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Regeneration of china clay sites



China Clay Quarry

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Cornwall's Area Action Force, a group set up to mitigate the effects of china clay pit closures and redundancies announced by china clay producer Imerys earlier this year, has announced plans to build new homes and offices on sites owned by Imerys. The group, consisting of Restormel Borough Council, Cornwall County Council, the Southwest Regional Development Agency, Imerys and the Job Centre, says the plans could potentially create around 9 000 jobs by 2026. This redevelopment is to take place on 1 000 acres of Imerys-owned land around St Austell, Par Docks and Nanpean and is expected to cost between £300 and £500 million, the majority of which is expected to come from private investment. Regeneration will be needed in this area when the scaling down of Imerys' operations is complete, cutting 500 jobs by closing a china clay pit, a refinery and two drying units. Unions claim this will take away £12 million a year from the local economy. Imerys says the job cuts are necessary and will ensure the future of the rest of its operations in the Southwest.

Source : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/cornwall/7124550.stm>

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/downloads/start.cfm?id=>

Lagoon leak at Glebe Mines



Tailings pond

Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

A leak was discovered on the 30 November at a tailings dam at Glebe Mines, Derbyshire. The leak, from a hole in the dam caused by a rock fall in old mine workings below the pond, caused no major damage and was rapidly plugged using rocks and clay. This leak follows the overflow of another of Glebe Mines' tailings dams in January which flooded the village of Stoney Middleton causing damage to property and local infrastructure. Local residents have voiced concerns that the lagoon in which the new leak was found is much bigger than the one that failed in January and its failure "would cause much greater problems and even loss of life" according to local ecology consultant Steve Furness. The Environment Agency and Glebe Mines are investigating the cause of the leak.

Sources : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/derbyshire/7126543.stm> and <http://www.matlockmercury.co.uk/news/Stoney-Middleton-villagers-fear-new.3551475.jp>

Plans for major offshore wind farm expansion



Wind turbine

Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

The UK Energy Secretary, John Hutton, has unveiled plans to increase the offshore wind energy capacity of the UK to 33 gigawatts by 2020. This would mean building 7 000 new turbines and would increase wind energy production in the UK by 60%. This would generate enough electricity to power all of the UK 's homes. Mr Hutton announced the plans at a European energy conference in Berlin as part of a strategic environmental assessment of the seas surrounding the UK . Under current plans several large offshore wind farms are to be built, with a total capacity of 8GW, including the 1GW London array, which will be the largest wind farm in the world. These new plans will allow for a further 25GW of offshore

<http://www.bgs.ac.uk/downloads/start.cfm?id=>

capacity. Mr Hutton also announced that he will chair an enhanced Renewable Advisory Board to advise the government on the EU 2020 renewable energy target of 20% of energy coming from renewable sources.

Environmental campaigners have voiced concerns that the wind farms could damage habitats and kill birds. Mr Hutton has conceded that the implementation of such plans would "change our coastline". The Royal Academy of Engineers has also expressed its concern about the UK's ability to meet these targets. Sue Ion, vice-president of the Academy, said "the engineering effort to build 7 000 large offshore turbines by 2020 would be enormous, unprecedented and is probably underestimated".

Sources : http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7135930.stm and

<http://www.gnn.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=337237&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=True>

Plans for methane extraction by Scottish Power



Longannet power station
Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

Scottish Power has applied for planning permission to extract methane from below Longannet Power Station in Fife . Scottish Power wants to start a pilot project injecting carbon dioxide into coal seams and collecting the methane that is pushed out. This would allow Scottish Power both to reduce its carbon emissions by storing carbon dioxide in underground coal seams and produce methane for power generation. The methane would come from the deep coal mine at Lonagannet with is now disused and flooded in 2004.

This scheme is one of several that Scottish Power is looking into to try to reduce their carbon emissions; others include pumping carbon dioxide into saline aquifers in the Firth of Forth. Although only small amounts of electricity would be generated by the proposed scheme the methane supply can be turned on and off quickly in relation to demand. The planning application includes special conditions to protect wildlife but local residents are concerned that the drilling involved would cause excessive noise pollution. Fife Council will have to approve any plans before development can go ahead.

