

Seeing Through Stone

4 July - 3 October 2009



Exhibition Press Cuttings

History written in stone



■ **OPENING:** Well wishers including MP JIM Knight and islanders, artists, geologists and scientists inspired by the stone gather at the "Walk Through Time" exhibition on Portland.

AN EXHIBITION telling the story of Portland's economic and cultural history through the quarrying of stone was officially launched last week.

Residents and visitors alike can now walk through the years at the free exhibition at the Drill Hall, which includes work by islanders, artists geologists and scientists inspired by the stone.

The exhibition, which was made possible by Portland Sculpture Quarry Trust, will also include archive footage and photographs showing the countless arts projects and ways the trust has involved the community over the last 26 years.

One of the project leaders, Hannah Sofaer, said: "For us the quarry environment has always been more than just a place where stone is extracted from the earth.

"Visitors can now understand the landscape better and will be able to see the different people who worked within the landscape.

Part of the exhibition will focus on plans to build a school for the whole island, and an amphitheatre and arts spaces cut into the rock.

There are also plans for an exciting 'Walk Through Time' attraction in the Independent Quarry behind the Drill Hall, where visitors can walk through 250

million years of fossils and caves.

Islander Tegan Smith, 19, who gave a dance recital inspired by the exhibition, said she thought it would be brilliant for Portland and the children would love the interesting way of learning that the project made available.

There will also be the first chance to see film of world-renowned percussionist Evelyn Glennie playing stone instruments, and archive footage of natural history, and the carvings schoolchildren have made over the years.

Councillor Brendan Webster, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council brief holder for Leisure, Tourism and Community facilities, said: "This is going to be an incredible exhibition, spanning not only the 26 years that the trust has been working with the island, but also charting the progress of quarrying since the stone was first used in the 1700s. In fact, some of the artefacts are from the beginning of time – amazing stuff.

"The exhibition really makes it clear just how much the trust has done to regenerate the island's quarries."

The exhibition, which opens at the Drill Hall in Easton Lane runs until October 3rd.

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ruling delayed p7

FUNDING AND FINANCE
PM raids £128m from
infrastructure fund p5

DCLG may cede £1.5bn underspend

FUNDING AND FINANCE

By Allister Hayman

The Department for Communities and Local Government is set to return a £1.5 billion underspend to the Treasury even though it has just announced raids of nearly £590 million on existing housing and regeneration budgets to fund the Prime Minister's new homes package.

According to the Treasury, the DCLG has underspent its 2008/09 budget by £1.53 billion, around four per cent of its total budget for that financial year. A Treasury spokesman said that every department could carry over unspent cash to the next financial year subject to scrutiny of each department's need and the "wider fiscal position".

But a source close to the inter-departmental discussions said that, while no final decision had been made, the DCLG was "unlikely" to carry over its underspend due to demands for efficiency savings.

An official DCLG spokesman said: "As with the rest of Government, we are required to deliver savings of at least five per cent. Indeed, we will need to go further than that in the current fiscal climate."

News of the underspend came as the DCLG announced details of a £586 million raid on its existing re-



generation and housing budgets to help fund Gordon Brown's £1.5 billion housing package (see *Funding and Finance News*, p5).

According to the Treasury, Whitehall departments have amassed more than £20 billion in underspends over 2008/09, a figure that has remained largely the same in each of the past three financial years. Last year, departments carried over £5.5 billion of the £19.8 billion 2007/08 underspend into their 2008/09 budgets. But analysts now say that pressure to rein in

Treasury: likely to get back the DCLG's £1.53bn underspend for 2008/09

public spending means that departments are unlikely to carry over underspends again this year.

The new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Bis), which has now subsumed the old skills department, has a total underspend of £1.6 billion. But a Bis spokeswoman would not say whether it would keep this money. Bis has been asked to contribute £50 million to Brown's housing package, which sources expect to come from regional development agency budgets (*R&R*, 20 July, p1).



Sculpting skills in a Dorset quarry

A review of a public art and stone carving project on the Isle of Portland **Page 14**



"We have been trying to go upmarket a bit. Now you can access free wi-fi on the seafront"

Nick Taylor, renaissance manager, Scarborough **Page 11**



Bridging the funding divide

The public sector in the East Midlands is fighting to keep renewal going **Page 17**

JOB OF THE WEEK

Trent & Dove Housing, head of business development, £45,000 **Page 26**

London mayor: city losing out over homes cash

HOUSING

By Jamie Carpenter

London has been short-changed by the formula used by ministers to allocate £750 million of emergency affordable housing cash across England, the capital's mayor has said.

Last month, as part of a £1.5 billion homes package announced by housing minister John Healey, an extra £750 million was made available through the National Affordable Housing Programme

to fund around 12,500 new homes.

But Boris Johnson claims that London's £207 million allocation is a third less than would have been agreed using the housing need-based formula normally used to allocate NAHP cash.

