

Villagers protest over plans to expand quarry



LOGGERHEADS: protesters at Lesmahagow say rumbling lorries from the quarry pose a threat to the village but people in Blackwood, Kirkmuirhill and Boghead say they have had enough of the trucks.

Report by **John Rowbotham**

PEOPLE from four South Lanarkshire villages are at loggerheads over plans to expand a quarry.

Paterson's of Greenoakhill want to double the size of their 152-acre operation at Dunduff Quarry, between Lesmahagow and Kirkmuirhill.

The company, who have a turnover of more than £29m, want to add a new concrete block making facility to the operation at Dunduff.

They say the scheme will extend the life of the quarry by 37 years and maintain between 73 and 87 jobs.

However, the Coatbridge company's proposal to create a new access for lorries heading to and from the site has put people from Lesmahagow at odds with residents of Blackwood, Kirkmuirhill and Boghead.

Trucks currently enter and leave the site via an access from the B7086 road between Strathaven and Kirkmuirhill.

In their latest application, Paterson's propose an alternative access on to the unclassified Lesmahagow Road, .6 of a kilometre from Boghead.

It is intended that lorries would travel from there towards Lesmahagow where they would turn into Strathaven Road and on to Teiglum Road before joining the M74 from the roundabout close to the newly-opened Tesco supermarket.

Paterson's anticipate 18 lorry movements an hour on the proposed route.

That equates to up to 234 truck movements per day and 1224 over the quarry's five-and-a-half-day working week.

Between 80 and 85 per cent of the quarry's annual output, of between 600,000 tonnes and 800,000 tonnes would be trucked out via the proposed access.

People in Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill, for years worried that Paterson's lorries were regularly thundering past three primary schools in the villages, have largely welcomed the plan.



DUNDUFF QUARRY: residents from Kirkmuirhill, Blackwood and Boghead **PROTEST:** Alan Cardwell (front) and Lesmahagow residents

Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill Coordination Group have written to residents there urging them to support Paterson's proposals.

They say: "Blackwood, Boghead and Kirkmuirhill have suffered enough."

Already, no fewer than 138 letters of support for the scheme have been lodged with South Lanarkshire Council.

However, Paterson's access route proposal has infuriated people in Lesmahagow who on Saturday staged a protest against the move.

Up until Tuesday, there had been 284 objections to the Paterson's plan submitted to the council. Officials have also received a 180-signature petition opposed to the application.

One of the protest group's spokesmen is Alan Cardwell who has lived in Strathaven Road for 14 years and whose business, Dynamic Chemicals, is on the corner of Strathaven Road and Teiglum Road.

He said: "This planning application was the first opportunity in 30 years to take lorry traffic from the site away from Kirkmuirhill and Blackwood as well as preventing it from going through Lesmahagow.

"They have solved the problem for one community but created new problems for another.

"It has caused a considerable stir in both communities and in Lesmahagow, everyone is talking about it."

He said they had calculated that production levels at the quarry were likely to require 52 lorry movements per hour rather than the 18 estimated by Paterson's.

Mr Cardwell said they had also looked at 18 alternative routes for the lorry traffic and identified two that were "Viable" and would provide a link with the motorway.

"We have approached this in the way a developer would have and spoken to farmers and land owners to find out if land would be available," he added.

"Of the two we believe to be viable, one brings the lorries out at the M74's Kirkmuirhill/Blackwood junction and the other at the Lesmahagow junction with the motorway.

"Both substantially take traffic away from houses."

Mr Cardwell said their next step was to discuss the alternative options with Paterson's who have an option to buy the extra land they need for their proposed route.

Paterson's declined to comment on the row caused by their application, but the B&K coordination group say, in a newsletter, that the Lesmahagow group's objections are "partisan and totally unsympathetic to our situation".

"Where is the wisdom of having 36 tonnes of massive vehicle travelling at 30mph only a pavement's width from any primary school's playground," they add.

The group described as a "false hope" the idea of finding an alternative route, avoiding residential areas.

"Paterson's have tried various options to buy land," they added.

"However, farmers will not sell and Transport Scotland have confirmed that they will not accept any proposal to build more ramps on on/off the M74."

Clydesdale South councillor Alex McInnes said he had yet to see the detail of the Paterson's plans but agreed with the principle of routing the traffic away from Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill .•

He said: "To me this is a no-brainer.

"The Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill route takes lorries past three primary schools and hundreds of houses.

"The proposed route passes no schools and only about 20 houses."

Mr Cardwell said the lorry traffic would also affect people in the Hillpark and Clannochdyke estates.

"There are also plans for 500 houses at Wellburn Farm," he added.

"Once that is built you would have something in the region of 2000 people using the junction (down to the M74). It is ludicrous."

MSP Aileen Campbell said residents in Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill should not have to tolerate the traffic generated by the quarry.

She was, however, disappointed that Paterson's proposed alternative route had been presented simply as "all or nothing".

Ms Campbell said the alternative routes put forward by the Lesmahagow protesters appeared "sensible".

She added: "I've written to both Paterson's Quarries and South Lanarkshire Council to see if they would be willing to enter into a constructive dialogue that might take these alternatives forward."