

POSITION PAPER

29 March 2018

EU Pollinators Initiative

BACKGROUND

UEPG, the European Aggregates Association represents the largest non-energy extractive industry in Europe, with members in 27 countries. Aggregates are sand, gravel and crushed rocks, used to build Europe's essential infrastructure including homes, roads, railways, schools and hospitals.

The European Aggregates Industry covers a demand of 2.7 billion tonnes of aggregates, produced every year on 26.000 sites by 15.000 companies (mostly SMEs), employing 200.000 people across Europe.

After water and air, aggregates are the most used materials. Therefore, one of the key priorities of the European Aggregates Industry is to ensure sustainable access to primary local resources, while also aiming for the recognition of land-use for extraction to be an activity of public interest.

As one of the few sectors represented among major actors on the EU Biodiversity Policy, the European Aggregates Industry is now widely recognised as a trusted partner for biodiversity by EU institutions and a growing number of NGOs and academic researchers. UEPG members are convinced that responsible aggregates extraction is not only compatible with a favourable conservation status of habitat types and species; it has the potential to create it. Throughout the life of aggregates extraction sites (quarries and sand and gravel extraction sites) a large diversity of high biological value habitats is generated. These habitats are protected from external disturbances and pollution. In that respect, active and restored aggregates extraction sites form an integral part of nature conservation areas and Natura 2000 sites. In fact, a number of Natura 2000 areas have been designated on former extraction sites, demonstrating the compatibility of aggregates extraction with biodiversity and nature conservation.

KEY MESSAGES

Committed to contribute to nature and biodiversity conservation, UEPG welcomes the European Commission initiative on Pollinators and supports its objectives to fight the decline of these key species across Europe, which may jeopardise our ecosystem.

- ▶ In line with the **smarter participatory approach** of the EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy, to **reconcile socio-economic and nature conservation objectives**, UEPG believes it is essential to **engage with**

stakeholders (particularly landowners and users) and create partnerships between local authorities, businesses and NGOs to deliver practical results on the ground. The European Commission **Business@Biodiversity Platform would be a good starting ground** to initiate the dialogue and discuss appropriate measures to tackle this issue.

- ▶ While it is important to identify the key actors causing the decline of pollinators, it is also essential to look at who are the **key players which can provide support to reverse their decline and lead to their recovery**. The Aggregates Industry can contribute to the objective of this initiative with its **strong biodiversity hosting capacity and its targeted actions** beneficial to domestic and wild pollinators on a very large scale across Europe.
- ▶ It is essential to offer opportunities to attract and **encourage investment in nature protection**. In that respect, UEPG encourages **increased support and assistance from the EU**, with the development of **European SME support tools and funding schemes** for local actors which can contribute to the conservation of pollinators. This would stimulate private investment in nature-based solutions and better support the goals of this initiative.
- ▶ UEPG would welcome a **European Guidance** document providing simple and efficient examples of measures, including innovative business models, to revert the decline of pollinators. **The European Aggregates Industry is already taking action in this field** by raising awareness on the importance of pollinators for the good functioning of our ecosystem, through the dissemination of guidance documents, the development of biodiversity action plans, and through the organisation of training days and seminars.
- ▶ UEPG has an **important database of good practices** from National Aggregates Producers Associations and companies across Europe, taking effective actions for the conservation of pollinators and **raising awareness on the fact that active areas and former extraction sites represent opportunities for various species**, having not only the capacity to mitigate the decline of pollinators, but the ability to enhance their presence locally and across Europe.

SOME EXAMPLES

Please find below a non-exhaustive list of initiatives from national aggregates producer associations and companies across Europe, raising awareness and taking action for the conservation of pollinators.

- ▶ **UNPG, the French Aggregates Association** developed a [guidance](#) document providing detailed information on domestic and wild pollinators in France. The document is comprised of 8 practical factsheets describing how to identify and preserve solitary bees in quarries. Furthermore UNPG organises conferences, training days and awareness raising [campaigns](#) to disseminate good practice examples and to encourage quarry operators to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity by fostering the reproduction of these species on their sites, which host ideal habitats for pollinators.

- ▶ **MPA, the Mineral Products Association in the UK** works together with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BCT), within the partnership programme [Nature After Minerals](#), to promote to its member companies cost-effective measures to help support conservation efforts. Advisory sheets were developed in this framework, to provide guidance on the good management of bumblebees both [during](#) and [after](#) extractive activity. The ongoing project underlines that minerals sites, both active and restored, offer excellent opportunities to provide habitat and foraging (feeding) opportunities for many of the twenty four species of bumblebee in the UK.
- ▶ **FdA, the Spanish Aggregates Federation** is working in partnership with several NGOs to develop a National Action Plan on Pollinators to promote voluntary actions from companies to create habitats for pollinators.
- ▶ **JURA Materials (CRH Group), a Swiss aggregates producing company**, launched in 2014 a project for the protection of wild bees. In cooperation with a nature conservation association, the company brought a set of effective measures to foster the protection of wild bees and built wild bee hotels on 37 extraction sites belonging to JURA Materials.
- ▶ **Rudus (CRH Group), a Finnish aggregates producing company**, developed a voluntary programme called *LUMO* for the conversation and promotion of biodiversity before, during and after extraction, as an integral part of the company's vision on sustainability and environmental responsibility. Together with nature conservation organisations, the programme aims at training the personnel and the management of the company, to create better living conditions for hundreds of birds species, butterflies, frogs, plants and insects including bees.
- ▶ **Swerock (PEAB Group), a Swedish aggregates producing company** has developed within its biodiversity management plan, a specific action fostering the presence of wild bees, where removed surface layers of soil are laid up in embankments and different kinds of seeds are sown to bind the soil. This mixture of local grass and meadow flowers benefits butterflies, wild bees and a number of other species.
- ▶ **Heidelberger Sand und Kies (HeidelbergCement Group), a German sand and gravel producing company**, has developed a project called *Friends of Nature*, in partnership with a primary school in a predominantly agricultural environment. The project involved students conducting a research on insects, focusing on the collective interest in wild bees and their benefit for mankind. The company built together with the students a Wild Bee Hotel in 2016 and set-up an information board for visitors to raise awareness on wild bees and their nests. The gravel site, thanks to the absence of fertilizers and herbicides, allowed the renaturation of the area, creating an ideal habitat for wild flowers. Following which, the company sowed seeds of forage plants popular with wild bees. As a result, the company is hosting today 200 bee nests and 27 wildflower species, and raises awareness within its local community on the importance of pollinators.

More case studies are available online on the UEPG [website](#), with over 150 case studies demonstrating the compatibility of aggregates extraction with environmental protection and biodiversity management. Furthermore, UEPG raises awareness continuously via the triennial organisation of a Sustainable Development Award Ceremony, promoting good practices across Europe, with a specific reward for Biodiversity. **We believe the vast network and the large scale of the European Aggregates Industry can contribute to make a difference in the conservation of pollinators.**