



Press Releases

from the British Aggregates Association

An enlightening day in Durham

Monday, 05 August 2013, Mineral Planning

This year's British Aggregates Association conference again featured a wide variety of speakers from across the industry. Peter Huxtable reports on the day and the areas covered



Peter Barkwell delivered an upbeat address. Credit: BAA

The British Aggregates Association (BAA) meetings and AGM took place this year at the Ramside Hall Hotel in Durham on 24 June. It had a record turn-out of 95 out of a rising membership of 108. Seventy of these members run UK-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which represent 13% of national aggregate output with almost 300 active quarries. It was a day-long event with 12 exhibition stands and ten presentations covering a range of topical concerns.

Martin Layer of Smiths Bletchington opened the morning session, updating delegates on inert waste and restoration issues. The BAA and other industry bodies continue to meet with DEFRA and Environment Agency officials to look for a more consistent and fact-based approach through RGN13 guidance. A recent 2013 joint industry survey shows at least 8-10 million tonnes per year are needed to meet statutory quarry restoration commitments. It indicated that an approach oriented to recovery rather than disposal for restoration to agriculture as well as biodiversity is needed, especially when government waste reduction targets are increasing.

Easing the regulatory burden

Jim Davies, Midlands principal planning officer at the Environment Agency, also commented on this in his presentation and volunteered to act as a contact point to operators having problems with the agency. He outlined the importance of easing regulatory burden and the red tape initiative as well as the new 2013 Water Act. Abstraction licence exemption from quarry dewatering is again subject to further agency and DEFRA consultation starting in September with a view to a final decision and possible implementation by April 2014.

There were two presentations on environmental aspects. Liz Harris provided an update on the Nature After Minerals (NAM) project that has recently been boosted by a new RESTORE funding stream after the government axed the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund. Both NAM and Ponds Conservation have BAA support and endorsement. Martin Layer talked about the relaunch of the latter at the Freshwater Habitats Trust in a Westminster event on 12 September and on Radio 4 on 22 September –with ample opportunity for BAA member sponsorship.

Phil James, executive director of the Institute of Quarrying and Mineral Products Qualification Council introduced the new PRIME project, which offers ‘total professional development’ from director level down to grass root operatives.

Thomas Clifford from Atkins elaborated on his prize-winning research on managing rockfall in quarries, which enabled firms to assess and manage this in a practical and cost-effective way that minimised safety risks and maximised extraction with geotechnical techniques and LiDAR monitoring.

The morning session closed with a talk by Eric Darlow MBE, chair of the BAA Safety Awards Committee, who reported on the success of the external audit scheme, which is approved by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). It is now in its sixth year with more than a third of BAA members already participating. The scheme offers improved site standards, good PR and low-cost insurance, which is important with the recent rise in health and safety prosecutions and new HSE fees. Darlow encouraged greater member take-up and announced that BAA and HSE have launched a joint-venture voluntary participation scheme. He presented awards to five firms (Huntsmans, Henry Streeter, Johnston’s, Middleton and Tillicoultry Quarries) and the first three-year renewal award to Raymond Brown Group.

The afternoon session was opened by David Gartside, a main board HSE director and engineer with a long career in operations with ICI/Astra Zeneca. He spoke about the HSE’s evolving work with industry, noting that a recent review has shown the --framework as fit for purpose but found an over-interpretation and application of regulations. This needed attention to produce a sensible and proportionate approach to keep people safe at work. The Mythbusters Challenge Panel has been established as a mechanism open to individuals to challenge excessive regulation.

Mark Osbaldeston from the University of Derby Corporate outlined the evolution of courses for the quarry industry from the original Doncaster Assisted Private Study arrangements to more tailored distance learning for managers and the introduction of an honours degree. The university launched the Centre for Mineral Products Professional Development on 5 July.

Andy Sales from BDS Marketing showed the impact of the 2008 recession and the continued flat-lining of the industry output, running 40% below pre-2008 levels. UK-owned SMEs generally continue to fare better than the majors. He outlined opportunities for members offered by the improving prospects for housing and construction.

Greatest asset

The final keynote address on challenges and opportunities presented by the recession was made by Peter Barkwill, managing director at John Wainwright & Co, chair of the Institute of Quarrying and the leading light behind the Somerset Earth Science Centre. Barkwill elaborated his passion for the sector and the people who work in it. He sees his own team and all stakeholders in Somerset as his greatest asset, noting the last five years had been the most successful in the firm's history. He also made a plea for more women in the industry.

It was an enlightening day with a high level of networking that continued throughout the AGM, the evening dinner and a morning golf session. The spirit in the industry remains high and the BAAs long-standing campaign to repeal the aggregates levy enters a new stage with a High Court hearing in October.

Peter Huxtable is secretary of the British Aggregates Association

Peter Huxtable. Secretary

British Aggregates Association

10 Brookfields, Calver, Hope Valley

Derbyshire S32 3XB

(T) 01433 639879 (M) 07711 492378

(E) phuxtable@british-aggregates.com

(W) www.british-aggregates.co.uk

