Action on cycle safety campaign gathers pace

Uniquely placed big on biodiversity

Craft meets tech versatile precast

Action speaks loudest delivering sustainability
THE mineral products industry is anxiously awaiting crucial Government decisions on the new planning policy framework for England which it believes are vital if it is to continue to supply the nation.

With the final details of the Localism Act now dropping into place, MPA welcomes the exclusion of minerals from neighbourhood plans and hopes for a positive response to its call for retention of some form of managed aggregate supply system. It believes such a system is vital to balance the needs of the economy with localism principles.

MPA has been pressing the Department for Communities & Local Government to recognise that “bottom-up” planning could be dominated by nimbysim to an extent that could make strategic decisions impossible. MPA has, therefore, made proposals that could maintain the benefits of a managed aggregate supply system within the new localism agenda.

The industry’s uncertainty over investment has been further dented by figures showing that less than 40 per cent of mineral planning authorities in England have adopted a core strategy.

Says MPA director of mineral planning Ken Hobden: “We have raised our fundamental concerns and have been given opportunities to input our ideas. We should know very shortly whether the new system will deliver the aggregates and aggregate-based products that we all need.”

MPA is continuing to press the case for a new grant scheme to replace the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund which was ditched by Government a year ago amidst strong criticism from industry, communities and environmental groups.

“To date, we are not seeing the buy-in we would like from DEFRA,” admits chief executive Nigel Jackson. “We think that a short-sighted given David Cameron’s vision of a Big Society because the fund we have in mind would back communities working in partnership with operation on locally-beneficial projects.”

MPA’s alternative would cost about £10m annually from the Government’s £300m plus tax haul on aggregates. In the three years to 2011, the £65 million dispensed by the old fund also leveraged over £47 million in third-party funding.

Metal madness

MPA is working with its members to fight back against the scourge of metal theft, which is currently costing the UK economy a total of £700 million a year and endangering lives.

Demand for metal has rocketed from 25 million tonnes to 30 million tonnes over the past 11 years, driven by rapid development in China and India. With the price of copper soaring to £6,200 a tonne, the mineral products industry has become a target for opportunistic thieves. The offenders often put their own and others’ lives at risk by cutting power cables.

With a Home Office-led clampdown on unscrupulous metal dealings plus a £5 million police taskforce tackling the issue, MPA is now setting up its own alert system via

While we inevitably devote great effort to safety within our own operations, we are very aware that we have responsibilities when it comes to our vehicles on the roads. Cyclists are at particular risk when they interface with lorries. I very much hope that our own Cycle Safe campaign, coupled with the powerful new initiative from The Times, will make real inroads into the worrying statistics.

Biodiversity is another public arena where we are “uniquely placed” to take action. Many of us inside the industry were heartened by the success of the MPA Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund which was ditched by Government a year ago amidst strong criticism from industry, communities and environmental groups.

“It is a vital part of resilience to future climate change. The long-standing MPA Restoration Awards shared the stage at the Royal Society in London and rewarded sites right across the country where planning commitments have not just been met but substantially exceeded. More detail on page 20. Meanwhile, throughout last year, MPA and its members have been working to raise the profile of the issue of cyclist safety in relation to lorries. The launch a few weeks ago of The Times campaign comes as a great fillip for MPA’s Cycle Safe initiative. The issue is covered in detail on pages 14 and 15.

Photographed above – They went the extra mile: individuals recognised at the MPA Health & Safety Awards.

www.safetyqcam.com. It is also using miners to minimise storage of scrap metal, fits vehicles and machinery with tracking devices and keeps valuables in secure compounds. “Just in time” ordering of parts and machinery is also suggested, as are regular checks on CCTV systems and fencing.

“The problem is a serious one,” says MPA regional director Brian James, who sits on the police-coordinated National Metal Theft Group. “We believe the alert system will help and hope our members will be diligent in sending us incident reports as quickly as possible.”

MEMBER commitment to the MPA cause has never been stronger after a series of high profile stakeholder events over recent months.

In October, the Natural England Biodiversity Awards (run in partnership with MPA) produced a string of glowing testimonials for the industry’s work. Guests watched a series of video case studies which demonstrated action on a massive scale to deliver new priority habitats and, in doing so, help to protect endangered species. The event and the wider biodiversity initiative are reported in detail on pages 5 – 7 of this issue.

