

9 July 2009

Mr Peter Stockton
Strategic Planning Officer
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority
Yorebridge House, Bainbridge
Leyburn
DL8 3EL

Dear Sir

Cessation Of Work On Yorkshire Dales Minerals And Waste Development Plan Document

We refer to your letter of 29 June addressed to our Lanark office and comment as follows.

You state that the cessation of this work is “not considered to be a serious problem”. We find this rather strange given that all the information from the British Geological Survey and other government sources indicates that consented reserves of construction and industrial minerals are being depleted due to the shortage of new consents.

Minerals can only be worked where they occur. Very often this happens to be in prominent landscapes such as those found in national parks. That does not necessarily mean that quarries will harm the environment or affect the visual aspects of the surrounding countryside. There is adequate environmental and planning legislation to ensure that society’s needs do not override the environmental or visual aspects of a national park.

Indeed it is often said that quarrying puts more into the environment than it takes out. Over 50% of SSSI sites started as quarries. Numerous RSPB and other nature reserves were once quarries and old quarries are now being used as sites of special geological interest.

Your letter goes on to imply that you have a policy of a presumption against new quarrying consents based on the assumption that quarries are a negative factor in the environment and should not be allowed to operate in a national park. However, national parks policy was never predicated against quarrying. Indeed, quarries were operating in “national parks” long before they were so designated. It is only recently that nimbysism and a lack of knowledge about our country’s resources that has fostered the notion that national parks be kept sterile for outsiders to visit from time to time.

It is noted that you are to review a detailed housing policy and presumably this means new houses in the national park. If this leads to new residents coming in then we ask where will they gain employment and where will the materials to build these houses be sourced? The priority must be in providing rural jobs for the rural community and for materials to be sourced as locally as possible. Quarrying is a rural industry just the same as agriculture and tourism. This important fact must not be overlooked, particularly in these difficult economic times. Furthermore, there is a requirement to cut down on the amount of time people spend travelling to and from their workplace.

Your letter goes on to state that Swinden Quarry has been given an extension because of the closure of another large limestone quarry at nearby Threshfield. This met with your policy of delivering overall environmental benefits. Is the environmental benefit in the restoration of the old quarry as a public amenity (which confirms my earlier point about old quarries adding to the environment)? It can hardly be the reduction of consented tonnage if you have simply transferred the reserve to another site! The British Aggregates Association is normally against giving up one site to open another as it can result in increased road miles and leave SME companies vulnerable to monopolies and restrictive practices. Currently the EC Competitions Directorate is investigating a number of giant cement companies (some of whom own quarries in the Yorkshire Dales National Park) for illegal restrictive practices. Your policy could unintentionally encourage this.

To conclude, we welcome the fact that you will operate a minerals strategy, which conforms to regional and national policy. By this we understand that you will, without prejudice take into account local needs and circumstances. We in turn maintain that quarry operations can be a valuable part of any national park, so long as they fully comply with modern environmental legislation and any specific planning conditions.

Yours faithfully

Richard Bird
Executive Officer