Penfold Verrall Ltd are now into their 51st year of trading and have grown into one of the largest muck away contractors in Sussex, employing in excess of 50 local people and utilising the services of many more local members of the community through our suppliers and subcontractors.

Throughout our history, our business has relied on landfill operations to dispose of inert soils and have completed numerous such projects; in recent years alone, we have undertaken disposal operations at sites in Lancing, Henfield, Small Dole, Washington, Horsham, Ringmer and Redhill to name but a few.

Of course, such sites have a finite lifespan and slowly these sites have progressed to completion meaning we are now at the point where only two of these sites remain operational, albeit with limited life expectancy, and with no other active landfill sites in the Home Counties we have had to look at alternative disposal options to safeguard the viability of our business.

With this in mind, in 2016 we invested heavily in the creation of an inert recycling facility at our headquarters in Dial Post with the purpose of making the business more sustainable by focusing on recycling of inert construction waste. The facility has been a huge success, allowing us to produce recycled crushed concrete back to the construction sector all year round. However, where it has struggled is during the autumn and winter months where the wetter weather greatly reduces the effectiveness of our screening plant with our recycling rate dropping from around 65% in the summer to below 40% in the winter. This is because the 'claggy' soil is vastly more difficult to separate from hardcore and concrete than in the summer when the soils are dry. Once screened, the soils that are separated are then transported onwards to one of the landfill restoration projects we are contracted to undertake; even during a prolonged dry period in the summer we are still having around 35% of waste soil that we need to deal with, rising to 60% in the winter, and with a lack of upcoming restoration sites it is a real concern for us as to what we do with that soil.

We believe that the answer to this problem is to diversify our recycling techniques into **'Soil Washing'. This will enable us to consistently recycle 80% of our mixed soils on an all-year-round basis**. We will still be able to separate concrete and hardcore for crushing but also in addition will be separating the natural stone for use as a recycled sub-base or drainage shingle and also both sharp and soft sands. Our expectation is that the waste soil generated by our recycling depot will drop to below 20%, all year round, significantly raising our recycling rates. In addition, the waste soil that is generated will be 'pressed' to remove the water infused into it during the washing process, forming a cohesive 'cake' material. We are already exploring ideas for re-use of this material, such as for use in dry-walling and perhaps even block manufacturing which would further increase our recycling rate.

The washing operation is no noisier than our current dry screening process and the very nature of the water washing system means that dust will be very effectively managed. It would not constitute an intensification of our exiting operation but rather a natural progression to a 'greener', more sustainable way of running our business due to the maximising the efficiency of our recycling operation all year round. It would also represent a major investment for our business in the local area of around £3m which will enable us to carry on trading with a degree of certainty and consistency. We feel that the wash plant will safeguard jobs, provide a platform for the next generation of the employees to enable the business to continue to thrive and is key to the viability of the business. Careful consideration has been given to ensure that the proposed wash plant equipment can be fitted wholly within the existing yard area and no additional transport plant is necessary.

I do not believe it to be scaremongering when I say that without this wash plant, I find it difficult to see how Penfold Verrall Ltd will still be an effective business in 5-years time.