The long-standing MPA Restoration Awards are still for individuals who had ‘gone the extra mile’ to make their workplaces safer. More on pages 14 and 15.

Key decisions

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TAKING on timber

LATEST sustainability claims from the timber lobby have come under a critical eye at MPA’s The Concrete Centre.

Suggestations that timber is naturally renewable, easily recyclable and a simple way to reduce emissions only tell half the story, say the concrete team who insist that sourcing and use performance of timber must be considered. TCC points out that not all imported timber is responsibly sourced and that deforestation is responsible for 18 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. It also says that the whole-life performance of timber must be considered. According to the timber industry’s own data, greenhouse gas emissions are typically around 690 kg CO₂ per tonne over life when taking account of emissions when it is burnt or goes to landfill. This contrasts with a figure for concrete ranging from 40 to 240 kg CO₂ per tonne.

Holding warmth in winter and remaining cool in summer is a further issue where concrete scores strongly, says TCC. Even if the thermal mass of a timber home is enhanced with an extra layer of plasterboard, it will still be three times lower than the lightest concrete home. Recognised in building regulations, thermal mass is a benefit over and above insulation and is a vital part of resilience to future climate change.

MINIATURE house – less embodied CO₂ over its life.
Compromised by cumulative impacts

MPA chief executive Nigel Jackson believes Government needs to restore a spirit of enterprise to British industry

Implictly with deficit reduction and better public services - if industry continually feels it is on the back foot if it does, simply won't have the confidence or motivation to invest.

Despite four desperately tough years and with little light in the tunnel, our members have proved resilient and their business acumen and determination to survive is undiminished; but surviving is not growth. As the biggest material producer in the UK economy and the biggest supplier to the construction industry, we have much to offer if we are given the right support and encouragement. Right now, the majority of operators in our industry just feel exhausted and bemused that they are continually on the wrong end of so much 'red tape and tax'.

Raw materials are not just the source of our particular business; they are the lifeblood of the economy. To harness them, we need a reasonable and proportionate 'licence to operate' based on planning and permitting systems that are fit for purpose.

Planning system stalled

At the moment, our planning system is stalled and behind schedule, with only 40 per cent of the mineral plans that should have been completed in 2007 in place across the country. More detailed plans are even more sparse.

Investment is discouraged by spiralling fees on all fronts – from pre-application consultations fees and planning fees through to the spiralling cost of archaeology. On top of that, a proliferation of carbon and energy taxes and increasing waste and water-related permitting fees makes the UK look a daunting and increasingly uncertain and expensive place in which to do business.

There needs to be a fresh debate about both the level and number of taxes to which this industry is subjected - and the extent of UK and EU regulation. Take off some of those brakes and companies of all sizes - and in particular the smaller and medium-size businesses that are so important to our economy - will grow and multiply.

Meanwhile, larger international companies will feel more encouraged to invest in the UK rather than elsewhere.

Cumulative impacts

We also need to look at genuinely joining up the thinking (and actions) of Government departments and regulators who operate in bureaucratic silos and simply do not seem to look sideways and recognise the cumulative impact of what they do. They need to come around the table and see how things look from where a typical CEO of one of our member companies sits.

MPA has always taken the view that it should support whatever Government of the day and help to achieve its objectives. At the end of the day, we are in the solutions business and we can do much to help make the UK the most enterprising country in Western Europe in which to do business. If the Coalition Government delivers on some of the fundamental issues we have identified, then our members can play their part in helping the UK recover and play its key role in local, national and European markets.

Growth agenda

We need to be careful that recent debates about 'performance and reward do not become counterproductive and deter or inhibit innovators and inventors who create wealth and jobs. Government must, as a matter of priority, make the UK the place to invest and one that encourages enterprise in practice and not just in intent. We cannot progress with the growth agenda - and...
LOWLAND HEATHLAND

BAP target: 151ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Characterised by plants such as heather and gorse. A priority for nature conservation because it is a rare and threatened habitat and is important for species such as nightjar and woodlark.

RUDEWELL QUARRY, SOMERSET

Action: Located in the Mendip Hills Special Area of Conservation, which is one of the most extensive stretches of lowland heathland in the Midlands. The quality of CEMEX UK’s restoration is such that it is already difficult to see the join between the two. It will, by 2012, have added over 200 hectares of this priority habitat.