Sources : <http://www.thecourier.co.uk/output/2007/12/06/newsstory10651353t0.asp> and http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7130493.stm

Future secured for Nottinghamshire colliery



UK colliery

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UK Coal, the owners of Thoresby Colliery, one of Nottinghamshire's last remaining coal mines, has signed a deal with EDF Energy securing the colliery's future for the next 10 years. The deal, worth around £200 million, means Thoresby will supply EDF with four million tonnes of coal between 2009 and 2012. After 2012 UK Coal will operate the colliery for another 6 years with new contracts and selling coal on the spot market. This deal has prompted UK Coal to announce a £55 million investment scheme in the colliery.

Currently the reserves at Thoresby will be exhausted by late 2009, but UK Coal have said that the £55 million of new investment will allow access to a new seam by excavating major new tunnels. Eleven faces, between 265 m and 350 m wide and each containing around a million tonnes of coal, have been planned. Machinery to work these new faces is also to be refurbished. The new seam known as the Deep Soft Seam, had previously been discounted due to its high waste levels but a near doubling of coal prices in the last 12 months has made it economic to work.

UK Coal has also said that the new workings would require fewer employees and 100 jobs are to be axed, bringing the number employed by the colliery to around 360. UK Coal maintains this can be met through voluntary redundancies.

Sources : <http://www.ukcoal.com/press-releases> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/nottinghamshire/7135880.stm>

Plans for Shropshire opencast coal



Open cast coal extraction

Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

UK Coal has revealed plans to develop an opencast coal mine at New Works and Huntington in Little Wenlock near Telford . The proposed operation would have a duration of 32 months and would extract 900 000 tonnes of coal. Local residents have made objections to the mine, concerned about noise, dust, lorry movement and the impact to tourism. The local Parish Council has said they are “extremely concerned” about the development but UK Coal has promised a community trust fund of £500 000 for the local area.

Source : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/shropshire/7122574.stm>

Re-opening of UK tungsten and tin mine



Hemerdon open pit

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The Hemerdon mine, near Plympton in Devon , is set to re-open, possibly in the next three years. The Australian-based, tin and tungsten-focused, Wolf Minerals has announced that it has purchased 100% of the Hemerdon deposit.

The Hemerdon mine, one of the largest tungsten and tin resource in the western world, contains an estimated mineable reserve of 40 million tonnes at a grade of 0.183% of tungsten trioxide and 0.029% tin. The total resource is estimated at 73 million tonnes at 0.143% tungsten trioxide and 0.026% tin according to a feasibility study carried out in 1981 for American miner AMAX. The ore is currently accessed by an open pit which, if mining restarted, could be up to 850 m long, 540 m wide and 200 m deep.

Wolf Minerals has agreed to pay \$1 000 000 Australian dollars for the Hemerdon mine. The majority of this will go to Imerys who own much of the land and several adjacent china clay pits. An annual rental fee of \$145 000 Australian dollars will also be paid to local farmers who own mineral rights; this lease has been agreed for 40 years. The announcement boosted Wolf Minerals' share price by 89%. Wolf plans to spend £8 million on the development with the rest of the £60 million needed to begin mining to come from UK and international investors.

The mine life is expected to be 15-19 years and will provide 200 new full-time jobs. A further 300 positions could be created indirectly in the area. Wolf Minerals anticipates producing 3000 tonnes of tungsten each year and will pay an estimated £1 million each year to local land owners in smelter royalties. Overall the project could indirectly invest £20 million into the region annually. A company spokesman announced “the strategically important reserves of this valuable mineral are anticipated to meet the UK 's entire demand for this essential raw material for many years to come as well as generating economically important exports and up to 500 jobs”.

