



Eric Darlow (left) presents the certificate to Steve Rackley on behalf of the staff at Denham Quarry

Train to gain

RECOGNISING TRAINING EFFORTS MADE BY THE EMPLOYEES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY CAN HELP BOOST MORALE AND SENSE OF TEAM WORK

Health and safety training is an essential part of modern quarry operation but motivating staff to undertake such programmes is not always straightforward. Many are not used to classroom based study or using computers so rewarding and recognising their achievements is important.

Summerlease's Denham Quarry recently held a ceremony on site to present the quarry's staff with a certificate for gaining the British Aggregate Association's Assessment of Operating Standards. According to Summerlease operations director Mike Lowe, involving staff in the presentation is vital and the company also plans to pay a cash bonus for reaching this standard.

The BAA scheme aims to provide third party audit of the quarry's operation. "It is a useful process, although it doesn't prove competence, it shows that the site is being managed in the competent manner," explained Lowe. "We had two visits from auditors as part of the assessment to check our processes. The first raised some areas of legislation which as a small company we were not aware of such as the need to have an emergency drill and health screening for employees."

While these are not critical issues, it shows the depth that the assessment goes to and BAA Assessment Panel

secretary John Baxter said, "No single quarry that has been through the programme has been without issues. While the items it brings up may be low on the HSE agenda, they are still important."

Lowe believes that Denham Quarry had an easier path to the accreditation than others because the site was only opened in 2009, however, the team of six who operate the quarry come from a mix of backgrounds which did add to the challenge.

Denham produces 240,000 tonnes per year of sand and gravel and is collocated with a London Concrete plant, which takes a significant proportion of the material produced by the quarry. The quarry has just received consent to tip inert waste into the open water without the need for a physical membrane – believed to be the first consent of this kind in the UK – which will restore parts of the quarry to agricultural use, while another part will be used to develop a new rowing facility.

The team is headed up by quarry manager Steve Rackley who has a level 4 NVQ and is supported by a team of experienced quarrymen and new recruits to the business. "The staff have a wide range of skills and it has been difficult to develop these skills in a way that is appropriate for each person with such small team," said Lowe. "We have tried to

focus on hands-on practical training that will motivate the team."

In presenting the BAA award to the employees, former chief inspector of quarries and mines Eric Darlow said, "The qualification panel that decides on this award is well aware of the hard work and commitment which was required to make Denham Quarry a safe and healthy place to work and we know that it could only have been achieved by everyone at the quarry working together.

"However, I have to tell you that your work has not yet finished. Those of you employed at the sharp end must continue to make improvements by identifying and rectifying hazardous situations and intervening whenever anyone inadvertently or otherwise puts themselves in danger. Protecting you and each other is an ongoing commitment and maintaining a high standard once achieved is the hardest part.

"All that said, you have made a very impressive beginning by gaining this award and you can be proud of what you have achieved."

With 2.4 million tonnes of consented reserves at Denham and prospects of further extensions, the quarry looks set to be a long term part of the Buckinghamshire construction sector. But with the BAA accreditation secured and the backing of the workforce, Summerlease hopes that its tenure will be a safe one. ■