LOWLAND DRY ACID GRASSLAND

BAP target: 276ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Typically occurs on nutrient-poor, generally free-draining soils and is important for priority species such as tower mustard, Deptford pink, field cricket, woodlark, nightjar and stone curlew. Has undergone substantial decline mostly due to agricultural intensification and forestry.

CAVENHAM QUARRY, SUFFOLK

Action: Allen Newport has created 50 hectares of lowland dry acid grassland over the past 15 years and attracted breeding pairs of the threatened stone curlew. The stone curlew was found in 23 English counties in the 19th century but the number of breeding pairs has fallen alarmingly. More than 50 have used the site as a roosting colony prior to their migration south in the autumn.

MPA ACTION ON PRIORITY HABITATS

UPLAND HAY MEADOWS

BAP target: 72ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Characterised by a dense growth of grasses and herbaceous plants. No single grass species is consistently dominant and the most striking feature of the vegetation is generally the variety and abundance of plants such as wood crane’s-bill, pignut, great burnet, and lady’s mantles. Meadows of this kind have much reduced through agricultural intensification. Recent estimates indicate that there are less than 1,000 ha in northern England. Scotland is believed to have less than 100 ha.

HOPE CEMENT WORKS, DERBYSHIRE

Action: Lafarge Cement has created valuable hay meadows which have achieved national SSSI recognition for their habitat value. Species found include marsh orchids, ragged robin and marsh valerian. The site has been carefully managed by the National Park Authority.

LOWLAND MEADOWS

BAP target: 256ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Unimproved neutral grassland habitat has undergone a remarkable decline in the 20th century, due to changing agricultural practice. The habitat has a specialist group of scarce and declining plant species such as the fritillary, the green-winged orchid and greater butterfly orchid. It is also important for skylark and corncrake.

WOODBRIDGE QUARRY, NORTHUMBERLAND

Action: A Tarmac sand and gravel quarry with ditches which maintain the water levels. Threatened by agricultural intensification and neglect of traditional management.

ACTION:

KINGS DYKE NATURE RESERVE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Action: Created by Hanson from 50 hectares of disused brick pits with high quality reedbeds linked to the wider Great Fen Project. Inhabited by species like marsh harrier, reed warbler and willow warbler. There are also over 30 ponds, several of which hold translocated populations of the rare bearded stonecrop. The wetlands and grasslands support a range of important and vulnerable plant and animal species.

WET REEDBEDS

BAP target: 1,715ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Wetland habitat has been lost through water extraction, land drainage and conversion to intensive agriculture. Amongst the most important habitats for birds in the UK, supporting distinctive breeding birds like the bittern, marsh harrier, crane and warblers.

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OTHER PRIORITIES

COASTAL & FLOODPLAIN GRAZING MARSH

BAP target: 1,250ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Periodically flooded pasture, or meadow with ditches which maintain the water levels. Threatened by agricultural intensification and neglect of traditional management.

ACTION:

LOWLAND WOODLAND PASTURE & PARKLAND

BAP target: 120ha  |  more than 100% can be met by minerals sites

Affected by lack of forestry management, disease, changes to ground water levels, pollution and agricultural improvement.

ACTION:

AWARDS

The MPA-supported Natural England Biodiversity Awards provided ample evidence of industry commitment to the cause.

WINNER

CEMEX UK

Rugeley Quarry, Staffordshire (see page 6)

RUNNER-UP

Hanson UK

Kings Dyke, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire (see left)

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Aggregate Industries: Blackhill Quarry, Devon; Aggregate Industries: Little Paxton Quarry, St Neots, Cambridgeshire; Tarmac, Woodbridge Quarry, Northumberland; Brett Group, Villa Quarry, Essex.

COMMENDED

Aggregate Industries: Eskett Quarry, Colburne; CEMEX UK, Southam Quarry, Warwickshire; Aggregate Industries, Croft Quarry, Leicester; Marshalls, Staniton Quarry, South Yorkshire; Hanson UK, Ripon Quarry, North Yorkshire; Lafarge Aggregates, Matfield Quarry, North Yorkshire; Smiths Bletchington, Rushy Common; Oxfordshire; Aggregate Industries, Bardon Hill Quarry, Leicester; Sibloco, Messingham Nature Reserve, North Lincolnshire.

MPA SPECIAL AWARDS FOR SME COMMITMENT

Marshalls, Smiths Bletchington, Brett Group, Sibloco.

