

## INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Mineral workings have an immediate impact on the land surface, forming an excavation whose characteristics will depend on the nature of the mineral and working arrangements. In some cases (e.g. clay) excavations are likely to extend over very long time-scales.
- 9.2 Accordingly, it is essential that these sites are progressively and effectively restored to an acceptable after-use. Restoration is an integral part of the winning and working of minerals and unless the industry can demonstrate that high standards can be achieved it is unlikely that planning permission for mineral extraction would be granted.
- 9.3 Restoration of mineral workings offers opportunities to enhance and create new landscapes, habitats and land-uses. Careful design can mitigate the effects of mineral extraction and may contribute to the local environment. The mineral planning authorities wish to encourage after-uses which clearly demonstrate such benefits.
- 9.4 To an extent, the type of mineral and method of working will determine the options available for restoration and after-use, and these should be identified at an early stage so that operations can be designed with this in mind. Unless special local planning circumstances prevail, restoration to wildlife, forestry, agriculture, or amenity uses are likely to be most successful, especially in rural locations. Restoration with built development may be appropriate in some situations.
- 9.5 Applications for mineral extraction and associated processing will need to include details of the proposed after-use together with arrangements for progressive restoration, phasing, land contouring, planting and aftercare as appropriate to ensure that the amount of unproductive or despoiled land is minimised.

**POLICY 34** Proposals for minerals extraction, processing and associated activities should include a scheme for the progressive restoration, as appropriate, and aftercare of the site to a high standard which is appropriate to its intended after-use and which can be achieved within an acceptable timescale.

- 9.6 In exceptional circumstances the mineral planning authorities would expect mineral operators to deposit a restoration bond prior to the grant of planning permission as a guarantee that the approved restoration scheme is carried out. Such a bond may be required where operations are expected to continue for a very long time and where progressive restoration is inappropriate.

## AFTER-USE

- 9.7 Separate planning permission is likely to be required for after-uses which do not fall within the following categories: agriculture, forestry, uses classified as 'Permitted Development' under the General Permitted Development Order, nature conservation, and informal recreation uses which do not involve substantial public use. Proposed after-uses will need to be consistent with approved Structure Plan and Local Plan policies and the development control criteria in this Plan.
- 9.8 Restoration to an agricultural after-use is likely to be appropriate in the countryside where mineral resources underlie the best and most versatile agricultural land (i.e. Grades 1, 2 and 3a). Where such an after-use is proposed, MAFF will advise the Councils on its suitability and on aftercare conditions. If mineral extraction is proposed on high-grade agricultural land, government policy requires restoration to the highest standard and as near as possible to the original grade, and that the land should not be lost to agriculture for all time. In some instances amenity or forestry after-use may be appropriate on better land if the methods used in the restoration and aftercare retain its longer term potential as an agricultural resource.
- 9.9 Restoration to forestry has taken place mainly on previously forested areas, and on areas lacking topsoil. Government policy on forestry generally considers the main potential for afforestation to be on arable land and improved grassland no longer required for food production. The Forestry Commission is required to advise on aftercare conditions for forestry restoration.
- 9.10 Restoration following mineral working can provide land for various countryside uses including informal recreation, amenity woodland, water areas for recreation and wildlife habitats and such uses will be encouraged particularly where clear environmental benefits are demonstrated. Mineral working can also provide opportunities for creating and preserving features of geological interest, and the mineral planning authorities will encourage restoration schemes which acknowledge these interests and recognise the presence of geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS). The mineral planning authorities will encourage the inclusion of areas of nature conservation interest in restoration schemes, in accordance with established policies of encouraging programmes which contribute to enhanced biodiversity. Proposals which provide an educational resource will also be supported.
- 9.11 In some cases, restoration may require backfilling of a mineral working with controlled waste. This could involve the import of construction or demolition waste, or, on larger sites, landfilling with general household or commercial waste. The latter is only likely to be appropriate where the geology is suitable, e.g. in former clay workings and where any fill material used will not cause pollution. The restoration of mineral workings which would result in the raising of ground levels in the flood plain of a watercourse will normally be resisted. This issue is to be considered in due course in the Waste Local Plan.

POLICY 35 The mineral planning authorities will normally consider nature conservation, forestry, agriculture, and informal leisure use as appropriate after-uses for new mineral workings. After-uses which offer clear environmental benefits will be encouraged. The inclusion of wildlife and geological features of interest into restoration schemes will be encouraged where appropriate. Consideration may be given to landfilling or other waste related activities where the geology and hydrogeology are suitable. Built development consistent with Local Plans will be considered at appropriate sites.