

Category: Certificate of Excellence - Biodiversity
Company: Hanson
Location: Otley Quarry, UK

Otley quarry is a former sand and gravel quarry situated within greenbelt on the north side of the River Wharfe and northwest of Otley Town centre in West Yorkshire. Otley lies on the southern border of the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The grid reference for the site is SE191 456.

The submission area is owned by Weston Hall Estate. Access for the Otley Wetland Nature Reserve Trust (OWNRT) members is through the obligations set up under a 21 year Section 106 Agreement. Access is by permit only, issued to members of the public via the Trust. A vehicular track from the B6451 leads to the site. The track also provides access to the Otley Sailing Club.

Sand and gravel extraction was carried out by Hanson and its predecessors at the site from the 1940s and ceased in 1996. The quarry was progressively restored over a number of years. A ready-mixed concrete production facility was situated on the site until June 2007; this area has now been restored.

The area previously used for mineral extraction covers around 50ha in total. The area submitted for the award amounts to 13.7ha and is known as the Otley Wetland Nature Reserve (OWNR) and is managed by the Otley Wetland Nature Reserve Trust formed in 2003. In 2008 this site won the top prize, the Cooper-Heyman Cup, at QPA Restoration Awards.

The restoration programme developed in conjunction with Leeds City Council officers and the OWNRT restored the site into a number of after-uses including:

- Otley Sailing Club
- A fishing lake
- Agricultural grassland.

Land within the OWRN has been restored to:

- A conservation lake.
- Native woodland, scrub and hedgerows.
- Reedbeds.
- Associated open water and channels.

Hanson has recently provided the OWRN with a new portacabin and tool store on the former concrete plant site.