MPA INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The late Brian Butterfield, Lafarge Aggregates.
SUSTAINABILITY

against a backdrop of economic uncertainty and a stagnant construction sector, the mineral products industry remains committed to operating responsibly and delivering a sustainable built environment.

The industry is now planning for a safer and more sustainable 2012. The target of Zero Harm is taken very seriously, including a new MPA Safer by Competence policy and improving awareness, control and measurement of respirable crystalline silica.

The cement industry has also made some important strides forward on safety, with a drop of 83 per cent in reportable injuries.

The figures are in, and the industry has not only met but, in many cases, considerably surpassed the targets. Highlights include a 38 per cent drop in some greenhouse gas emissions, and a significant rise in the use of waste as fuels and raw materials.

The step change has taken multi-million pound investments against a backdrop of changing environmental legislation and ever-more challenging EU and UK climate change policies. The industry now looks forward to setting and achieving targets for 2015.

IN 2005, MPA Cement members entered into an historic environmental performance programme with the Environment Agency, setting demanding targets to be met by 2010 against a 1998 baseline.

IN its sustainability performance report, the concrete industry (covering 78 per cent of UK production) reaffirms its vision: ‘by 2012, the UK concrete industry will be recognised as the leader in sustainable construction, by taking a dynamic role in delivering a sustainable built environment in a manner that is profitable, socially responsible and functions within environmental limits.’

Serious progress has certainly been made. In line with the Government targets, 88 per cent of concrete production in the UK is responsibly sourced and CO2 emissions have been slashed. The concrete industry is now a net consumer of waste, using almost 47 times more than it produces.

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Building upon the success, new objectives and performance goals have now been set for the period to 2030. This ranges from better sharing of good practice to playing an active role in the delivery of a zero-carbon built environment, and developing a low carbon freight initiative.

Objective | Outcome
--- | ---
1. To increase the use of waste as raw materials or fuel in cement works | Alternative raw materials have replaced 7.2% of Portland cement’s natural raw material requirement, and alternative waste derived fuels have replaced 38% of the energy requirement from fossil fuels.
2. To reduce waste disposal from cement manufacturing | Against 14,021 tonnes of waste disposed of, the industry used 1.32 million tonnes of fuels and raw materials.
3. To reduce air pollution from cement manufacturing | Dust emissions from all sources are down 83%.
4. To reduce emissions of greenhouse gases per tonne of cement | Oxides of Nitrogen emissions are down 59%, Sulphur Dioxide emissions 87% and Carbon Dioxide emissions 22%.
5. To improve regulatory compliance and stakeholder perception of sites | Each cement manufacturing operation holds regular community liaison meetings. Members produce newsletters and hold exhibitions and open days.

Milestones

Across four priorities, mineral products companies have demonstrated dramatic advances in their sustainability credentials:

- **In health and safety**, highlights include a drop of 83 per cent in reportable injuries.
- **Sustainable products** are going from strength to strength, with certified environmental management systems operating in the vast majority of member sites, including all cement works.
- **The cement industry** has also made some important strides forward on climate change with direct CO2 emissions reduced to 725kg/tonne in 2010.
- **MPA and its members** have been equally busy on the biodiversity front, with a biodiversity strategy and industry award scheme (in partnership with Natural England), launched this year.

MPA is committed to halving Lost Time Injury rates by 2014.

MPA members have planted a million trees over the past five years.

Cement industry direct carbon emissions fell in 2010 but aggregates sector emissions increased.

Recycled and secondary materials accounted for 28% of the GB aggregates market in 2010.

9.3% of aggregates sold were moved by rail.

The ratio of the area of aggregates sites restored to the area of land prepared for quarrying was 1:0.8.

26,569 visitors were recorded at aggregates and cement sites in 2010.

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The London 2012 Olympics look set to be a defining moment for Britain on the world stage. But the Games should also be a significant landmark for concrete as it affirms its right to be recognised as the leader in sustainable construction – and to be recognised aesthetically as well as for its strength and durability.

The Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) set out its stall from the outset. This wasn’t going to be just another “green” project; the sustainability mission had to be embedded in every structure – from the main stadium to the sewage plants. It also had to be enshrined in the legacy that it needed the concrete to be of a low-carbon variety and that it had to be supplied universally across the main development by one supplier from one plant.

