



Highbarns News

Update 6 November/December 2009

Introducing the Highbarns Project Managers

Engineering and project management specialists Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited have been appointed to work with Dacorum Borough Council on the Highbarns chalk mines project.

Hyder have extensive experience of working with the Homes and Communities Agency to obtain funding to treat areas affected by mining. Within Hertfordshire they oversaw the successful investigation and treatment of chalk mines in the Briars Lane area of Hatfield and helped Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to access significant government funding.

Nowadays, to maximise government funding councils need to apply for a parliamentary order. Hyder have recent and detailed experience in helping councils through this process.

The Hyder Team are as follows:

- Mark Skittrall - Project Manager.
- Chris Milne – Mining Risk Specialist.
- Dr Peter Arnold – Project Director.
- Chris Bristow – Project Surveyor



REMINDER: Visual Survey, 30 November & 1 December

Chris Bristow from Hyder is carrying out a visual survey of 50 properties in Highbarns, Pond Road, East Green, Meadow Road and Chambersbury Lane on Monday 30 November and Tuesday 1 December. This will involve a 15 minute external examination of the house and garden at each property.

This is a key part of the survey work needed in order to develop the funding application. It is vital that Chris has access all to the properties in question.

If we have to go back to missed properties in the New Year this will delay the process. We want to avoid this at all costs as, like you, we are keen to move things forward as quickly as possible.

We are therefore relying on residents' support to make sure that this survey is completed successfully. If your property is being surveyed you will have received a letter from the Council making you aware of this and telling you what date and time Chris will be visiting your property.

If you are unable to make your appointment time, please make other arrangements with neighbours or others who can provide access to your property on your behalf. If you are unable to make alternative arrangements call us on 01442 228834 as soon as possible.

As well as undertaking the visual survey, Chris will also be on hand to discuss any problems that you think may be linked to the mines. Chris, pictured above, will be carrying identification to show that he is an approved contractor.

In addition to the household visits Chris will carry out a walkover survey of the general area on 2 and 3 December, including the playing fields and playground of Nash Mills School.

Following the inspection and a subsequent geophysical survey the Hyder team will prepare a detailed map and report for the council comparing new evidence with what is already known. This work will be a key part of the funding application.

There will be an update following the visual survey in the next newsletter.

GOOD TURNOUT AT PUBLIC MEETING

Around 50 people attended the public meeting held in October to update residents on progress made with the Highbarns project. As well as introducing the team from Hyder, the meeting was also an opportunity to update residents on other steps taken.

Richard Taylor and Michelle Berkeley gave an update on the work of the Highbarns Residents Group which has been meeting regularly with officers from the Borough Council and Hertfordshire Highways and with local councillors to raise issues on residents' behalf.

A copy of an advice sheet for householders, given out at the public meeting, is being circulated with this newsletter for the benefit of those who couldn't attend.

PROJECT NEXT STEPS

In summary, the Hyder team is currently building up a picture of the mine workings by reviewing all of the information so far, undertaking detailed research and carrying out initial site survey work.

This work to establish whether or not the mines extend beyond the area we already know about will form the basis of funding applications.

November/December 2009 - Review of information to date, detailed research & site surveys.

This involves:

- Researching the history of the mines
- Reviewing all existing information relating to the mines including historical records, details of remedial works to individual properties and other information supplied by residents
- A risk management workshop linked to the funding application. This took place on 11 November and was attended by representatives from the Borough and County Councils, the police and Richard Taylor representing local residents.
- A visual inspection on Monday 30 November and Tuesday 1 December. This detailed ground inspection will look for all possible features such as cracks in walls or paths or slight depressions in the ground and will identify areas for further investigation. It will be followed by a walkover survey of the general area on 2 and 3 December.

Late 2009/Early 2010 – Geophysical survey

This will use a technique called '**microgravity**' which investigates whether material has been removed beneath the ground. Microgravity surveys are carried out from the surface using portable equipment which doesn't cause any noise or vibration. It will give a good idea of what is underground without actually having to dig holes or go underground.

Hyder may follow this up with some additional boreholes if the geophysical survey suggests further evidence of mine workings.

Spring 2010 - Interim funding application

Once Hyder have completed a sufficiently thorough investigation and have a better idea of the type and extent of the treatment needed for the mines, they will work with the Council to prepare an interim funding application to the Homes and Communities Agency. This will help to develop the Highbarns project further.

COUNCIL FUNDING SUPPORT

To move the project forward to an initial funding application, Dacorum councillors have agreed to commit a further £84,000, on top of £150,000 already provided by the Council, to fund this important investigation work by Hyder.

Information on-line

Find up-to-date information on the chalk mines project on a dedicated area of the Borough Council web site: www.dacorum.gov.uk/highbarns