

XRSL, Ambleside for the Future and South Lakes Action on Climate Change (SLACC) joint Press Release

Campaigners opposing West Cumbria Mining's plans to extract nearly 3 million tonnes of coal a year (until 2074) from their proposed mine near Whitehaven, Cumbria held a demonstration at New Road Common, Kendal today (Thursday 20 August). After hearing speakers from Ambleside for the Future, XR Penrith, and also from groups opposing coal mines in the North East, over a hundred protesters, wearing masks and socially distanced, walked with their banners up through the town centre to County Offices at Busher Walk, Kendal. Campaigners dressed as canaries staged a "die in" on the steps of County Hall, and Maggie Mason, of South Lakes Action on Climate Change (SLACC) appealed to the County Council to tell the truth to the Councillors who will eventually make the decision on the mine, and explain why it needed to be refused.

The demonstration was originally planned to coincide with a key meeting of councillors to decide whether to approve the mine, but the County Council postponed the meeting saying "The report is not yet at a point where it can be finalised."¹

The groups opposing the coal mine continued with the protest, to make it very clear that the Council must acknowledge the credible "new evidence" that objectors had submitted², compared to the gaping flaws in the environmental

¹ Email from Cumbria County Council 12 August 2020:"

² Email from Cumbria County Council 24 June 2020

assessment and the evidence presented by West Cumbria Mining, and the significant, damaging local and global impacts of the proposed new mine

“Contrary to West Cumbria Mining’s case, the coal from this mine is not needed to maintain the UK or European Steel industry” said Henry Adams, one of the campaigners involved in the latest legal challenge. “ New evidence from the Materials Processing Institute, submitted to the Council, shows conclusively that European steel making is changing rapidly to use lower carbon alternatives that don’t need coal, initially Electric Arc Furnaces using scrap steel, and by 2026, commercially produced steel using hydrogen instead of coal. Demand for coking coal is set to reduce significantly by 2030 and will not persist for the 50 year life of the mine”.

‘The county council has also received evidence from Professor Paul Ekins, an eminent economist, that opening the mine would increase global carbon emissions, contrary to what West Cumbria Mining has claimed,’ said Henry Goodwin, who was part of the Carlisle protest as chair of a local sustainability group and as an Extinction Rebellion activist.

‘The developers say that this mine won’t result in ANY more coal being burnt, because other mines that currently supply the coal will close. Professor Ekins states clearly that the increased supply would lower the price, delay the necessary switch to lower-carbon steelmaking, and result in additional coal being burnt over the lifetime of the mine. Mines in the USA are not going to close the day the Whitehaven mine opens!’

Objectors have pointed out that these additional greenhouse gases (approximately 9 Million tonnes a year) could continue until 2074, 24 years

after the UK is committed to net zero carbon emissions. Even the greenhouse gases from the mine itself have been grossly underestimated by West Cumbria Mining, by applying inappropriate “guidelines” and totally unjustifiable “sensitivity criteria” to give the impression that these damaging gases would only have minor impacts.

Maggie Mason, who retired from the County Council’s minerals planning team in 2015 said “ Councillors need to be very clear that these negative effects are highly significant and must be added to the impacts on West Cumbria’s tourist economy, and it’s reliance on the much-loved West Coast and coast-to-coast walking routes that would be redirected into an underpass, past trains being continuously loaded with coal.”

“ The only real positives are the wages from jobs at the mine, because 87% of the coal was always planned to be exported, and it could be more., yet planning policies say that unless the national and local economic effects of the proposed mine clearly outweigh the significant impacts, applications for coal extraction should be refused.”

The campaigners say they need to demonstrate because climate change will affect us all, probably sooner than most people think. Rising sea levels will be affecting the centre of Whitehaven by 2050, and increased river and surface water flooding will increasingly affect almost all Cumbrian towns (including Kendal of course). International action is needed, and Cumbria County Council should not be undermining the UK’s climate commitments by giving permission to a 50 year coal mine!

Notes to editors. Please find information on these websites

<https://xrsl.earth/wp/ps://>

slacc.org.uk/campaigns/cumbria-coal-mine/

https://slacc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SLACC_objection-to-application

https://slacc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SLACC_Appendix-1_Professor-Ekins-letter_5-12-2019.pdf-4_17_9007-Final-21-6-20-v2.pdf

https://slacc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SLACC_Appendix-2_MPI-Report_11-06-2020.pdf

<https://slacc.org.uk/wp-admin/upload.php?item=2502>