

The case FOR the new Cumbria coal mine

The West Cumbria Mining project is an important new export-led industrial project. It is a significant employment and new skills opportunity for Copeland and West Cumbria at this extremely challenging and difficult time. It will supply the domestic and European steel industry with high quality metallurgical coal.

As well as enjoying my strong support over a long period, the project has the support of the five Conservative MPs in Cumbria and many councillors. It has also enjoyed the support of various Government departments ranging from the Department for International Trade, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Ministry for the Northern Powerhouse.

The WCM project will deliver a vital economic boost at local and regional levels and utilise a valuable local industrial resource which enjoys strong demand in the national and European steel industry. As Mayor I have consistently supported the project and have written to the Prime Minister and others detailing my support over a prolonged period.

The support from Copeland Council, who have a range of experts with extensive knowledge of the local area and sites which West Cumbria Mining are seeking to develop, clearly suggests that they believe that the mine would not have negative impacts and fits within the development plans of the area.

Other local businesses, from small independent shops to larger employers such as Sellafield, are also in support of this project and can see the long term benefits that West Cumbria Mining would bring to the wider supply chain.

Copeland has a very wide range of socio-economic areas, some with very high levels of child poverty and deprivation. These areas, like many in the country, have been hit hard by the impacts of COVID. The area has been almost completely reliant on the nuclear industry for decades, but with the current changes which Sellafield are implementing in terms of a significant reduction in jobs, the need for diversification to other industries is apparent.

As such, it is imperative for the survival and economic prosperity of Copeland, Allerdale and Barrow that diversification is supported in terms of new projects, long term job creation and wealth coming back into the local economy.

The project represents a major new investment for Copeland and West Cumbria and will create hundreds of new skilled jobs in a coastal community. It also represents a large new export industry for the UK, and Copeland and Cumbria will become a key part of the international steel industry supply chain. This is reflected through the support WCM has received from BEIS and DIT Ministers. During the construction phase, the project will initially generate around 200 highly paid jobs within the next 18 months, with the right support in place.

We need to see planning permission and the relevant permits granted and awarded so that we can get on and deliver this crucially important project for the people and economy of Copeland and West Cumbria.

Mike Starkie
Elected Mayor of Copeland