

## West Cumbria Mining Statement: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Since 2014, West Cumbria Mining (WCM) has been working to develop and deliver a new, state of the art, underground mine in West Cumbria to supply specialist steelmaking coal to the UK and EU steel industry. When in operation the mine would fully conform to UK Climate Change policy and assist the steel industry migration towards the government objective of a zero net carbon emissions target by 2050.

We were therefore very disappointed when, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the Secretary of State issued formal notification that he was now ‘calling-in’ the planning decision, on the basis that there is *‘increased controversy’* in relation to the project and that *‘the 6<sup>th</sup> carbon budget was published since he was advised on this decision’*.

The Secretary of State (SoS) has twice formally considered ‘calling in’ the application and has consistently declined to do so, most recently in February 2021, after receiving representations about the Climate Change Committee (CCC) report published in December 2020. This was in the knowledge of the prior approval of the project by Cumbria County Council (Cumbria CC). It is extremely unfortunate that large projects such as Woodhouse Colliery, with the significant economic benefits to all stakeholders and that have been found to meet local and national planning and environmental criteria, are subject to continuing delays in decision making.

Many of those who have written about the mine do not seem to understand and appreciate the industrial processes and requirements for steelmaking and how the UK will simply continue to import millions of tonnes of steelmaking coal from overseas for the foreseeable future if the UK does not have an indigenous supply of its own.

Until an alternative for coking coal is found, such coal production is essential; it also plays a crucial part in the renewable energy supply chain which relies upon steel for its wind turbines and other key infrastructure.

*Cont.*

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Mark Kirkbride, CEO of WCM commented, *'After committing so much time, resource and private funding towards the creation of a truly worthwhile project, it is distressing to learn that the Secretary of State has decided at this late stage to reverse the two previous decisions not to 'call in' the project.*

*'This appears to be in response to ill-informed comments rather than complying with established policy. As is abundantly clear in our planning application, the project would be beneficial to the local West Cumbrian community, the core industry in the North of England and the prosperity of the wider UK.'*

*'Nothing about the project has changed since the SoS last expressed his view two months ago. The Climate Change Committee's recommendations for the 6<sup>th</sup> Carbon Budget predate his most recent decision not to intervene, and nothing in the recommendations provide justification for a reversal of Cumbria CC's planning committee decisions to approve the project three times.'*

*'WCM will now assess the requirements of the public inquiry process & timetable and shall ensure that our clear case is presented such that it will be a compelling submission to the planning inspector, to ensure a further approval for the project.'*

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### Supporting Notes

1. WCM is a privately-owned business that holds three coal exploration licences granted by the UK Coal Authority, which collectively cover an area of approximately 200 km<sup>2</sup> of land and seabed off the coast at Whitehaven in West Cumbria.
2. Since October 2014, WCM has undertaken an extensive programme of exploration and design work to reach the current stage where the project was ready to commence construction activities.
3. By early 2021 WCM had secured significant private funding commitments to support the £165million investment in the construction and operation of the mine.
4. WCM has invested more than £36 million of private funding to date in the project development, known as Woodhouse Colliery. There has been no government or taxpayer funding.
5. The scheme has been fully supported by a wide range of stakeholders, including MP's, government ministers (across many Whitehall departments), local mayors, councillors and industry.
6. The local public in West Cumbria remain overwhelmingly in support of the scheme.
7. WCM submitted its planning application to Cumbria County Council (Cumbria CC) in May 2017 and has subsequently received three separate resolutions to approve from the Development Control & Regulation Committee (DC&R).
8. The scheme does not raise any significant architectural or design issues nor does it conflict with national policies. It is not concerned with the extraction or burning of fossil fuels or the extraction of coal as a supply of fuel as the proposal make very clear that the only coal that may be extracted from the site is that which is suitable to be used in the industrial process for steel manufacture.
9. The scheme will not have any adverse impact on economic growth and in fact has been demonstrated to perform a vital role in the economic recovery of the region.

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10. For the following reasons it is difficult to conclude how the publication of the Sixth Carbon Budget could be relevant to the principles` on which the SoS should intervene to call in the application:
  - a. The advice published clearly states at page 19, paragraph 2, as follows “reducing emissions in the UK should not be at the expense of shipping jobs and emissions overseas”.
  - b. The report does not contain sectoral carbon budgets and merely presents a series of exploratory scenarios by which the recommended budgets can be met. That pathway is expressly not prescriptive and does not purport to limit emissions that may arise in any one sub-sector of the economy and in fact envisages the continued extraction of coal for steelmaking as part of its findings.
  - c. Nothing in the information published by the Climate Change Committee affects the modelling or significance of the GHG emissions that formed part of the application at the time that the SoS previously decided not to call in the matter.
  - d. The application made clear the steeply declining future carbon budgets required to meet the net zero target and secured a GHG review mechanism as part of the negotiated planning obligation to ensure that the position could be kept under review.
11. At the previous planning Committee, the Council’s ultimate conclusion was that the proposed development would result in a global reduction in GHG emissions due to the effect of substitution and the reduction in transport distances .
12. Nothing in the CCC's recent report and supporting information has any effect on that conclusion or the ability to determine the application on that basis.