A letter from Johnson to Healey, seen by *Regeneration & Renewal*, says that the formula used to allocate the new NAHP cash appears to have been made "primarily on the basis of where the highest number of short-term completions can

be delivered". It calls for an urgent meeting to "explore the methodology" used to allocate the cash.

Richard Blakeway, the mayor's housing adviser, said that the formula meant that London's share of NAHP cash had fallen, while "every other region" had seen its share rise. "Funds are being taken out of London and redirected to areas of less housing need," he said.

The DCLG said that Healey would respond to Johnson's letter shortly.

It's an unwritten rule in Portland, Dorset, that you mustn't say the word "rabbit". A few years ago, posters on the island for the Wallace and Gromit film *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* were changed to "Something bunny is going on" because of this local superstition. According to Portland folklore, the animal's burrowing was responsible for fatal landslides in quarries. If a rabbit was seen in a quarry, the workers would pack up work and go home until they were assured that the quarry was safe to re-enter.

This is one of the more colourful stories relating to the island, which is connected to the mainland only at low tide, although it is probably more famous for its quarried limestone. Portland stone has been used by architects in the construction of landmarks such as Buckingham Palace and St Paul's Cathedral. However, many of Portland's quarries have long-since closed.

In 1983, spurred on by environmental problems such as fly-tipping in disused and neglected local quarries, residents formed the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust (PSQT), based at Tout Quarry on the island. In 1995, landowner Hanson Bath and Portland Stone granted a 30-year lease on the quarry to Portland Town Council, with the trust holding a renewable licence to run stone carving and sculpture courses. At the start of the trust's work, the quarry had been disused for nearly a century. It now contains a sculpture park and open air stone-carving workshop, as well as being used as a venue for outdoor dance, poetry and music. In 2008, the trust was runner-up in the British Urban Regeneration Association's awards for community-inspired regeneration.

The trust – which runs training courses covering all aspects of stone, including historical, scientific and environmental elements – works with artists, designers, the education sector and industry to develop the project's long-term future. As well as focusing on preserving the environment, the trust also seeks to enhance local people's skills. The latter objective is key: the Government has designated Portland an area of high deprivation: a large number of 16- to 25-year-olds in the area are not in education, employment or training; there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy; and aspirations are low, perhaps due to a lack of skills and job prospects.

Over the past 15 years, the trust has employed a total of 26 people in the quarry from May to October to run stone-carving workshops. Around 3,000 unemployed people have attended the courses, of which 240 are now studying related subjects in institutes of higher education, 144 are self-employed and 14 are professionals, such as architects.

A study – undertaken with Dorset County Council – found that the project had made a significant economic contribution to Portland. It had attracted an estimated £160,000 worth of business to local guest houses, hotels, cafés and restaurants over 15 years. On average, 8,000 visitors visit the quarry each year, the council says.

Rob Russell, deputy head teacher at the nearby Royal Manor Arts College, which is involved with the trust's work, says: "The benefits of the project for the community are huge. The largest school on

SET IN STONE

A former limestone quarry in Dorset is home to an arts-based project that aims to develop skills in this disadvantaged area.

Herpreet Kaur Grewal asks a regeneration expert for a review



the island is a specialist arts college, the coastline is now a World Heritage Site, the historical significance of Portland stone is without equal and the Olympic Games [whose sailing events will be held nearby] are on the horizon. The success of a community is closely linked to its cultural wealth, its educational provision and respect for its history. The trust is promoting all of these."

Regeneration & Renewal asked Patrick Pringle, principal consultant at regeneration and economic development consultancy ERS, to visit the PSQT and report his impressions.

Is the project innovative?

Perhaps the most innovative element of the project is the way it has been allowed to grow organically and in many different directions – often as a direct response to community needs. As a result, I can imagine the trust means very different things to different members of the community: some will feel it is about art, others may see it as being focused on education, heritage and open spaces, or it may be seen as a source of support for disadvantaged groups. Art and creativity are undoubtedly at the heart of the trust's work and that is reflected in its creative response to regenerating what are essentially a series of big holes in the ground. If the trust is to expand significantly to benefit more of the community, it will be interesting to see whether this organic approach can continue or whether really tough decisions have to be made in trading off creative energy with more regulation and structure.



On display: reviewer Patrick Pringle (left) examines the sculptures in the quarry (below and far left). Tout Quarry attracts 8,000 visitors a year (lower right). An exhibition at nearby Drill Hall (middle right), where the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust has its offices on the Isle of Portland (above right)



How effective has this project been in reaching people from disadvantaged areas?

The project seems to have successfully engaged different groups, ranging from schoolchildren, parents and retired quarry workers to those with interests in industrial history, geology and biodiversity. But there is still the major challenge of engaging the wider community and attracting people who don't fall into those interest groups. Art and heritage are always a hard sell to those who don't usually engage with them – both can seem intimidating or academic. The sculpture park and a proposed outdoor theatre present huge opportunities for broader engagement with local people, as well as a chance to make education and the arts accessible to a wider audience.