The chosen ready-mixed concrete supplier, Aggregate Industries, duly provided the plant and also did a lot of work to maximise the use of secondary and recycled materials while maintaining structural integrity and achieving a high-quality finish. Its mixes included pulverised fuel ash, a by-product from coal-fired power stations; ground granulated blast furnace slag from steel making and china clay waste from Cornwall. Other MPA members to have contributed along the supply chain include recycling specialists Day Aggregates.

Targets were set demanding that at least 25 per cent of aggregate used for the development had to be recycled. At least half of all materials brought to site had to travel by rail or water. Meanwhile, some 90 per cent of construction waste generated from the development site has been diverted from landfills and been reused or recycled. All but three of the buildings will be converted to 2,800 official across 60 buildings. Post games, the athletes' village will provide more than 17,000 beds for competitors and officials across 60 buildings. Post games, the buildings will be converted to 2,800 flats, half of them affordable homes.

While onshore wind undeniably has a key role to play in the renewable solution (and is more cost-effective because of simpler construction and closeness to the grid) opportunities for new farms are being limited by planning issues and local community resistance.

Wind energy needs concrete

CONCRETE will show its elegant and interesting architectural side right across the Olympic portfolio of structures. One of the highlights promises to be the Mining Museum, one of the largest blocks in the athletes’ village, which employs concrete to create a freeze cast from the iconic Elgin Marbles.

Designed by Niall McLaughlin Architects the freeze uses the famous theme of the Greek Parthenon because of its association with a great festival which included sporting games.

“The Olympics is a massive triumph for the British construction industry – it has been delivered on budget and with all its key targets achieved.”

Wind energy needs concrete

Cumbria needs monopiles at an offshore farm in the North Sea.

CONCRETE
A COUPLE of shovels of sand, a few more of gravel, one of cement and a good slug of water and you’ve got it – concrete. Well maybe that’s true for your garden path but it won’t do if you want to create a piece of classic architecture, a water feature to impress the world at the Olympics or decorative detail on a country house.

Your recipe may then need to include plastic, pigment to introduce colour, a waterproofing agent, finely graded specialised aggregates, and white cement. You will also be talking about using complex moulds to create special shapes. The concrete will be cured as carefully as any cake is baked and will then be lovingly tended by a team of craftsmen as it emerges from the moulds.

But don’t ask any precast concrete manufacturer for his own specific recipes because he almost certainly won’t tell you. Knowing how to do amazing things with concrete is of necessity a closely guarded commercial secret.

However, ask Garry McBride of Derbyshire-based Evans Concrete Products how his company created a 20-metre high sculpture in white concrete that now looks majestically over the Lancashire town of St Helens and he will tell you enthusiastically about the outcome. Likewise, Simon Tibble from near-neighbour Amber Precast will gladly show you how his team uses concrete to create beautiful classical architecture where once only natural stone would do.

Talk, on the other hand to Barry Cooper, chief executive at Stanton Bonna’s extensive works near Nottingham and you will find computer-controlled production on a large scale. His company’s specialities are pipes, manholes and railway sleepers – 170,000 tonnes in a typical year. We might see little of them but the precision applied keeps the nation’s wheels turning and its water (and yes, sewage) flowing. It is this blend of craft and technology when applied to one of the most basic of all products in a factory environment that makes the precast concrete industry so unusual. It also means that it has much to offer in helping the Government deliver its construction priorities, whether they are high profile like the Olympics, or low profile construction priorities, whether they are high profile like the Olympics, or low profile in maintaining and developing essential infrastructure.

While waiting to enjoy a warm glow from Evans’ involvement in the Olympics, Garry McBride points instead to the 20-metre high Dream sculpture at St Helens as a fine example of changing outdated perceptions about concrete. Constructed on an old colliery spoil heap overlooking the M62, the sculpture depicts a nine-year-old girl in a dream-like state and is seen as a powerful symbol of a brighter future for a depressed area.

For Evans, is was a huge challenge involving 54 precast sections each weighing 10 tonnes and made using sparkling white Spanish dolomite. Such was the excitement of designer Jaume Plensa that he walked reverently on the first panel in his bare feet when he came to inspect the work. Moulding was particularly complex and involved polystyrene that was cut by computer.

