

English Stone Forum

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DEFINITION OF SMALL AND LARGE SCALE BUILDING AND ROOFING STONE QUARRIES November 2008

Introduction

1. Minerals Policy Statement 1 (MPS1) "Planning and minerals" refers to building stone quarries in terms of small and large scale operations. However it does not provide definitions of these, leaving that to the discretion of individual Mineral Planning Authorities. In addition, the industry has drawn attention to concerns over fees for inspecting mineral workings to ensure compliance with planning conditions. It appears that a number of authorities are requiring the maximum number of annual visits in respect of small sites, as well as large quarries, with a disproportionate financial burden on the former. The industry feels that those small sites that have limited environmental impacts should be visited less often.

2. Making a suitable distinction is not straightforward because the environmental impacts associated with quarrying depend on factors such as:

- the area affected by extraction;
- the amount of stone (and, where relevant, ancillary minerals) produced;
- the rate(s) and duration of extraction; and
- the amount and frequency of associated traffic.

A further issue is whether or not proposed development requires environmental impact assessment (EIA).

3. The following comments are made to assist those who need to implement the policies in MPS1.

Discussion

4. Paragraph 99 of the Minerals Practice Guide accompanying MPS1 builds on Chapter 4 of "Planning for the supply of natural building and roofing stone in England and Wales" prepared by Capita Symonds. As a starting point, this states:

"There are currently about 300 active quarries and mines in England that produce building and roofing stone, but only a few produce roofing stone. Most are very small compared with, for example, modern aggregates quarries. Ninety percent of these are intermittently worked sites that have an annual output of 2000m³ or less and many produce 100m³ or less. These commonly have only one or two employees and mainly serve local or specialist markets. However, the remaining 10% of larger sites produce on average 20,000m³ per annum and, therefore, account for about 70% of the annual production of 650,000m³ (1m³ weighs about 2.0 to 2.6 tonnes). These larger quarries may market stone on a regional, national and even international scale".

5. It might be appropriate therefore, as a rule of thumb, to propose that small quarries produce less than 2,000m³ of stone per annum and large sites produce more than this.

Conclusion

6. In general, therefore, it is concluded that a small-scale building and roofing stone quarrying proposal is one that produces, on the average, less than 2,000m³ per year. But each case must be considered on its merits.

Recommendation

7. In the absence of explicit advice on this issue, the English Stone Forum strongly commends the above approach to considering the distinction between small and large scale stone quarries in the planning process.