Are there plans to ensure the trust's activities fit in with the Olympics?

Olympic legacy is a high priority for Dorset County Council because Weymouth and Portland Sailing Club will be hosting the sailing events for the Games. But this legacy goes beyond sport and offers an exciting opportunity for the trust and the wider regeneration of Portland. The council appears to recognise the value of the trust's work and is working with it to maximise the benefits the Olympics brings. However, it will be important that the trust gives some thought to all of the opportunities the Olympics presents and where to focus its energies, as it would be a real shame if the trust failed to make the most of the Games.

What would you suggest?

It would be wonderful if the trust could develop the theatre in time for 2012, especially if it is possible to locate it within Tout Quarry overlooking the sea. I recently visited the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, which is a useful benchmark in terms of what can be achieved with an outdoor theatre. I've no idea if any Olympic-related sculptures have been planned, but this would seem a great opportunity to promote local skills and heritage, both in terms of the future development of the sculpture park and installing local artwork at key Olympic sites. It would also be a great opportunity to invite sculptors from around the world. There really is so much potential.

How could the quarry be improved as a general resource for local people?

The sculpture park at Tout Quarry is a great resource as well as being a unique and atmospheric open space. I only spent a relatively short time there, but I think more could be done to draw more people into the park and increase the level of interaction between the local community, their environment and art. It would be terrific if this place was really buzzing with life in the summer – I'm not sure to what extent this has been achieved to date. The multifaceted nature of the project is exciting, but it also makes it a challenge for the project to retain focus if it expands in an attempt to become an even greater resource for the community. ■

DorsetECHO

Exhibition to reveal plans for Portland Quarries (From Dorset Echo)

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Exhibition to reveal plans for Portland Quarries

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By James Tourgout »

PLANS to breathe fresh life into quarries on Portland are going on show at a new exhibition.

Ideas include an amphitheatre and arts spaces cut into the rock and a Walk Through Time attraction at Independent Quarry on Tophill.

The attraction, behind the Drill Hall, in Easton Lane, will allow visitors to walk through 250 million years of fossils and caves.

Plans will feature in a Portland Sculpture Quarry Trust (PSQT) exhibition, which opens at the hall on July 4 and continues until October 3.

Hannah Sofaer, who is one of the project leaders, said: "Proposals for Independent Quarry include a geological interpretation pathway with 18 geological rooms where the fossil record is reinstated at the correct level, and a wildlife corridor leading to a spiral earth mound rising from the base of the quarry to above ground level, the present day, and into the future. "Here children will be able to create work over the next 50 years that expresses their aspirations for the future, awareness of environmental change and endangered species as a means of highlighting global issues to effect change, both local and international contexts."

The exhibition will include an aerial view of Portland beamed onto the floor.

There will be images of PSQT's work on the island to keep the stories of the quarries alive as well as archive footage and photographs.

Islanders, artists, geologists and scientists have been filmed for short pieces of footage, telling how they have been inspired by the stone.

They include 100-year-old George Davy, who started out in quarrying in 1924 and still remembers the songs of the quarrymen.

Part of the exhibition will focus on the plans to build a school for the whole island.

There will also be the first chance to see film of percussionist Evelyn Glennie playing stone instruments.

Councillor Brendan Webster, Weymouth and Portland brief holder for leisure, tourism and community facilities, said: "This is going to be an incredible exhibition, spanning not only the 26 years that the trust has been working with the island but also charting the progress of quarrying since the stone was first used in the 1700s.



Stone show is a success

A MAJOR digital multi-media stone exhibition at the Drill Hall in Easton Lane, Portland, has been hailed a success.

Seeing Through Stone is the result of many years of work co-ordinated by the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust.

And it is a celebration of Portland Stone, the island's lifeblood, and the artefacts on show form a unique example of how industrial heritage and history can be used to build community pride through art and education.

The whole concept of Seeing Through Stone leads from what is on display inside the Drill Hall to looking outside at Independent Quarry and the landscapes

within the Quarry Park that visualises stone from its beginning to regenerating the quarry at the end of its working life.

The exhibition features documents, artifacts and creative works that are the outcome of on-site explorations, residencies, local archive research and design workshops representing a diversity of approaches to quarry regeneration.

Multimedia presentations and exhibits tell the story of the geological history, linking the present to the past with large fossils, the might of the industry's tools which exemplify the might and skills of quarrymen.

The exhibition will be open daily until October 3.

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Workshops

One week courses in sculpture, letter-cutting, architectural detail using freshly quarried stone in the open air workshop of Tout Quarry Sculpture Park.

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STONE Exhibition

opening 4th July the drill hall
Easton street Portland

