



Finishing on a high note

Welcome to the last Aggregate News of 2024. What a year it has been.

The AQA finishes it on a high note, though I want to acknowledge things have been tough in our industry and across the economy.

The inclusion of eight quarry projects in the 149 included in the list under the Fast-track Approvals Bill (see story page 4) is a signal that our industry's critical importance to our nation is finally being recognised – and some gloomy days will soon have passed.

As a line in a recent Stuff opinion article on this subject from Wayne Scott said:

"Nothing can be built without quarries. We are like the bass player in a band; not flashy but fundamental to all that happens."

It's not just the fast-track legislation where we are seeing progress. There are indications that quarrying will be central to the National Environment Standard being developed for infrastructure; that our concerns about over-reaching biodiversity requirements will be addressed; and that councils will be required to plan for quarries in future district plans.

Some credit for these emerging changes is due to Wayne for his years of patient lobbying, supported by some key industry players. And let's also give credit to the lead Ministers Chris Bishop and the redoubtable Shane Jones for their preparedness to front these issues to ensure their Government's objectives for infrastructure, housing and progress can be delivered.

I also take this opportunity to reinforce the point that Wayne has made to Parliament, the public and the press: our industry has not asked for, nor does



it want any reduction in environmental standards or outcomes with any law changes. We simply want the opportunity to get quarry resource consents approved without years of delay caused by multiple processes and often vexatious objections.

Our industry actually wants to improve environmental outcomes. That's why the AQA Technical Committee has been looking at ways to include more recycled content in regional variations for M3 sub-base specifications. As Committee recycling lead Stacy Goldsworthy says in our page 3 story, industry is supportive of more recycling, but it needs alignment across a number of moving parts to make this happen.

Also in this Aggregate News, an example of how the AQA is supporting our colleagues working in the regions. We've been working with Hawkes Bay quarries as they've faced challenges to continue their extraction of river-sourced material. The regional council is now embarking

on consultation after receiving a report which suggests further shutdown. What needs to be understood is that as well as reducing flood risk, gravel extracted from a region's riverbanks also helps provide the aggregate needed for all its infrastructure. The story on page 2 is another measure of what the AQA has been contributing.

Meanwhile, our Technical Advisor Mike Chilton contributes his usual report on all the work he's been supporting – see page 6. All in all, it's been a good year on a number of fronts, even if it's also been a tough one for some quarry operators while we await the hoped-for economic bounce-back.

I trust that the policy gains we are beginning to achieve can be cemented into more aggregate, rock and sand deliveries in 2025. Every kind wish for Christmas and the New Year.

Jayden Ellis
Chair, AQA

Local quarries essential to Hawke's Bay

The Aggregate & Quarry Association says the quarry industry would welcome the opportunity to engage with iwi and the wider community in Hawke's Bay on the future of rivers in the region.



Keep Hawkes Bay quarries local. Tukituki River pictured.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council is proposing to consult after a Lincoln Agritech report on the Ngaruroro River suggested allowing the river to widen and deepen.

AQA CEO Wayne Scott says the industry is open to the discussion but long-standing issues in Hawke's Bay around gravel extraction and water abstraction need to be managed very carefully.

"Water takes in the catchment have been over-subscribed for many years and are closely guarded. That has wide impacts for everyone including our sector."

Wayne says the quarry industry understands the Council needs to manage multiple stakeholders on river flow, capacity and allocation, as well as navigating the associated cultural and heritage issues.

"All of us need fresh water to survive. Iwi attach important values to it. Farmers need it for crop security. The aggregate industry also requires water to meet required specifications for infrastructure supply in the region."

Some years ago, a local quarry operator

asked Council for a consent to take water for washing aggregate and was told there was none. When it was explained the water would wash aggregate and mostly soak back into the ground, a consent was granted.

"Allowing the Ngaruroro to build up and widen would not only mean no gravel extraction in the river but potentially beside it as well," says Wayne.

"Our members need to understand how widening the river would help the water table. They are also only extracting on portions of the riverbed. While building up the depth of gravel may make the water table deeper, it may also make adjacent land more prone to flooding.

"Given its recent experiences, the Council needs to explore this risk thoroughly in any consultation with iwi, the community and our industry."

Wayne Scott says the Council and Hawke's Bay residents need to understand that as well as reducing flood risk, gravel extracted from the region's riverbanks helps provide the aggregate needed for all its infrastructure.

"The last thing that's needed is to rope off existing sources, especially those with the benefit of reducing flood risk. Gravel extraction from a river is a by-product of flood/river management for Council but it's essential for the foundation of all that's built in the region."

A holistic economic and environmental analysis is required where the benefits of increasing groundwater levels is balanced against the cost and emissions of carting aggregate from faraway sources.