**Craft meets tech**

Adding fine detail to classic architectural design is an everyday occurrence at Amber Precast, another producer making its mark in the Olympic Village. Its customers cover the whole span from big developers who want to make small homes more ornate through to massively expensive country homes.

The picture above shows a new library extension at the St School of St Helen and St Katharine at Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Significant here is the fact that the ornate detail uses both wet-cast stone where strength is needed for larger reinforced components, but semi-dry cast stone using finer aggregate for detail. The economics make blinding sense when you consider that just one mould produced 208 brackets that would have taken many weeks to carve.

Says director Simon Tibble “There is a growing demand for stone decoration at reasonable cost and architects now accept that there are no limits to the geometric shapes you can create with precast concrete provided it is done by experts. If you add to that the fact that we can achieve the most subtle colours, and you have a product with enormous versatility as well as strength.”

**Eye for detail**

With the Government planning to invest £8bn in Britain’s railways and talking seriously about a major renaissance in light rail, companies like Stanton Bonna that provide vital infrastructure look well placed. When its high tech machinery isn’t turning out sleepers or bearers, it will be geared for an assortment of drainage products that also look well placed when the nation finally goes into growth mode. The arguments for concrete in this as in other specialist sectors are strong, especially when you consider that its cradle-to-grave greenhouse gas emissions are up to 35% lower than plastic as the main alternative.

As part of Consolis, Europe’s biggest precaster, Stanton Bonna enjoys the benefits of investment in new products like complete precast manhole bases offering reduced cost and greater safety. But it is also driving forward safety within its own workforce. It picked up the top gold award under the British Precast Concrete Targets scheme for the past four years, and in 2011 won the British Precast Health & Safety project award.
Leading on safety

... for workers

ONE-BY-ONE they stood to take their applause; twenty-one individuals who have made a real difference when it comes to safety in their own workplace. Employers large and small got their rewards too as the MPA Health and Safety Awards shared best practice across the industry.

The long-standing awards moved venue this year to BAFTA’s prestigious London headquarters, and rightly deserved the red carpet treatment in representing real action taken by operators to minimise risk and keep workers safe.

Participation was at its highest level ever with a total of 126 entries from 28 companies. Also significant was the fact that an increasing proportion of submissions came from companies with less than 1,000 direct employees. The overall momentum right across the industry has never been greater.

There was a new dimension this year, in that a morning conference preceded the awards ceremony. Its focus was on the key issue of competence in which mineral products is an acknowledged leader. As MPA Health & safety Committee Chairman Chris Leese put it if we are to achieve zero harm, it is essential that we are all competent for the work we are required to do ... that we recognise the level beyond which we are not competent.

Participation was at its highest level ever with a total of 126 entries from 28 companies.

... for cyclists

THE MPA drive to make the roads safer for cyclists has received a major boost with the launch in February of a new campaign by The Times which is attracting massive support around the UK.

Growing concern across the industry over cyclist deaths in accidents involving lorries prompted the MPA Cycle Safe initiative, which began in Oxford early last year followed by a London launch in June in partnership with the Metropolitan Police.

The momentum grew in a year which was focused on a six-point plan designed to raise awareness amongst both cyclists and lorry drivers of the hazards when they are in close proximity on the roads. Most worrying of all situations is one that arises when cyclists move up the nearside of lorries that are about to turn left.

One of the casualties from an accident involving a lorry was Times journalist Mary Bowers who suffered severe injuries and remains unconscious. Since the launch of the newspaper campaign in February, thousands have pledged their support and hundreds have written to their MPs demanding greater investment in cyclist safety.

MPA chief executive Nigel Jackson is delighted by the growing momentum. “We are committed to playing our part in tackling one of the most worrying safety issues of our times,” he said. “We welcome the initiative that has now been taken by The Times and will continue to encourage our members to press the cause at local level. There is no doubt that what we are all doing can and will save lives.”

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Specific course for industry drivers to raise awareness of vulnerable road users.

MPA has produced a package of campaign resources for use by both members and cycling groups. More detail is available at www.mineralproducts.org. During March it will hold a Cycle Safe exchange for members to explore what more can be done.

ORCHESTRA CHAIRMAN’S TROPHY

J Wainwright & Co

Recognition for individual achievement represents new territory for the awards. Those rewarded this year have all ‘gone the extra mile’ to make the workplace safer for everyone.

AND THE WINNER IS...

