

Members of the Independent Expert Panel visit Huaxin Cement Co, Ltd (China), member of the Holcim Group (Sept 2009)

Panel members Christoph Imboden, and Peter John Meynell visited 3 sites over 6 days including the participation of IUCN Asian regional business and biodiversity coordinator and IUCN China programme coordinator. The visit allowed the panel and IUCN staff to see operations spanning the full site lifecycle: A new extraction site, existing operating plant, and one quarry operating for more than 45 years preparing for its permanent closure in 15 years time.

Sites Visited

- Fuling: new plant and “untouched” quarry site. New plant which will start its operation end 2009.
- Yichang: existing plant and quarries, with some land slide and top bench rehabilitation activities.
- Huangshi: cradle of Huaxin Cement CO, Ltd, long existing quarry. Site currently reviewing its rehabilitation and future land use plan.



Yichang plant green belt , more than 80% of plant site

People met

- Huaxin staff, both at corporate and plant level
- Environmental Protection Bureau at 2 operating sites

Visit Summary

- Fuling is a greenfield operation which will start producing Clinker at the end of 2009. It replaces 12 “old” vertical cement kilns which will be decommissioned by the local government. An Environmental Impact assessment (EAI) of the quarry site was conducted by a professional environment institute in Chongqing focused on geology, hydrology. Since there was neither a statutory or company requirement, no specific biodiversity inventory or study was undertaken for the permitting process. However, the surrounding area appears to support a diverse fauna and flora and a rapid biodiversity assessment will therefore be included in future biodiversity initiatives by Huaxin. The rehabilitation concept and plan has yet to be developed. In line with Holcim guidelines the Panel strongly recommends the completion of a general rehabilitation plan prior to the on-set of mining (which should include consultation with local stakeholders). There is also an opportunity to create a biodiverse greenbelt area around the new plant which could include a wetland area.
- Yichang quarry, which has been operating for 6 years, presents considerable potential for biodiversity management in three stages: a) beginning stage: landscaping and stabilisation of landslide area, b) throughout the lifespan of quarry: re-vegetation of completed mining terraces, c) closure: establishment of a lake. It is

important to decide on the final purpose of the lake (fishing, irrigation, recreation, biodiversity conservation) at an early stage, so that landscaping can be planned accordingly. The plant site of Yidu, sited on the banks of Yangtze River, offers a greenbelt covering almost 80% of the plant area. A total of 30 ha of trees and shrubs have been planted in mixed belts of about 20 - 30 m wide around the perimeter and through the open spaces in the plant area, consisting of a good and attractive selection of species. The panel members suggested there is an opportunity to further raise this interest and awareness among the plant staff and increase their motivation to think about biodiversity through some specific biodiversity related activities.

- Huangshi is the cradle of Huaxin cement Co, Ltd. Its main limestone quarry has been operating for 45 years. Restoration and greening of the quarry now have become a major issue for Huaxin Cement since the Environment Protection Bureau have requested that, after exhausting its reserves in 15 years' time, the quarry should be returned to the municipality as real estate. Rehabilitation of the top benches was started in 2003. The current work is largely of experimental nature. The Panel feels that the urgent rehabilitation needs faced at the Huangshi quarry would offer an excellent opportunity for Holcim and Huaxin Cement to put this work on a stronger scientific footing and set some benchmarks for future quarry rehabilitation programmes in China.

Extract from general comments and observation from the panel:

- Biodiversity has so far not been a particular concern for Huaxin Cement. A biodiversity-linked issue, the rehabilitation of quarries, is now, however, emerging as a company concern that must be addressed - on the one hand as a result of increasing government focus on this problem, on the other spurred by Holcim's (and the cement industry's) growing attention to such questions.
- Biodiversity in China and in Chinese legislation are still focused on rare and threatened species. Biodiversity questions, for example, have to be included in EIAs only if nationally protected areas and/or species are being affected. The notion of biodiversity as a feature which is present everywhere in the landscape has not yet been widely accepted and is not reflected in national or provincial legislation and regulations.
- In view of the slowly emerging recognition of biodiversity and ecosystem services as issues to be considered in industrial development in China and in view of Holcim's strong international focus on this topic there is an opportunity for Huaxin Cement to assume an industry leadership role by starting to dock into the Holcim Biodiversity Management Systems now being developed. IUCN China has developed a position paper helping Huaxin top management taking action in this direction.