

015/09

Novington Sandpit Residents' Committee

Minutes of Meeting Held on Thursday 7.30pm, 12th February 2009 Plumpton Village Hall – Committee Room

Present: Jeanie Muddle, Richard Muirhead, Paul Nicholson, Julie Russell.

1. Apologies

These had been received from Charles Dampney, Veronica Harris, Tony Hutson Tom Hawthorne, Amanda Inglis, Graham Inglis, Carole Nicholson, Katie Wride

2. Minutes

Those present approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November.

3. Matters Arising

An approach had been made to East Chiltington Parish Council concerning possible funding for the defence of any future planning application for the site. This has been agreed in principle by the Parish Council at £250. Paul would write to thank the Parish Council for this commitment. Full justification would be given for the expenses as and when required in the future. Paul will again request a similar commitment from Plumpton Parish Council.

4. Activities on Site

Paul Nicholson had visited site on 26th January, a day which saw a lull in the very heavy rain which had fallen for the previous 10 days or so. Flooding had occurred in the metal store areas and was being dealt with at the time of the visit.

The lagoons appeared as high as seen in recent years and the site was proving very difficult to work in such circumstances. Stock piles were very wet and all excavated sand was having to be stockpiled in greater quantities to facilitate this drying.

The eastern extension has been fully bunded and the bunds top soiled which should promote a very quick greening of the structures. Apparently, the bunds are not as loose to Stantons Cottage as initially thought. The direction of digging had not yet been finalised in the extension area.

Business throughput was still quite low as the economic slow-down and its impact on the construction industry were now quite acute.

Some work had been done to strengthen the pit boundary adjacent to Long Wood after what Paul thought had been a partial collapse of the inclined face of the pit. This work had been successfully completed and no further operations were envisaged in that area.

The site team indicated that they felt that the village was becoming more positive towards the sandpit operation; this was very welcome.

5. Traffic

Paul noted that he had received no complaints regarding the vehicular movement to/from the sandpit in the last few months. Heavy vehicle traffic continued to use Plumpton Lane, and although some of these vehicles were using the sandpit, it would appear that the majority were not. Wear and tear on the road surfaces and verges was significant but it seems that the majority of this was caused by non-site traffic.

6. Ecology

Tony Hutson had communicated previously that he had nothing to report.

The meeting recalled that, in response to our letter on the Conservation Management Plan, Jeremy Patterson of ESCC had made the following comments to Paul - *“A management committee is due to be set up and perhaps these issues could be discussed at such a forum in more detail. I am copying Mr Douglas Symes into this reply and would welcome his comments as to when such a committee will be set up and if/when the next liaison committee will be arranged.”*

Paul had asked Mr Patterson if there had been a response but Mr Patterson had confirmed that none had been received.

At the previous meeting there had been some concern about the run off from the sand into one of the lagoons and the possible silting up thereof. It had not been possible to examine this at the recent site visit due to the conditions but this would be followed up as soon as possible.

Whilst Paul felt that the on-site management was good, incidents have and will continue to occur. One such, recently in February, had been noted by the Sussex Ouse Conservation Society (“SOCS”) during its monthly measurement of local streams. The Environment Agency had been alerted but due to an administrative error at the Agency, the alert had not been followed up. Paul was asked to confirm if SOCS sends its regular measurement results to the Environment Agency and whether they should also be available to the Sandpit operator.

Action: Paul Nicholson

7. Village Action Plan (“VAP”)

Paul noted that, in association with one of the VAP environment teams, he was researching the availability of grant funding for community projects. This was relevant to the sandpit as the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (“ALSF”) is directly funded by tax paid by quarry operators on the tonnage extracted from site. The ALSF is not applicable to all types of quarry sites but the Novington sandpit does qualify and Paul has confirmed that the site is registered for the levy.

The types of projects that may be appropriate for funding through this source are being researched. Most come through funds from Natural England and the rules are quite strict. A lot of work would be required before any grant is made but it is hoped that initial findings would be available in a few weeks. Paul had already been in contact with Meg Stroude and the head of planning in ESCC to seek assistance in this from Council. All such funding is very much community based and the involvement of the community has to be demonstrated. The Plumpton Village Action Plan interface and the involvement of Plumpton and East Chiltington PCs is critical

to meeting this stipulation. A separate background note is attached to these minutes. Paul would be keen for any volunteer to step forward to assist.

8. Date of next Residents' Committee Meeting

This will be held on **Thursday 21st May 2009 at 7.30pm** in the Committee Room in the Village Hall.

9. Any other business

There was no other business so the meeting closed at 9pm.

Aggregate and Landfill Levy

Does this apply to the Novington Sandpit Operation?

DEFRA states that **The Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund (“ALSF”)** aims to reduce the environmental impact of the extraction of aggregates and to deliver benefits to areas subject to these impacts. The extraction of aggregates from the environment (sand, gravel and crushed rock) represents 82 per cent by tonnage of all non-fossil fuel minerals extracted from the land and sea in the UK. The objectives of the Fund support the delivery of DEFRA’s goals of tackling the causes and consequences of climate change and securing a healthy natural environment.

Defra has set the objectives of the fund and allocated funding to delivery partners. The delivery partners are obliged to publicise their funding schemes.

The objectives of the Fund for the period **April 2008 to March 2011** are:

1. **Quarries** - To reduce the environmental footprint of quarries and to take advantage of the opportunities they offer.
2. **Marine** - To reduce the environmental footprint of marine extraction.
3. **Resource Use** - To deliver more sustainable use of aggregates.
4. **Transport** - To reduce the environmental footprint of the transport of aggregates.
5. **Communities** - To deliver benefits to communities affected by extraction.

The way that funds are allocated appears to be to local authorities and other bodies that are supporting projects of demonstrable public benefit in areas within the county that suffer environmental impacts of aggregates extraction.

At the present time funds are available in 18 local authority areas although East Sussex does not appear to be a leader in this area. It is interesting to note that ‘Communities’ grants have ranged as follows:

- Community playgrounds
- Repairs to community buildings
- Creation and interpretation of wildlife habitats
- Restoration and interpretation work at quarries

At first glance it would seem that these sort of projects might be of interest to Plumpton/East Chilmington, but further research is required to ascertain what criteria would be used to test the eligibility of such funding for our communities.

The ALSF has also funded research and development projects to advance knowledge and the techniques for more environmentally friendly production transport and use of aggregates. It is important that the results of this work are disseminated to the people who can put them into practice and translate

them to improved outcomes for the environment. The website gives a review of ALSF research carried out to date, which distils the results of some of the best projects. In East Sussex, for example, the ASLF recently has issued grants for '*enhancing biodiversity and access at Dungeness Nature Reserve at Lydd*' and '*a grant towards a new hall at Udimore Hall, East Sussex*'

Given that Novington Sandpit is the only site in the county for good quality sand, and that the two communities are going to be affected by the traffic arising from the site and noise nuisance, it would seem appropriate to see if grant funding can be made available.

The next steps being pursued by Paul and the Village Action Plan team are:

- 1 To establish the criteria used to determine if a community is eligible for such funding:
- 2 To follow up with other communities how they have progressed their grant application. Contact has been made with a successful applicant near Bristol.
- 3 Contact Action for Communities in Rural England for advice
- 4 Prepare a recommendation to the Parish Councils of Plumpton and East Chiltington and Village Action Plan team on the way forward.

Timescales

The 2008/9 grant year has ended and any new applications must be made for the 2010 year which is to open shortly (contact has already been made re this new year). Grant schemes are short life projects and delivery would be required within months rather than years.

PWN

February 2009