John Osbourne Memorial Trophy for outstanding excellence — J Wainwright & Co

Sir Frank Davies Trophy for SMEs — Singleton Birch

Special award for companies with less than 100 employees — Francis Flower

Special award for companies with between 100 and 1,000 employees — Steetley Dolomite

■ Blutemon; asphalt; contract surfacing promoting safer behaviour — Aggregate Industries

■ Contractors safety — Tarmac Marine Dredging

■ Engineering initiatives — Singleton Birch

■ Leadership; training and management systems initiative — CEMEX UK

■ Occupational good health — Lafarge Aggregates and Concrete UK

■ Worker involvement — Sibelco

OUR SIX-POINT PLAN

■ Promote driver and industry awareness

■ Promote cyclist and public awareness

■ Improve driver training

■ Encourage members to use appropriate technological adaptations to minimise risks to cyclists and exchange experience

■ Liaise with schools

■ Work in partnership
Here today
Mars tomorrow

AN Oxfordshire quarry has been the focus for extra-terrestrial activity as scientists from the European Space Agency tested robot technology to explore the surface of Mars.

The Seeker project, led by RAL Space from Harwell, aims to demonstrate the ability of a variety of robots and vehicles to travel 6km over a three-day period, avoiding obstacles and hazards whilst detecting and recording information about objects encountered along the way. The geology at Hills Quarry Products’ Tubney Wood quarry was ideal to test the terrain. Among the vehicles tested has been a six-wheeled robotic platform to explore volcanoes, a modified 4x4 capable of unmanned operation and a robotic test platform packed with sensors, software and processors.

Shared approach

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PIctured below with MOP chief executive Simon Wills (left) and MPA chief executive Nigel Jackson, Ms Hackitt said her tour with industrialists and regulators showed how those right across the sector were working together to share innovative approaches and lessons learned.

“The industry must be congratulated for reducing injuries by more than three-quarters in the past decade,” she said. “However, reaching the Quarries National Joint Advisory Committee goal of another 15 per cent reduction by 2015 will require even more hard work, determination and the development of new approaches.”

“It is clear that we have to protect our soils as a basic resource for food security. The three key factors are drainage, compaction and pH. If you don’t synchronise these, the benefits of seed, fertilisers and agrochemicals will all be limited. Lime may not be a high profile component but it underpins and makes the rest work.”

Agricultural lime

“Soil sense” is the message from the Agricultural Lime Association (www.aglime.org.uk) following warnings from the Professional Agricultural Analysis Group that soil fertility levels in Britain are dropping. The 2009/10 survey showed that all important pH (acidity/alkalinity) was in many cases substantially below recommended levels for both arable and grassland.

Says ALA secretary, Stephen Hill: “The world population is now expected to hit 20 billion by 2050 and experts are saying that current world grain reserves equate to just 76 days. Add to that the problem created by climate change and greater weather extremes, and it is clear that we have to protect our soils as a basic resource for food security.

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Health & safety

Terminal transformation

A FORMER sand and gravel quarry near Heathrow has been re-opened to accommodate engineering material from the redevelopment of Terminal 2. The new terminal will serve 20 million passengers a year and will use 20% less carbon than its predecessor.

Brett Aggregates’ Hithermoor site was used for landfill then closed, but is once again a hive of activity with up to 400 loads delivered daily. The material taken from Terminal 2 is placed and compacted to create a sealed cap.

Care is being taken to monitor noise levels, keep dust down in dry weather and to wash the wheels of vehicles before leaving the site. Gas levels are constantly monitored.

Once complete, the site will be restored to a mixture of woodland and open areas for public use in accordance with plans agreed with local councils and community groups.

Rail

Smoothing the way

THE smooth running of Britain’s trains in the years to come will have much to do with a special ballast from Lafarge’s Mountsorrel Quarry in Leicestershire.

Network Rail has awarded a framework contract potentially worth £35 million over the next five years to Lafarge who are hoping to supply more than a million tonnes a year. The ballast – a 50mm crushed rock – forms the bed on which railway sleepers are laid. It keeps the track stable and level which prolongs the life of the track and enables trains to run smoothly.

The material is laid by a specialist machine which automatically lifts the sleepers then blows and packs the ballast beneath it. Gas levels are constantly monitored.

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Landfill

PLANNING

2 into 1

PLANNING permission has been given for a vital extension to two of Scotland’s most strategically important quarries at Monifieth to the east of Dundee.

