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COVID-19 Update to AQA Members

Welcome to our first update in Level 3.

It's great to hear that most if not all quarries and other operations have reopened. It appears the required COVID-19 Management Plans are in place and working well.

Companies are taking their own approaches. I'm aware of one site where staff are texted their Toolbox talk material each evening, with a brief chance to ask questions the next morning across a staggered start before heading to the machines.

Most sites are starting slowly and looking for an upswing. Much of that rests with the Government's infrastructure initiatives and how fast these can be made 'shovel ready.' As one industry leader observed this week, if this means projects underway in the promised 6 months, that's fantastic; if it actually turns out to be 12 or 18 months, that will have consequences for our sector and well beyond.

I've written to Environment Minister David Parker this week applauding his plan to fast track some projects and offering the AQA's support. I again made the point to him – nothing can be built without access to local supplies of aggregate. We will keep ramming that message home.

Not that Government projects can solve our economic woes on their own. It's

interesting to see the perspective of Brian Bellingham in this AQA update about how he sees forestry and farming as the drivers of the Far North's economic recovery.

We had a good AQA Board meeting (via Zoom) yesterday and there was much discussion on how such technology can replace traditional face to face meetings.

I've certainly had a great response to the MinEx webinars I've been running – with more than 200 attendees across 6 events; that's as many or more than I'd have got to the planned workshops. That said, as one Board member noted, a lot of the value comes from the chats over smoko or lunch, so our future activity needs to embrace a balance of online and face-to-face engagement.

Stay safe and productive in your bubble and beyond.

Kia kaha

Wayne Scott
CEO
AQA & MinEx

Far North quarries look to region's mainstays

Forestry and farming are two key drivers for the contribution from Bellingham Quarries in the Far North to economic recovery.

Brian Bellingham, who runs the family company, and twin brother David along with Brian's son Jarrod, says log prices are climbing again after being an early casualty when COVID-19 hit the main Chinese market.



Looking local - Brian and David Bellingham

“A lot of smaller forestry blocks are now ready for logging and that needs roading,” he says.

With Level 3, the company’s Larmer Road quarry in Kaitaia, supported by five static supply sites, re-opened.

Bellingham’s three limestone quarries had been closed when Level 4 started but quickly re-opened with farmers wanting to put lime on their properties.

Brian says months of drought in Northland had meant little supply but lockdown coincided with the first rain.

“As soon as the rain came in, farmers were in a rush to get fertiliser on their pastures.”

Staff employed at the rock quarries were kept on 80% of pay with support from the Government wage subsidy. Brian reports it’s been reasonably busy across the rock quarries since the Level 3 return to work but he’s suspending judgement on any infrastructure-fed boom.

He’s unaware of any major Far North infrastructure projects emerging although there is a new bridge planned at Kaeo. Bellingham’s was the main supplier of aggregate to

the now completed new Taipa bridge but Brian recalls that when the Canterbury earthquakes hit, funding appeared to shift south.

“It’s going to be interesting to see how we get on with this recovery.”

As for the company’s COVID-19 Management Plan, he says staff have taken the requirements on board and these are reinforced at daily 7am meetings.

“We are going to have to manage it day to day.”

Webinars proving popular

The MinEx webinars, instituted to replace COVID-cancelled workshops, have been very successful. We’ve had 240 attendees on the 6 webinars run so far.

The webinars, led by a variety of presenters, covered Innovation, Incident/Health & Safety Trends, WorkSafe update/Risk Management, Falls, Incidents & Controls, CoC & Renewals, and Managing psychosocial hazards

We start the webinars again next Wednesday 13 May with a session on Innovation and then one on Friday 15 on Traffic Management. The following week there is a Wednesday 20 May webinar on WorkSafe update/Risk management and the following Wednesday 27 we repeat CPD, CoC & Renewals.

All of these webinars take place from 12pm-1pm and cost just \$20+GST. Please register [here](#). We will decide shortly whether to resume our schedule of later workshops, due to start on Tuesday June 9 in Paeroa and running through to October.

Update from NZ Petroleum & Minerals on COVID-19

NZPAM says it’s secured additional resources to allow it to process permit applications more quickly.

Sarah Kenward, Mineral Operations Manager says NZPAM recognises the challenging circumstances the minerals sector is facing in light of COVID-19 and the important role it has in supporting the New Zealand economy during these times.

“We wanted to let you know we intend on processing permit applications as quickly as we can and we have secured additional resources to help speed that process up. As you will appreciate, we must also ensure any decisions are granted in accordance

with the law.”

“While we haven’t received any requests for changes to work commitments due to COVID-19, we would encourage you or the people you represent to get in touch with us if they have any issues via nzpam@mbie.govt.nz.

“We note that MinEx has usefully provided a [COVID-19 Management Plan template](#) to help businesses set up appropriate precautions for re-starting activities.

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