



Richard Bird, executive officer of the British Aggregates Association (BAA), responds to last issue's Snapshot from Ross Finnie, the Scottish environment minister, on Scotland's recycled materials consultation.



I read with interest Ross Finnie's comments in the Sept/Oct edition of *MQR* on the proposed targets of 10% of recycled materials being used in public projects throughout Scotland.

As one who lives in Scotland and who is closely connected with the aggregates industry, I fail to understand why politicians like Mr Finnie feel they have to keep pushing the case for the use of recycled aggregates.

Since the introduction of tracked crushers, the Landfill Tax in 1996 and the Aggregate levy in 2002, the market has changed and there is plenty of evidence that almost all the aggregates that can be recycled are already being recycled, particularly in urban areas.

However, new potential wastes in the form of primary by-products, namely crushed rock fines and the like, are being produced and stockpiled as a result of the increasing demand for high specification aggregates. The Government's policy needs to be revised in the light of these changes and a new policy based on sustainability and a more holistic approach to aggregate use developed, rather than a simplistic emphasis

on recycling or setting unrealistic targets for public authorities to achieve.

Mr Finnie also conveniently ignores the problems caused by transporting subsidised recycled aggregates long distances through rural areas simply to meet targets.

It did occur to me that if Mr Finnie and his colleagues in the Scottish Parliament had used more recycled aggregates in the new Parliament building, then not only might it have cost the nation less to build, but his latest plans to use more recycled materials in public projects might sound a bit more credible.

I think Mr Finnie would be well advised to spend less time talking about recycled aggregates, which are no longer an issue, and more time getting the environment officials of his Executive to deal with actual problems.

An obvious example is recovered fuel oil. Unlike other EU environment agencies, SEPA and the EA have decided to class RFO as a waste and that its use as an alternative fuel in asphalt plants will be prohibited by the end of 2005. Not only will this put another A25million onto the cost of resurfacing the nation's roads, but it will create an environmental time bomb with the disposal or illegal dumping of some 400,000tonnes per annum of waste oil.

The British environmental agencies have refused to recognise this problem. Perhaps it will take the pollution by waste oil of a few Scottish salmon rivers to make Mr Finnie and his officials pay a bit more attention to, what is actually going on in the real world.

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Quarriers welcome directive success

After seven or eight years of battling by industry bodies and government departments, the European Parliament and Council have finalised the Mining Waste Directive leaving out overburden and topsoil so it will not be classified as waste in need of permits.



Peter Huxtable of the BAA.

Earlier drafts of the directive would have imposed a disproportionate burden on non-hazardous inert quarry wastes, which would have led to the need for new waste management licenses and monitoring for material such as overburden.

Peter Huxtable, secretary of the British Aggregates Association (BAA) said it was a triumph for the industry, its associated bodies and government working together to overturn an unfair piece of legislation.

A lot of pressure came from the Greens in Parliament and by working together we managed to see it off. It should be a celebration of how bodies such as the BAA, CBI, Coalpro, MAUK, BCC, EEA and the QPA have worked with the ODPM and DTI to effect positive change," he told *MQR*.

Simon van der Byl, the QPA's director general, said the industry could breathe a sigh of relief: "Had our efforts not paid off, the directive in its original form would have classed Britain's quarries in the same bracket as uranium mines, which is clearly absurd."

Changes made include inert waste and unpolluted soil being exempted from permits, public participation, after-closure procedure, and financial guarantee, and rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites being left in the hands of member states.

Also, the thresholds for the classification of a waste facility as Category A (large and dangerous waste storage sites) will be maintained at a practical level. Most aggregate sites in the UK do not fall within this category.