Permitting decisions

Surrender

We have decided to accept the surrender of the permit for Batts Combe Lime Works operated by Singleton Birch Limited.

The permit number is EPR/FP3832KR.

We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to avoid any pollution risk and to return the site to a satisfactory state. We consider in reaching that decision we have taken into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

Purpose of this document

This decision document provides a record of the decision making process. It:

- highlights key issues in the determination
- summarises the decision making process in the decision checklist to show how all relevant factors have been taken into account

Unless the decision document specifies otherwise we have accepted the applicant's proposals.

Read the permitting decisions in conjunction with the environmental permit and the surrender notice. The introductory note summarises what the notice covers.

Key issues of the decision

Batts Combe Lime Works (multi-operator installation) is operated by both Singleton Birch Limited and Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited. Singleton Birch Limited (operator of this permit) operate the lime kiln process, and Hanson Quarry Products Europe Limited operate the quarry – supplying the limestone to Singleton Birch. The Installation is located at national grid reference ST45925478 in Cheddar, Somerset.

This site has been mothballed since February 2014.

The main purpose of the activities that took place at the Installation was the production of lime (calcium oxide) and ground lime which was permitted as a listed activity under 'The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016':

Section 3.1 part A(1)(b) Producing lime or magnesium oxide in kilns with a production capacity of more than 50 tonnes per day.

The installation included:

- All raw material handling and preparation operations (excluding blasting operations).
- All lime, ground and burnt lime manufacturing – including screening, crushing, blending storage and handling operations.

The site operated a rotary kiln fired by natural gas. A vertical pre-heater tower pre-heated the limestone utilising waste heat from the kiln process (hot exhaust gases). Following this the heated (pre-calcined) limestone entered the kiln. The kiln had a daily production capacity of 560 tonnes. Gas oil was utilised as a backup fuel supply in the event of an interruption to the gas supply.

Following calcination of the limestone, the lime product was air cooled and conveyed to a screening plant to remove any fines and was then stored in silos. Further processing of the lime took place according to product specification – including further crushing and grinding in order to produce ground lime.

There were no process emissions to ground or groundwater.

This surrender only concerns the Schedule 3.1 part A(1)(b) activity and the associated land outlined in green within the area outlined in red in Schedule 7 of the permit.

Condition of the land at permit issue

At the time of the original permit determination (BL2491IP) the applicant stated that there were zero concentrations of relevant pollutants in the ground or groundwater therefore this provides the baseline for determination.

Measures taken to protect the land/groundwater

Environmental Management System

Singleton Birch operated under a quality assured Management System for Environment, Safety and Quality all certificated and verified by BSI. Normal monitoring surveillance visits by BSI took place on site, with company representatives for Singleton Birch Quality, Environmental and Safety in attendance. The BSI certification for Singleton Birch followed on from Hanson's (the original operator) ISO 9001 previous registration and was in place whilst the site was operational and for a while when the plant was mothballed.

Batts Combe followed the Singleton Birch Computer Management System which was an intranet system, with a specific section dedicated to all matters for Batts Combe operational control. It was an integrated part of the system with internal audits carried out on site, including specific environmental aspects/impacts and environmental monitoring.

There was a clearly defined management structure, with specific job descriptions for all staff which included roles and responsibilities including specific environmental tasks.

Procedures were in place for plant operation including an Environment Agency Incident Report Form and a Kiln Gas Oil Installation Checklist which looked at bund state, standing water, visible oil spills and that pipes were in good order. There were plant handbooks which were used as an operator training manual and reference document, specifically telling operators how the plant worked and key actions that were required including inspections and what to do in normal, abnormal (maintenance) and emergency situations. Spills and leaks were also covered in the handbook including standards required.

There was a "General Environmental Check Sheet" in place which listed environmental maintenance checks including recording oil storage security, drip trays storage and general housekeeping. These checks were carried out on a weekly basis.

Gas Oil Storage

There were three diesel gas oil tanks at the site, only one of which was used. The two unused tanks were previously cleaned and filled with nitrogen but were not used by Singleton Birch. Secondary containment was a bund in a gated compound with a concrete floor. Rainwater from the bund was initially drained into the diesel storage area access road. Variation EPR/FP3832KR/V003 initiated a discharge point into the Hanson Aggregates drainage system. A pipe was installed to transfer any clean bund rainwater onto the main quarry access road, which then ran into the Hanson collection system. Bund water was checked for diesel contamination before discharge and if contaminated was removed by a specialist waste oil contractor.

There was a spill catchment system separated from the bunded sections, for delivery of diesel oil and for dispensing of oil. This was regularly emptied and sent to an approved recycler as contaminate/water oil mix.

Hydraulic Oil Storage

Specific work instructions were in place to ensure there was no environmental impact from spillages, and to ensure waste oil was disposed by a registered carrier.

There was a building for the storage of engineering oils and hydraulic oil grease. Primary containment was the drum or container the material arrived in, secondary containment was a bund, and the final barrier was the concrete floor of the building. Spill kits and spill granules were also stored in here.

Waste oil was stored in a bunded receptacle. Storage of waste oil was kept to a minimum and transferred to an approved reclamation facility for reuse or final disposal.

General Waste
Separate skips for metals, general waste, electrical and wood were kept on site and emptied on a scheduled or ad-hoc basis depending on activity on the site.

Incidents

There have been no reported incidents with the potential to affect ground/groundwater within the lifetime of the permit.

Decommissioning

Decommissioning and demolition work commenced in January 2018 and has now been completed.

The site was inspected by an Environment Agency Area Officer on 11/10/19 confirming that the site had been decommissioned and all potentially polluting materials had been removed from site.

Conclusion

The permitted activities have ceased at the Site, and all dismantling and decommissioning works are complete, thus all pollution risk is considered to have been removed.

The Environment Agency agrees with the assessment that there has been no significant increase in levels of contaminants associated with the ground or groundwater underlying the site during the period of permitted activities.

From the evidence supplied in the Site Surrender Application and visual inspection, the Environment Agency has concluded that the pollution risk has been removed and that the measures put in place by the Operator during the life of the permit have protected the site from deterioration. The application to surrender the permit is accepted.

Decision checklist

Aspect considered	Decision
Receipt of application	
Confidential information	A claim for commercial or industrial confidentiality has not been made.
Identifying confidential information	We have not identified information provided as part of the application that we consider to be confidential.
The site	
Pollution risk	We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to avoid a pollution risk resulting from the operation of the regulated facility.
Satisfactory state	We are satisfied that the necessary measures have been taken to return the site of the regulated facility to a satisfactory state. In coming to this decision we have had regard to the state of the site before the facility was put into operation.
Growth Duty	
Section 108 Deregulation Act 2015 – Growth duty	We have considered our duty to have regard to the desirability of promoting economic growth set out in section 108(1) of the Deregulation Act 2015 and the guidance issued under section 110 of that Act in deciding whether to grant this permit surrender. Paragraph 1.3 of the guidance says: "The primary role of regulators, in delivering regulation, is to achieve the regulatory outcomes for which they are responsible. For a number of regulators, these regulatory outcomes include an explicit reference to development or growth. The growth duty establishes economic growth as a factor that all specified regulators should have regard to, alongside the delivery of the protections set out in the relevant legislation." We have addressed the legislative requirements and environmental standards to be set for this operation in the body of the decision document above. The guidance is clear at paragraph 1.5 that the growth duty does not legitimise non-compliance and its purpose is not to achieve or pursue economic growth at the expense of necessary protections.