

# QUARRY IS HUNTED

■ By ROSS THOMSON

**V**ILLAGES in rural Clydesdale are celebrating after the council threw out the controversial quarry application at Overburns Farm.

The application, from Patersons of Greenoakhill, was rejected by the council's planning committee on Tuesday morning following a lengthy protest campaign by locals.

If permission had been granted, 4.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel would have been extracted over a period of between 11 and 15 years.

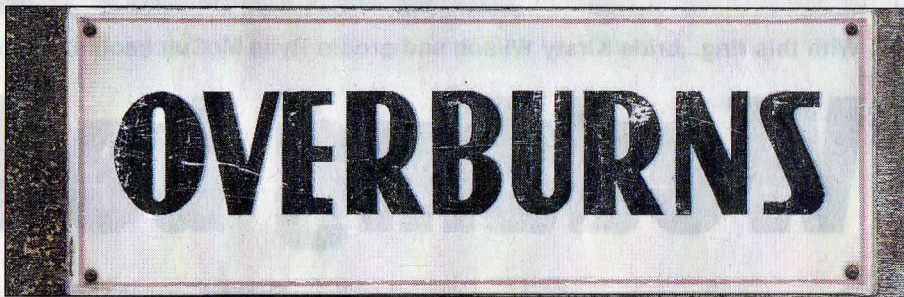
In the report, planning officials stated that insufficient information had been submitted to assess the potential environmental impact as well as concerns regarding the effectiveness of a 20 metre flooding 'buffer zone' between the quarry and the River Clyde.

Local councillors Bev Gauld and Hamish Stewart also threw their weight behind the campaign during the meeting itself.

The campaign against the quarry began last year when residents from Biggar, Lamington, Coulter and other surrounding villages formed the Clyde River Action Group (CRAG).

As well as environmental concerns the group, led by chairwoman Caroline Parker, believed that the number of lorries serving the quarry going through the villages would be disastrous and that tourism would also suffer.

Caroline believes this decision could be a landmark one for South Lanarkshire Council.



She said: "After 16 months of hard work we have so many people to thank from the residents of the communities to our experts, especially our planning consultant Alistair Woods, to our donors and fundraisers.

"Everyone has been brilliant and a huge thank you goes to the Lamington Anglers.

"I believe this is a watershed moment because the council noted the concerns of their residents and threw out these proposals.

"The council have told Patersons to give them more information but you simply cannot extract sand and gravel near a river on a flood plain.

"It was so vital not just for the people in our communities but for the whole of South Lanarkshire that this application was rejected.

"The Upper Clyde economy depends on the river and that would have been destroyed.

"Because of this decision I believe everyone in the community will be able to put their faith back into our council once again."

Another leader of the CRAG campaign, well known businessman and politician Arthur Bell, warmly greeted the decision.

He told the *Gazette*: "To have allowed the ecology of the Upper Clyde to be decimated would have been very wrong. Thankfully common sense and democracy have prevailed.

"Those of us in the area who are not going to have our roads massively overwhelmed with heavy lorries must be warmly welcoming this decision. This is a day that future generations of fishermen, hillwalkers, birdwatchers and casual visitors might never know of but it is a very significant one as their pursuits would have been badly damaged had the vote gone otherwise.

"The four major political parties have backed the CRAG campaign and have proved that we can all unite when the cause is a worthy one."

Arthur said that he took great satisfaction that the SLC planning report on the quarrying proposal was so comprehensively damning that there probably wouldn't be another attempt to develop the area for mineral extraction for many years to come.

He paid a personal tribute to Biggar water bailiff George Clark who first alerted local residents to the forthcoming development. "George passed away some months ago but it was due to his alertness

that we had the time to organise our opposition. The preservation of the area will be a lasting tribute to a fine countryman."

A total of 393 individual letters of objection were lodged while a further 58 objection letters were received from people who regularly fish in the River Clyde.

Symington and Duneaton Community Councils also objected, along with Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA, the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Transport Scotland.

Clydesdale MSP Karen Gillon, along with MP David Mundell and MEPs Struan Stevenson and David Martin, all objected, as did South of Scotland MSP Aileen Campbell who cited a survey she had carried out stating 89 per cent of respondents were opposed to the development.

Rejecting the application, Enterprise Resources Executive Director Colin McDowall said: "Insufficient information has been submitted to properly and fully assess the potential environmental impact of the proposed development despite a number of requests.

"Concerns regarding the stability of the 20 metre stand-off from the River Clyde, particularly during flood events, are also relevant and have not been properly addressed."

He went on to say that with the impacts which could be identified on the basis of the information currently available to the council, and the continued absence of information essential to deal with the application, he had to recommend refusal of planning permission.