

MEDIA RELEASE

Quarry Products Association NI

EMBARGOED UNTIL 22 May 2008

28 May 2008

Quarry Industry cements their Commitment to Nature

At an event held in Stormont fittingly on International Day for Biodiversity (22 May 08), the Aggregates and Quarry Products Industry celebrated their commitment to the conservation and enhancement of Northern Ireland's rich Biodiversity and Geodiversity with the launch of their Strategy **Our Nature with Aggregates**.

Quarry Products Association NI (QPANI) has taken the lead role by being the first industry sector in Northern Ireland to produce a strategy to champion biodiversity and geodiversity action. Our Nature with Aggregates is a play on words, conveying how the aggregates and quarrying industry makes a great contribution to the quality of our lives through the materials it produces while recognising that the extraction of aggregates does have environmental pressures, it operates in an environmentally sustainable manner and is committed to maintaining and enhancing our environment for a wealth of habitats and species of national significance.

Speaking at the Our Nature with Aggregates launch of QPANI's Biodiversity and Geodiversity Strategy Minister of the Environment Arlene Forster said "Northern Ireland's Aggregates and Quarry Products Industry is worth £730 million annually to the economy and directly employs over 5,000. I strongly welcome QPANI's initiative and industry's commitment in formulating this strategy and am delighted to be working in partnership with them to ensure that the industry continues to operate sustainable. This strategy and the resulting action plan will safeguard and enhance biodiversity conservation while showcasing Northern Ireland's unique geological richness which is known right around the world.

Laverne Bell, Biodiversity Geodiversity Officer QPANI explained to guests "Working quarries are important places for a wide variety of wildlife and our strategy realizes how quarries are an important contributor to the overall biodiversity picture. The peregrine falcon, which was once scarce in Northern Ireland, values the rocky ledges in quarries for nesting and its numbers are increasing as a result of that unique habitat. Wetlands created in sand and gravel quarrying is a superb location for a range of birds, insects and plants."

Laverne is delighted by the way in which the quarrying industry has responded to her guidance "The attitude has been fantastic, QPANI members' have already demonstrated their commitment to nature conservation, though involvement in species action plans, land management, and by integrating biodiversity into their policies and environmental management systems."

Our Nature with Aggregates is a five year Strategy focusing on the themes of awareness, action, involvement and partnership to conserve and enhance our biodiversity and geodiversity. The quarrying industry will work together with government, planners and nature conservation organisations to achieve shared goals, for the benefit of wildlife and society alike.

The launch was hosted by MLA's David Ford, Tommy Gallagher and Jim Wells in the Long Gallery and was attended by MLAs from various Assembly Committees, representatives from the Aggregates and Quarry Products Industry, geologists, nature conservation bodies, academics, government officials and other guests from the world of commerce and investment.

For further information regarding Our Nature with Aggregates and to learn more about the positive work the industry carries out go to www.qpani.org.

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Notes to Editors

- The Quarry Products Association is the trade association representing the UK aggregates industry. In Northern Ireland our members produce over 90% of aggregates extracted – sand and gravel and crushed rock as well as non aggregate minerals such as agricultural and industrial lime including limestone, clay and shale for cement.
- Press and press photographers are invited to gain coverage of the launch at Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on Thursday 22nd May 2008 at 10.30am.
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