Breedon Aggregates and the Geddes Group submitted a joint application for their adjoining quarries, to avoid serting significant mineral reserves. They can now produce rock (500,000 tpa), asphalt, recycled aggregate and ready-mixed concrete for the next 40 years. “It will sustain 50 local jobs and reduce long-distance haulage by supplying local projects using local materials,” says Alan Mackenzie, chief executive of Breedon Aggregates Scotland.

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Here today
Mars tomorrow

AN Oxfordshire quarry has been the focus for extra-terrestrial activity as scientists from the European Space Agency tested robot technology to explore the surface of Mars.

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What’s the buzz?

SOME 150,000 honey bees have a new home at the CEMEX UK’s Taffs Well quarry in South Wales.

The 60-hectare site, which has Special Area of Conservation status, is a perfect location for the six hives, with its extensive woodland and varied flora. The bees will make a valuable contribution to the site’s biodiversity strategy.

“Pollinating insects are vital for our natural environment,” says Elaine Spence, who owns and manages the bees. It is estimated that they pollinate up to a third of our food crops which is worth £430 million per year to British agriculture.

Groovy asphalt

PEOPLE in the north of Scotland have a greater choice of holiday destinations as a result of a runway extension allowing larger aircraft to fly from Aberdeen airport.

The project was a testing one for asphalt supplier Leiths in that the runway had to take traffic a few hours after being laid and had to incorporate grooves in order to improve skid resistance in wet conditions. Trial mixes using carefully specified aggregate ensured that durability was not affected by early use, and the grooves were added several days later.

Time for lime

HYDRATED lime has a key environmental role to play as Britain reacts to the imperative to reduce landfill by using waste as a means to generate energy.

Delegates at the recent British Lime Association’s Energy from Waste (EFW) seminar were told that acidic flue gases produced from the thermal treatment process in EFW plants can be removed using hydrated lime which is the most cost-effective alkalai available for this type of treatment. This process ensures compliance with local environmental legislation for an emissions.

SEA DEFENCES

Time and tide

BLACKPOOL now boasts an impressive new sea defence scheme providing enhanced protection against flooding and coastal erosion between its famous North and South piers. The development required 65,000m³ of in situ and 44,000m³ of precast concrete supplied by Tarmac and was the biggest ever civil engineering project in the town.

Working within six-hour tidal windows was a major challenge for the construction team, but by maximising the use of precast units and using macro-fibre concrete, the project was completed with minimum disruption to local businesses.

Blackpool’s new seafront not only protects the town but looks good with its innovative design and pigmented concrete blending with the beach.

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What has emerged after more than 60 years of quarrying is 600-hectares of picturesque countryside that is much loved by all who inhabit it. It was appreciated too by the MPA Restoration Awards judges who selected it without hesitation to receive the coveted Cooper-Heyman Cup for the top achievement of 2011.

Tarmac’s operations have moved progressively along the Idle Valley north of Retford. At the heart of the site lies a 300-hectare area that was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1992 and has been the focus for a long-running restoration partnership with the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust.

One of the great achievements is the lottery-funded Idle Valley Rural Learning Centre which is operated by North Nottinghamshire College and is the base from which the trust runs numerous community programmes.

Amongst the other valued facilities is the 70-acre Linghurst Lakes parish park (pictured above) at Lound. Thousands of trees have been planted, wildflower areas created and grass paths defined.

Runner-up in the latest awards was a former Derbyshire quarry that has been restored by Lafarge Cement in partnership with local farmers Joe Dalton and son Joe junior to become a valued feature of the Peak District landscape.

Ironically, it was not Lafarge that previously quarried the majority of the site and its responsibility for restoration was limited. The Daltons faced a big headache when the company that had been quarrying there defaulted on its obligations. Limited material remained to landscape a huge remaining void.

Fortunately, the Daltons had Lafarge Cement as a neighbour. First, the company organised a huge re-contouring exercise to shift waste material that had been left around the site while preserving a fascinating rock exposure. Then, it transferred topsoil and seeded it to finish the job.

THE original plan for restoring Tarmac’s Bellmoor and Lound quarries in Nottinghamshire was to fill them with ash from a nearby power station. The fact that the source of ash then dried up was, in the end, a plus – for wildlife and for local people.

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