



Photo: Fotolia

## INSIGHT#5 : NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

# More than 99% of relevant sites have a biodiversity action plan

**Q**uarry restoration provides a major opportunity to protect and enhance biodiversity. The industry has a long legacy of high-quality restoration and makes a significant contribution to the UK's wildlife, including many rare and threatened species.

Most ready-mix and precast concrete production plants

are located in industrial areas where the impact of dust and light pollution on local residents tends to be minimal. Wildlife and biodiversity also tend to be affected less than in rural areas. The concrete industry has therefore adopted the Mineral Products Association biodiversity strategy which is more focused on the quarrying of limestone for cement and aggregates, where there is

a higher potential for effects on local residents and wildlife. Quarries offer a unique opportunity to design and create new landforms and habitats to support local biodiversity. Many plant species already live in quarries, attracted by the low-nutrient habitats that result when soils are removed, so this flora and associated fauna can be encouraged in the final restoration.

### DID YOU KNOW

*Since 2012, the mineral products industry has worked with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust to increase bee populations*

## 'PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING CAN LIVE IN A QUARRY'

**Nigel Symes is head of the RSPB's Business Advice unit overseeing the Nature After Minerals programme**

**How much quarry land has been restored through the Nature After Minerals initiative?**

We're building up a really good bond between the quarrying sector and the conservation sector. We've been involved in the restoration of 3,500 hectares, helping mineral companies to add value to their restorations. We've found that many quarry companies are very willing and keen to do a good job and should be commended for

going above and beyond what they're required to do.

**What sort of species can live in quarries?**

Pretty much anything. Quarries are located in a wide variety of different rocks such as limestone, granite or sand and gravel, and may be dry or flooded. That means you can design the restoration accordingly to create different habitats for different species. A chalk quarry, for example, would be ideal for calcareous grasses. For willow tits, whose populations have declined by 94% in the last 40 years and need wet scrub, quarries in flood

plains are ideal opportunities and we're working with several companies to put in that type of habitat. Quarries can provide a refuge habitat away from rivers for creatures such as the white-clawed crayfish, susceptible to diseases carried by the introduced signal crayfish.

**Why do quarries make good habitats?**

One reason that a quarry is a good site for restoration is that you're left with bare ground that hasn't had anything done with it except had things removed from it. You therefore have a blank canvas to design the habitat. For example, you can move around

the overburden material that's been extracted and left on the site to create the landscape you want. Also, nature doesn't like very fertile ground particularly – habitats do best where nutrients are a bit thin on the ground.

**Do you have a favourite quarry restoration?**

One of the places where there's been exciting stuff going on is Dove Holes, a huge limestone quarry near Buxton in Derbyshire, where it was discovered that there was a pair of rare twites. The company planted the specific grassland they need to feed and now there are seven pairs.



Photo: Tarmac

# 8,000

HECTARES OF UK  
PRIORITY HABITATS  
CREATED

Members of the Mineral Products Association manage or control over 115 square miles of land; equivalent to a National Park such as the Norfolk Broads. Scores of wild places, such as Threshfield quarry in the Yorkshire Dales (left), owned by Tarmac, are now open to the public as part of the MPA National Nature Park, launched in 2013. Tarmac has also trialled the government's Corporate Natural Capital Accounting Framework at its Mancetter quarry in Warwickshire. The innovative methodology highlighted the impact of its restoration projects, which have increased the renewable natural capital value of the site from £110,000 to over £3.5m.