soon as this process is completed.

We are hopeful now that this can be achieved in the next few weeks, maybe before the end of November. However, the delay means that we cannot have the interval between opening Waye Lane and closing Alston Lane that we had originally planned and hence the changeover will be much quicker than we would have liked. It also means that Glendinning has had to organise traffic control on Alston Lane whilst the hedgebank transplanting takes place as the road is still open to traffic.

2. Site visit

We then set off to see the hedgebank transplanting that has been done in Alston Pond field. We also viewed the hedgebank transplanting operation in progress, with the hedgebank being taken from beside Alston Lane and being placed alongside the new access to Alston Farm.

Here is a photograph taken at the start of the walk.



Before going into Alston Pond field, Barry explained that the presence of dormice in the hedgebanks within the extension area means that the hedgebank transplanting is subject to the Natural England (NE) Licencing regime. The application for the licence could not be submitted to NE until the planning conditions on landscape planting and management were approved by the DNPA. Delays by both organisations in issue of the approvals in this paper trail meant that the start of work on site was postponed by about a month from mid-September to mid-October.

Unfortunately, the early stages of work coincided with a spell of very wet weather. Hence very difficult conditions in Alston Pond field, which Graham Burge confirmed was the 'wettest field on the farm'. Fortunately, we are able to hire in a tracked dumper, which helped overcome the situation. The field will be reseeded in the spring. The photo shows some of the relocated hedgerows planted around the enlarged ponds in this field.



Barry explained that the hedge off-cuts have been laid on top of the hedge to protect it from deer and to provide additional shelter for the regrowing hedge.

Here is a photo of the tracked dumper:



3. Alston Lane

We then went down to Alston Lane to see the hedgebank translocation operation in progress. Mark described how the whole operation has been designed following a strategy to maintain and improve connectivity for dormice. The strategy includes the planting which was done in Stage 0. In preparation for translocating, the hedge is cut back to about 30cm in height, with the offcuts grabbed and put to one side for use later as witnessed in Alston Pond field. Before cutting back each section of hedgebank has to be carefully checked by an ecologist and any dormice captured and released to undisturbed hedges elsewhere. All cutting back is done in a specified direction, with a maximum of a specific length each day.

Here are photos of the hedgebank being cut back, which were taken a little earlier.



The next step is that lengths of hedgebank are picked up by a tracked excavator with a toothless bucket and a 'check blade' to help keep the hedgebank in one piece as it is transferred onto a trailer and transported to the receptor site. The trailer takes to three sections of hedge at a time.



Mark then described how the ground where the hedgebank had been taken from is carefully graded back to the edge of Alston Lane, with a ditch formed behind to prevent run off from the field flowing onto the surface of the lane. See photos below.



We then walked along the old farm access lane and joined the new access lane to see where the hedgebank was being replanted. Here, following preparation of the ground beforehand, each section of hedgebank is carefully lifted off the trailer by a small excavator with a specially adapted bucket that can turn 360° and tip either way to enable the driver to neatly place the sections in place and then gently tamp the sides to form a new hedgebank. The photo below shows this in progress.



Barry explained that the tracked dumper isn't needed here, because access to the donor site is from the lane, rather than through a field.

4. Blasting

During the walk, Neil Turner mentioned that he had observed a change in his perception of the quarry blasting. He emphasised that he wasn't complaining, but the blasts seemed more noticeable, and he was curious to know whether techniques had changed. Mark explained that indeed the technique had changed with electronic detonators now used with an explosive emulsion enabling precise timing of blasting in each drill hole. This minimises chemical use, blasting effects and improves fragmentation of the limestone.

Mark added that he anticipates further differences when quarrying in Stage 1a starts because blasting will be much closer to the surface. Glendinning is alive to this and looking at the best available techniques to control the effects.

5. Next steps

The next step, which will be in the spring when the weather and ground conditions improve, will be topsoil stripping and the removal of overburden, which will be placed in a bund parallel to the A38. The bund footprint and haul routes from the stage 1a area will be prepared by removal of the topsoil and installation of drainage.

Extraction of the limestone will start after that. A new water main has been installed leading from Caton Lane across to Alston Lane so that the water main alongside Alston Lane can be removed.

6. Date and format/venue of next meeting

The next Local Liaison Group meeting is due in spring 2025. The date and actual venue/format for this meeting will be decided nearer the time.

Many thanks to all who attended. We hope you found it interesting and useful.