



Update from The Hills Group – October 2020

The Hills Group continues to take the necessary actions to ensure that our operations remain Covid-19 secure and are in line with changing Government guidance.

Overall, Hills' operations have responded well to the immense challenges presented so far by the pandemic. All sites and offices across our operating divisions are open and our employees' co-operation in following new ways of working ensures that the company as a whole is able to work and operate safely during this time.

As we enter autumn and approach winter, it is incumbent on each and every one of us to heed the Government's message on 'hands, face, space' and the importance of getting tested if experiencing the symptoms of Coronavirus. These measures, along with adhering to self-isolation requirements and social distancing laws will reduce the likelihood of additional lockdowns being imposed.

Hills' priority remains to keep our employees, customers and the community in which we work safe, whilst ensuring that we deliver products, services and customer care to the highest standard and with minimal impact.

Our Group board continues to meet regularly to ensure our business continuity plans are adaptable to the quick-pace changes being experienced whilst being mindful of long term resilience and potential future situations.

If you have any queries please contact us, and in the meantime, take care and keep safe.

Telephone: 01793 781200 / email: info@hills-group.co.uk

Mike Hill
Chief Executive



Mortimer Quarry Autumn Newsletter 2020

Change of Quarry Manager

Kevin Cleall has retired from his role as Quarry Manager and we wish him well in his retirement. Kevin managed the Quarry since its opening in Spring 2018. The site is currently under the management of Olly Thompson, a Hills Quarry Manager who usually works at Hills' Cerney Wick Quarry in Gloucestershire and he is working alongside Frank Rodriguez, Site Foreman.

A new Quarry Manager has been appointed to start from Monday 2 November.

Current work on site

Mineral continues to be extracted from Phase 1 as planned and operations will be moving south into Phase 2 later this year. This will allow the southern section of Phase 2 to be restored and the intention is to make sure the ground conditions are correct for the planting scheme to establish successfully.

Application to vary planning condition submitted

Hills Quarry Products has submitted a planning application to Hampshire County Council Variation of condition 3* to permission BDB/73759 for the revision of the end date to 31 October 2032. You can search for Ref 20/02636/CMA [here](#).

The original grant of planning consent dates back to 2011 and was dependent on a S106 legal agreement being completed between the County Council and the landowner, Englefield Estate. As a result of the original applicant Hanson withdrawing from the project part way through, complex discussions resulted in the planning consent finally being issued in 2015, although the end date in Condition 3 was not updated to reflect the passing of time.

Hills, as the Estate's new partner, has therefore submitted a planning application to vary Condition 3 to revise the end date to 2032. This reflects the same 14 year period of anticipated extraction and restoration as originally planned, albeit from the date that mineral was first extracted in 2018.

Additionally, following discussion with Hampshire County Council, Hills has applied to update a number of the planning conditions to reflect that requirements in those conditions have been discharged; and to provide a more accurate set of conditions for the current development with respect to compliance of approved schemes and similar.

*Existing Condition 3 states: *The extraction of sand and gravel within the southern extension shall cease and the site, including the silt lagoons within the eastern extension, be restored in accordance with condition (23) by 30 September 2023, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Mineral Planning Authority.*

Liaison committee

The minutes of the Mortimer Quarry local liaison committee meetings are available to read [here](#). These meetings enable Hills to provide updates to community representatives on the current workings at the quarry, as well as face-to-face discussion and to answer any queries.

Donation to Silchester Parish Council

Hills has donated 30 tonnes of aggregate from Mortimer Quarry to repair the parking area outside the parish's Methodist Chapel. Chris Gunnell, Clerk to Silchester Parish Council has commented "the parking area looks very good and everyone concerned is appreciative of your contribution".



An aggregate donation from Hills Quarry Products has improved the car park outside the local Methodist Church, organised by Silchester Parish Council.

FOR REFERENCE:

As we progress through each phase of the quarry, we repeat certain activities many times over. This guide explains some of the terminology we use in our workings:

Timber harvesting: Mortimer Quarry is located within part of the large area of commercial forest owned by Englefield Estate. The timber is harvested in phases to allow the sand and gravel to be excavated following which the phases are restored to mixed forest including biodiversity areas with public access.

Soil stripping: This is the removal of top soils which are placed into amenity bunds on the site. Archaeologists are on site to record any finds as the work is undertaken. See [more](#) on how Hills has worked with archaeologists on other sites.

Creating bunds: The topsoils in each working phase are not removed from the site, but are retained within the area and used to create amenity bunds. These bunds are a requirement of the planning permission and they create a visual barrier into the site along with helping to reduce noise. The bunds will become covered with vegetation such as ferns and heathers which are in keeping with the surroundings. Once the sand and gravel has been extracted, the bunds are used in the restoration of the site. For more details on the overall restoration of Mortimer Quarry and examples of other Hills' restoration projects – click [here](#)

Ecological mitigation: Moving reptiles, (also known as translocation) is always undertaken by qualified ecologists who first erect special fencing to prevent any additional reptiles entering the donor site. This is done before any timber harvesting takes place and remains in place until ecologists are satisfied that the site is 'clear'. Reptile refugia (such as roofing felt and corrugated metal tins) are set up in the donor site and inspected regularly. Any reptiles found in the refugia are moved by the ecologists to the receptor sites – this take a number of months. This is followed by habitat manipulation works, under the ecologists' supervision, where vegetation is cleared to ground level using a tractor-mounted flail followed by clearance of the top layer of vegetation using an excavator. The top soils are then placed into piles (called windrows) and the ecologists inspect and monitor these to capture the final remaining reptiles. Click [here](#) to see the ecology reports for Mortimer Quarry.