

Quarry update 05 November 2018

The Parish Council conducted an investigation into the Aardvark plant hire operation at School Wood Quarry, Dunchideock Barton, after villagers raised strong concerns, in particular about planning compliance and potential road safety issues at the 2018 Annual Parish meeting in May. A robust public discussion was held at the July 17th PC meeting, at which the owner and operator attended to answer questions. Since this meeting, there have been further conflict reported between Aardvark lorries and other road users, and we felt an update in respect of the quarry might be helpful.

Prior to the July 17th PC meeting Councillor McCarthy sought advice from an independent planning colleague of his and also spoke on two occasions to the Planning Compliance Officer at TDC, Stephen Hobbs. Mr Hobbs confirmed that the operation is planning-compliant in respect of Land Use Class, as far as Teignbridge District Council are concerned.

Planning permission for the entrance splay was granted with three Conditions in August 2016, Condition 2 of which required surfacing to be completed *'in such a way as to prevent water, mud, stones or other debris entering the public highway'*. There was a robust discussion at the meeting about the lack of compliance with this condition and it was agreed that the work would be completed over Christmas 2018 when the operation would be shut down to allow the work to take place. The PC has expressed its considerable disappointment that compliance with this condition has taken so long.

The PC has also on several occasions expressed concern to the landowner / operator in regard to road safety; particularly with regard to potential conflict between fast-moving downhill traffic and slow-moving lorries emerging from the quarry entrance. During an on-site discussion with the operator / landowner and Devon Highways in June 2018, the PC made it clear that its preferred solution would be a powered/lit hazard warning sign on the downhill approach to the entrance which could potentially be activated by Aardvark drivers when leaving the site entrance. It was felt that this would be by far the best way of slowing approaching traffic down above the quarry entrance. An unlit 'Lorries Turning' sign has recently been fitted on the left hand side just above the final downhill bend on the road descending from Haldon Hill.

Conflict between Aardvark vehicles and other road users (in particular buses) on various local lanes continues to be reported. Apart from the nuisance issue and problems of occasional hedge bank damage, there is clearly also a safety issue. The operators stated at the July 17th meeting that one of the reasons for lorry-bus conflict might have been associated with a changed bus timetable; the Aardvark drivers were reportedly then equipped with an updated bus schedule. It was also agreed at the July 17th meeting that Aardvark would investigate other mechanisms that might be implemented to minimise conflict - for example by making sure

most of their vehicle movements take place outside peak times – i.e. very early and late in the day. Unfortunately there have been several recent reports of Aardvark vehicles continuing to come into conflict with other road users between mid-morning and mid-afternoon and on one occasion an Aardvark vehicle was hired out to a private individual and got into some difficulty whilst on a narrow section of lane towards Lower Ashton. The PC is therefore of the view that the conflict issues have not been satisfactorily resolved.

In the final analysis the PC has no powers of enforcement, so beyond discussing planning issues with TDC and road safety with Devon Highways, there is little more that can be done beyond continuing to express our concern to the operators as and when issues arise, and to and try and work with them to find acceptable solutions.