However, some local residents oppose the plans, saying that mining operations will be too near residential areas and traffic will increase. Local parish councilor Julian Taylor has said “it will be a huge impact on Hemerdon. This mine will actually engulf homes”.

The Hemerdon deposit was discovered in 1867, the first operations were in 1919 when 16 000 tonnes of ore was mined. The site was also active during the Second World War and has had several owners over the last 60 years. The mine currently has planning permission dated from 1986 to 2021. However a revised permission will have to be granted by Devon County Council.

Sources :

<http://www.mineweb.com/mineweb/view/mineweb/en/page36?oid=41279&sn=Detail> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/devon/7126273.stm>

Funding sought for Scottish gold mine



Gold sample

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Australian-based Scotgold Resources, the new owners of the Cononish gold deposit, in Perthshire , Scotland , has announced it will list on the Australian Securities Exchange. Scotgold is hoping to raise \$6 million to develop the Cononish mine and bring it into production as well as to pursue other advanced gold exploration targets in Scotland . Scotgold's IPO (initial public offer) has put 16 million shares up for sale at 25c each and will accept a further \$2 million in oversubscriptions. The offer opened on the 28 November and is planned to close on the 21 December, with the company proposing to list on the Australian exchange on the 15 January 2008. One of the priorities of Scotgold is to commence a drilling programme to identify the extent of the mineralisation and to determine a JORC-compliant resource. The Cononish deposit is already significantly developed with a 1.2 km tunnel along mineralisation and extensive exploration in the surrounding area. The deposit is estimated to contain 564 656 tonnes of ore with grades of 10.55 g/t of gold and 55 g/t of silver.

Sources : <http://www.scotgoldresources.com/latest%20news.htm> , <http://business.scotsman.com/business/26m-IPO--to-fund.3590475.jp> and <http://www.minebox.com/story.asp?articleId=10549>

Resource increase for Curraghinalt



Curraghinalt drill cores

Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

Tournigan, the owner of the Curraghinalt deposit in Northern Ireland, has announced a new resource estimate. Indicated resources are 250 000 ounces of gold contained in 570 000 tonnes of material with an average grade of 13.95 g/t of gold and an inferred resource of 350 000 ounces of gold contained in 640 000 tonnes of material with an average grade of 17.15 g/t of gold, based on a cut-off of 6 g/t of gold and a minimum vein width of 1 m. These estimates were calculated by an independent consultant, Micon International, as part of a technical report on the Curraghinalt deposit.

A previous estimate in 2005 by independent consultant, John Tully, gave inferred resources as 262 000 ounces of gold contained in 527 000 tonnes of material with an average grade of 15.45 g/t of gold, a total of 338 000 ounces of gold lower than the new estimate. The 2005 report gave no indicated resource estimate.

The new estimate is based on 11 934 metres of core recovered from 24 new boreholes as well as the 264 boreholes used in the original report. The president of Tournigan, James Walchuck, stated "Results from the drilling program confirm that the mineralised resource zone extends a further 300 m to the southeast" and that deep drilling to the north-west has identified several new veins.

Source : <http://www.tournigan.com/s/NewsReleases.asp?ReportID=276016& Type=News-Releases& Title=Tournigan-Announces-Significant-Increase-in-Curraghinalt-Gold-Resource-and>

New gold exploration licenses issued



UK mineral exploration

Photo Copyright: BGS©NERC

The Crown Estate which owns the rights to gold and silver in the UK , has issued the company, Galantas Gold, the operators of the Galantas gold mine near Omagh, with new licences to explore 464.1 km² for gold mineralisation. These new licences are in addition to the 189 km² the company already holds and extends the existing licensed area to the west and north-west.

The Tellus regional geochemical and geophysical exploration programme has produced data on the new licence area which Galantas Gold Co. has obtained and is expected to use to aid their exploration programme.

Galantas Gold has also announced the completion of their infill drilling programme of the Kearney deposit. This is prior to a recalculation of reserves and resources to comply with Canadian standards.

Source : <http://www.galantas.com/corporate/s/NewsReleases04122007.html>