Since 2020, Hawke's Bay Regional Council has supported gravel extraction from the upper Tukituki River, even though it is less economically feasible for quarry operators. This \$8m project was largely funded by Government to source quarry materials from central Hawke's Bay rather than from quarries closer to Hastings and Napier.

"That money was largely spent on transporting quarry materials. Keeping local quarries with viable supplies of aggregate is the best option for Hawke's Bay and that needs to be kept upfront in any consultation," says Wayne Scott. **AQA**



Time to get recycling into alignment

Stacy Goldsworthy thinks it's more than time for an integrated regime to recycle much more aggregate, crushed concrete and other reusable materials.

Stacy has been leading an AQA Technical Group project since the July 2024 QuarryNZ conference to come up with some regional variations for M03 sub-base specifications to allow waste source materials to be included.

This has included engagement with NZTA and councils, many of whom have requirements in roading specs for use of recycled products to meet lower carbon emissions objectives.

“We’re talking about how lofty goals can be translated to delivery.”

Stacy is not new to the frustrations of how difficult it can be to line up recycled materials with virgin product and to gain acceptance for its use. He’s now had 18 months as Business Manager with Winstone Aggregates and previously had six years with Civil Contractors NZ, but before that he was GM of Green Vision Recycling, who pioneered supplying recycled aggregate to numerous local government and private development projects in the Auckland region.

“This had a route to market even back then.”

He finds the pace of acceptance of recycled materials frustrating.

“It runs hot and cold. We’ve got some willing asset owners, but a lot of alignment is needed. It needs somebody with the power to take the lead and make it happen.”

Stacy says there are some initiatives that are working well. During winter, the AQA Technical Committee got to visit

the Leach-operated Kiwi Point quarry and controlled fill site in Wellington. This is repurposing concrete products, asphalt millings and other C&D waste such as bricks. There’s strong demand for the finished products which are at far higher specs than those without recycled content and saving 11 kg of carbon for every tonne diverted from landfills.

Fulton Hogan continues to crush glass and add it to road-building materials.

Last year, Winstone Aggregates acquired The Urban Quarry in Auckland to fast-track its circular and recycling solutions for customers. GM Amanda Croft noted while there’s some recycling of construction and demolition waste, much more could be diverted from landfill and upcycled. The trick was to collect sufficient waste quantities at a central point to enable recycling on an efficient scale.

Stacy Goldsworthy says there were a range of challenges with construction materials including source and production testing to ensure material consistency. There also had to be compliance certification that it was asbestos-free.

“But the opportunities are all there.”

He believes the AQA and industry leaders are behind the changes needed so that recycled materials become mainstream – it just needs supply chain leadership to make this happen.

AQA

Providing the base

Eight quarries are among the projects in the Government’s list for the Fast-track Approvals Bill. AQA CEO Wayne Scott says as most of the 149 projects announced were housing, infrastructure, irrigation or energy projects – all requiring quarry materials – quarries had to be included in the list.



“Nothing can be built without us. We are like the bass player in a band; not flashy but fundamental to all that happens.”

Wayne says given quarry materials are already in short supply across New Zealand, ensuring these were available for all the nationally and regionally-significant projects had to be provided for under the Bill.

“Given the scale of need in Auckland and its current reliance on imported aggregate, it’s appropriate four of the eight quarry projects approved are in Auckland.”

These are extensions to the Kings, Drury, Flat Top and Hunua quarries.

Canterbury gets two – KB Contracting’s Miners Rd Northern Expansion and Southern Screenworks quarry for expansion and establishing a managed fill facility. Wellington’s Belmont Quarry is included for a new overburden disposal, as is J Swap Contractors Katikati quarry expansion in Bay of Plenty.

Additionally, McCallum Brothers were included for a project to take sand from Bream Bay in Northland over a proposed 35-year term of consent.

“The fact quarry owners sought to be in the fast-track provisions reflects the challenges they face in getting an existing site approved for extension, let alone a new one consented.

There has been a lot of comment about the Coalition Government’s fast-track process approach to environmental considerations. The Aggregate & Quarry Association told the Select Committee considering the Bill that it wouldn’t be supporting it if it came at the expense of the environment.

“We said we were not seeking any different outcomes than those currently achieved using sound practice within the RMA process. While this legislation is subject to considerable revision, it will remain the process under which regionally significant quarry consents will continue to be lodged.”

The Expert Panels will now consider these applications. The AQA submission said these need to be resourced to provide the strong economic and environmental analysis required under the Bill to ensure robust decision-making and sound environmental outcomes.

“Quarries fully expect to meet environmental, cultural and resource management requirements for new or renewed consents whether under fast-track approvals or the reformed RMA legislation,” says Wayne.

“What we need are outcomes with more certainty and faster than current timeframes which often take many years to get a consent.”

He says the Infrastructure Commission told our July conference that it’s estimated our country could need to find \$1000 billion (\$1 trillion) to spend on infrastructure in coming decades.

