The Aggregate and Quarry Association

While sourcing materials for buildings and roads would have been one of the vital first tasks New Zealand's early settlers, it was only forty years ago the companies involved in extracting and supplying gravel and allied materials formed the Aggregate and Quarry Association of New Zealand - the AQA. It is the national body representing 85% of the companies involved in New Zealand's quarrying industry that produces nearly 50 million tonnes of aggregates and allied raw materials such as limestone.

Aggregate describes natural materials such as crushed rock, gravel, sand and river stone. It is obtained from two sources: quarries, where a quarry face is blasted and the resulting raw material is crushed and screened to produce a wide range of aggregates in various sizes; and riverbeds where gravel and sand is removed as part of river management to decrease the potential for flooding or to open choked areas.

The AQA was formed in response to the need for an industry group that could represent aggregate suppliers on a range of issues, as well as liaise with specifiers and end users of the materials.

Training, education, planning for new and the rehabilitation of old quarries and associated environmental issues are key concerns of the AQA.

Recently the Association has been encouraging members to join the AQA Best Practice Energy Programme which provides a practical way for the industry to drive down their energy costs. Business analysts say that reducing fixed costs should be the number one tactic for companies in tough economic times. Quarrying is an energy intensive sector, with energy making up as much as 21% of total cost of supplies, excluding labour. The project has been developed in partnership with the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA).

While aggregate is fundamental to the nation's infrastructure, New Zealand does not have a research programme to identify future sources. Also there is no provision by central or local government to ensure an adequate supply of aggregate at a national or local level. Forward planning for building works, major road and motorways does not factor in the massive

supply of locally sourced materials that will be required over a period of years to complete these works.

Rather it is an industry that has to fight for its right to quarry raw materials to produce aggregates. Therefore one of the AQA's major aims is to develop a national policy that will enable the industry to meet the nation's future demand for aggregates, particularly in the light of the government's plans for infrastructure development.

The most cost-effective aggregate is that which is locally sourced, for while aggregates are low value relative to weight, increasing the distance over which they are transported from quarry to construction site adds significantly to costs. For every 30kms travelled the material delivered cost can double in price. In some instances aggregate now has to be transported over 100kms to its destination.

Transporting aggregate also adds to costs and pressures on sustainability and traffic flow. New Zealand can lower its carbon footprint through sourcing aggregate close to the buildings and roads that require it.

However, access to appropriate land for quarrying is subject to the processes of the Resource Management Act and huge resource over many years can be used up in an application process.

AQA is currently engaged in a project with Ministry for the Environment and Local Government NZ, the culmination of which will be the publication of Guidance Notes on the MfE website later in 2009, essentially detailing how planning for current and future aggregate resources can be achieved, and describing appropriate methods to manage quarry environmental issues and effects.

It is hoped that these guidelines will level the playing field and ensure that planning will be consistent across local authorities rather than the current situation where each local body has its own interpretation of requirements.

However, the AQA is working towards a national policy framework and has developed an *Agenda for Change* to give New Zealand's future a more solid foundation:

- A national infrastructure summit, bringing together government, local government and affected industries to urgently assess obstacles to infrastructure development and set up rapid responses to issues, like proximate access to aggregate resources.

- Direct ministerial responsibility for aggregate; rather than currently under an Associate Minister of Energy, this might come under a Minister for Infrastructural Development..

- A national policy statement on aggregate supply – to include consideration of changes to the RMA and Local Government Act, requiring local authorities to include provision for proximate aggregate supplies in long-term council plans.

- A ministerial advisory body on aggregate supply that meets regularly.

- Establishment of a policy framework to ensure proximate supply of aggregates in all areas of New Zealand.

- Establishment of a research programme to identify future sources of aggregate supply and alternative sustainable technologies.

- Establishment of national standards for recycling of materials for use with aggregate, e.g. demolition concrete and glass bottles.

- Identification and designation of resource extraction zones by every local authority.

- Establishment of appropriate working relationship models between local authorities and local quarry/river extraction operations.

- Industry input into regional and local authority long-term plans.

The AQA is an incorporated society, with councilors elected from member companies around New Zealand.

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