

BAA heads for an innovative 2011

Many topics were discussed at the aggregates get-together, from apprenticeships to geotechnical mapping, and better safety and operating standards were noted, reports *Alison Carter*

The annual meeting of members of the British Aggregates Association (BAA) always manages to combine business with a convivial atmosphere and this year was no exception.

More than 80 BAA members listened to speakers covering a varied range of subjects. Alan Gibbon, development director at the Mineral Industry Research Organisation (MIRO) reflected on its collaborative work between industry and academia.

MIRO is sourcing funding for co-operative projects but, Gibbon emphasised, it was keen that industrial sponsors retained control of projects and directed what went on within them. He cited a project using quarry waste in the production of products such as paint, a project involving moving aggregates about using a freight pipeline and a low-carbon project which had been developed with a view to encouraging recycling and reducing the carbon footprint of asphalt in roadmaking.

MIRO is also involved in four projects in Europe, such as the "EE Quarry" project. Others in the pipeline include a project monitoring tailings dams, hard-rock ERT, using tomography to examine the complex siting of aggregates and looking at the impact of dust; MIRO has put forward schemes to design out dust in new quarries, reduce it in existing ones and reduce it during transport.

One cause of significant delay is the great crested newt, and MIRO is developing a project to cut costs and speed up the process when dealing with these amphibians.

Finally, MIRO is pulling together a range of views to produce a series of model planning conditions, with the aim of cutting costs and delays. A project in conjunction with Birmingham University is looking at the reduction of fines generation.

Gibbon pointed out that MIRO was industry focussed and was keen on industry pull rather than research push, adding that the organisation was based on collaboration and would "identify the best set of researchers to do the job on your behalf".

Simon Higson and Bob Edmonds from SLR talked about biodiversity offsetting within the mineral sector, with Edmonds highlighting the importance of quarries addressing biodiversity and the possible benefits to quarry owners, confirming that

"mineral operators are in a fantastic position as biodiversity gives them an opportunity to validate restoration work". While mandatory in several countries, DEFRA's environmental white paper published in June 2011 has introduced a voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting, initially looking to work on 12 pilot areas. (See page 14)

Geotechnical director at Quarry Design Adrian Wilkinson looked at an alternative approach to geotechnical mapping using LIDAR scanning, while Phil Slater, of SLR, spoke about the implications of the forthcoming Water Act. The act has been delayed more than once but Slater said it was likely that it would be implemented on 6 April 2012, with public consultation starting in the summer. (See page 11)

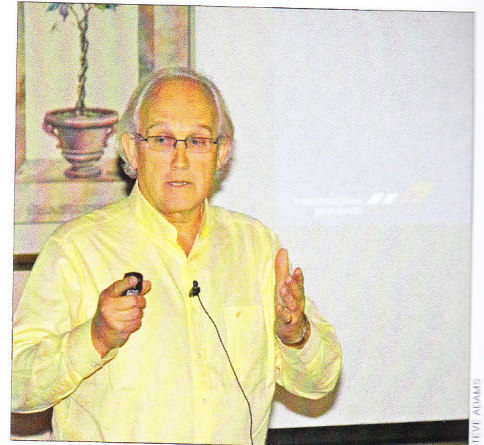
A good year for safety in quarrying

Eric Darlow, chairman of the BAA Assessment of Operating Standards Scheme, said that it had been a good year for the scheme, with Cullimore's Round House Farm, in Wiltshire, Glendinnings' Linhay Hill site, in Devon, and Summerleaze's Denham Quarry, in Buckinghamshire, picking up awards. Darlow confirmed that, overall, it had been a good year for safety in the extractive industries and BAA secretary Peter Huxtable said that he hoped these successes would inspire others to work towards the scheme's gold standard.

Laura Cameron, partner at McGrigors alerted all those attending to the perils of not addressing health and safety in the workplace. She said she was seeing a dramatic difference in the number of prosecutions relating to staff accidents: "Companies have spent money on putting statements in place, but there is still a lack of supervision, training and risk assessment. As it is now an individual responsibility, senior executives are regularly being brought forward for interview."

John Barritt from the Waste & Resources Action Programme, reminded attenders that aggregates "cannot be thought of in terms of just the UK as we are part of Europe". He confirmed that the CE standard, which means the manufacturer has declared the product is in conformity with EU standards, will be mandatory in the UK from July 2013.

Mike Phillips and Julian Smallshaw, of the Institute of Quarrying, spoke about the



Bolsover: upbeat about government's first year

importance of continual professional development training, since a competent workforce promoted the development of new skills, reduced accidents and improved company performance, alongside improving the industry's public image.

Finally, Bill Bolsover CBE, chairman of the Construction Products Association (CPA), looked at the importance of construction to UK growth and its fiscal value to the economy.

He outlined the role of the CPA, promoting the UK's construction products sector and its relationship with other parts of the construction industry. Bolsover was upbeat about the government's first year, saying that, while it had focused on deficit reduction and was committed to efficiencies in public-sector spending, it was beginning to reduce some taxes on businesses. He said the government was showing a commitment to apprentices, which supported his view that "we must get more people into the industry".

He said that every pound spent on construction generated £3 of economic activity. The government has supported major projects such as Crossrail, with a budget of £15 billion to be spent by 2018, 12 nuclear power stations, with £40 billion to be spent by 2030 and the high-speed rail link, worth £30bn.

However, with the Localism Bill looming, Bolsover was concerned whether people understood the crucial role of business in the community. ■

Alison Carter is editor of Mineral Planning