

ENGLISH STONE FORUM – NEWS – NOVEMBER 2009

The English Stone Forum met on 3rd September 2009 – the note of the meeting has been placed on the Forum website (www.englishstone.org.uk).

The Forum has contributed recently to two important consultations, and on a planning proposal:

- [Comment](#) on the CLG's consultation on draft PPS15 "Planning for the historic environment" - the Forum generally supported the consultation draft but felt, amongst other matters, that: the intention to conserve and enhance heritage assets that are not subject to designations is too wide for historic buildings; a clearer definition of significance of structures is needed; the need for improved skills in planning department's is not addressed; and , that sustainability of building and roofing stone, as well as of refurbishment of existing buildings, needs to be emphasised; and
- [Comment](#) on Defra's consultation on draft guidance associated with the Mining Waste Directive. The main concern with this is that the provision that after 3 years any deposit of unsold mineral would come within the terms of a waste management facility. In some cases, high quality building and roofing stone is stored for future use because of the small but long term nature of demand. There is risk that valuable resources might be sold as aggregate in order to avoid the regulatory regime.
- The Forum was recently asked to [comment](#) on the building stone issues raised by a proposed extension to a quarry at Ham Hill in Somerset that is the sole source of Ham Hill Stone, for which no closely matching alternative has been identified. However the proposed extension could have impacts on a scheduled ancient monument, in this case a hill fort.
- The International Association of Engineering Geology and the Environment has a Commission on Building Stone that has made proposals that certain very widely used sources should be defined as "Global Heritage Stone Resources". The aim is for the most significant stones to be identified and to gain enhanced status. There is a case for such designations but more thought is needed as to how identification of sources might influence supply policies. The Forum commented on the Commission's paper in respect of the need for a clearer definition of stone, a preference for the designation to be restricted to internationally traded stone (other stones could have national designations) a proper emphasis on global significance in terms of trade volume, and the setting of a minimum time for significance, such as 30 years. A first draft of a proposed "Global heritage stone citation" for Portland Stone was also prepared. This had been finalised and sent to the Commission.

All four responses have been placed on the Forum website.

Discussions with the National Trust are in progress about a possible publication. This would describe the use of natural stone in selected Trust properties, and other selected important buildings, and link this to information on the materials required for repair and maintenance and the quarries from which these are secured. An example chapter of the attractively illustrated, compact text, aimed at the general public has been prepared for consideration by the Trust. It is hoped that this will be published and placed on sale at the Trust's shops.

The Forum website has been augmented by the addition of a bibliography of books on building and roofing stone, and a list of town trail guides for England that focus on these materials. These will be added to at intervals. Further links to other relevant websites have been added. You are invited to visit the Forum website site and make suggestions on how it could be improved.

Other issues that have been discussed recently are:

- Sustainability of building stone – the Forum believes that the recent relatively poor ratings given to building and roofing stone in terms of carbon footprint are not well based. These do not take adequate account of the durability and thermal properties of stone. More collection and interpretation of data is needed. Consideration is being given to the need for a meeting on this topic during 2010; and
- Ethical trading issues – these include matters such as paying proper attention to health and safety at work, avoidance of discrimination against specific groups of people, avoidance of the use of child or forced labour and proper observation of environmental protection. These matters have been are being discussed extensively in Scandinavia and the Netherlands particularly in respect of stone originating outside Europe. The Forum felt that there is no simple way of determining the relative standards of materials from different areas or for “scoring” one source against another. A Swedish check list set out many of the relevant criteria but not necessarily in the right order. One approach might be to combine that material with existing BRE text. It was noted that the Stone Federation Great Britain is actively considering this issue.
- The Forum participated in a well attended BGS meeting on building stone held at the Geological Society on 1st October 2009, a record of which will be placed on the www.mineralsUK.com website soon.

The next meeting of the Forum will take place on 3rd December 2009. The Forum would be pleased to receive information on English building and roofing stone and suggestions of issues that need to be considered - [email](#)