“Ensuring better supply from nearby quarries is one way to reduce that cost because the big, price-driver is transport.

“The Fast-track Approvals Bill has struck the most positive note for our industry in a generation. We thank the Government for that change. We know quarries now have to show they are keeping the beat on good environmental outcomes while we supply the rock which allows everything else to be built,” says Wayne Scott.

**A version of this story also appeared on Stuff in September.*





Check where you are excavating is not owned by the Crown.

The Crown owns what's under its ground

Some quarry operators may be unaware of the hard, cold fact that the Crown owns all minerals in its wide estate, including aggregate.

The ignorance may not be surprising given Crown ownership of some minerals dates back to Elizabethan times, which was then picked up in this country in Victorian era legislation and land titles.

Whatever the reason, New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals (NZP&M) has become aware some operators are quarrying Crown-owned minerals without permits. As the regulator of New Zealand's extractives industry, it's issued a memo to get things sorted.

The Crown has owned all in-land gold and silver since a Royal Prerogative exercised in 1568 by Queen Elizabeth I. Such doctrines were 'imported' into New Zealand and petroleum was also added. The Crown has rights to other minerals listed in the Crown Minerals Act 1991 (CMA). It also owns minerals located within the Crown's estate, including those not specified in the CMA, such as aggregate.

Phil Latimer, NZP&M's National Manager Compliance, says even the mining sector would be surprised to know the Crown owns about half NZ's industrial rocks and building stones – mostly because they are in Crown-owned land.

"We have recently discovered a number of quarry operators that haven't sought correct permission from the Crown."

He says they've failed to check for Crown mineral ownership on their property title or to conduct a Land Mineral Status (LMS) report as part of their due diligence.

"And have since discovered they have been unknowingly mining Crown-owned minerals."

To mine Crown-owned minerals, a person or company requires

a mining permit from NZP&M. This gives the operator rights to specified Crown-owned minerals within the area of the permit, subject to conditions and obligations such as paying royalties.

"In the examples we have seen to date, some operators have come forward voluntarily, accepted responsibility and have worked constructively with our compliance team to resolve the situation," says Phil.

The process usually begins with the operator applying for a minerals mining permit.

"While this is a good outcome, we are reminding all quarry operators that checking the ownership status of the materials you are extracting should be an essential part of the planning phase of your project. This is important even when the land is privately owned."

He acknowledges it can be challenging to determine mineral ownership in a land title or holding. In many cases, it may be necessary to search back to the first transfer or sale of the land from the Crown. This should establish whether minerals continue to be held with the fee simple title, have been reserved by the Crown, or have been excluded because of subsequent transactions.

NZP&M recommends sourcing a Land Mineral Status Report from a supplier approved by Land Information New Zealand. This will give an accurate picture of ownership and "avoid possible enforcement action by NZP&M's Compliance Team down the track."

"If you think you may be illegally mining Crown-owned minerals without a permit, you need to do your due diligence urgently. Contact us before we contact you," says Phil Latimer. **AQA**

AQA Technical update

NZTA M03

- The working group on M03 sub-base has had its second meeting and may be ready for public consultation by the end of the year.
- Similarities to the new M04 spec are statistical acceptance and different classes of material for light and heavy design loading.

AQA/IQA Education Collaboration

- AQA has been collaborating with the Institute of Quarrying Australia to develop the quarry materials training package complete with short videos, with funding from the Inspiring Futures Foundation.
- This educational package should be out in the first quarter next year.
- It will be a very useful introduction to quarry products for those new to the aggregates industry and those who purchase and/or specify quarry materials.

AQA Quarry Database Update

- AQA has been auditing the database online and adjusting names for some sites, while marking satellite operations (related extraction areas) that are part of the main quarry.
- Koordinates is still unable to update the original dataset (Layer 118245) with the newer information, so this is being published separately. A link to the newest dataset will be in the description for users to access the latest version.

Wellington Region Aggregate Opportunities

- AQA has been involved in the Wellington Regional Leadership Committee’s work on future aggregate supply security, building on the work completed by GNS Science for the Infrastructure Commission.
- This collaboration between the Wellington Region’s councils and into Horowhenua District is looking at aggregate and industrial land opportunities and gives an opportunity to apply holistic planning to the Wellington Region.

Braided River Management Research

- A 5-year MBIE-funded project into the effects of managing braided rivers on braidplain aquifer recharges has been published by Lincoln Agritech. <https://lincolnagritech.co.nz/braided-river-management-can-limit-aquifer-recharge/>
- Those who extract gravel on the Ngaruroro (Hawke’s Bay) and Wairau (Marlborough) Rivers in particular will be interested to read the findings that will most likely be used to inform future regional plans. **AQA**

Mike Chilton
 Technical Adviser, AQA



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