Why the West Cumbria coal mine shouldn’t go ahead

Tony Bosworth
Climate Change campaigner
What I’ll cover

- What is being proposed?
- What has happened to date?
- Why does Friends of the Earth oppose the mine?
- What are the alternatives?
- What should happen next?
- What can you do?
What is being proposed?

UK’s first new deep coal mine for 30 years

Coking coal for steel manufacturing

Up to 2.78 million tonnes of coal per year until 2049

500 new jobs
Where is it?
**What has happened to date?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2019</td>
<td>Cumbria CC planning committee approves mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2020</td>
<td>Judicial Review threat prompts changes to Environmental Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2020</td>
<td>Planning committee again approves mine - in principle, pending possible call-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2021</td>
<td>Proposals published for 6th Carbon Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2021</td>
<td>Government decides not to intervene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 2021</td>
<td>Cumbria CC announces it will reconsider the application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Planning committee meeting?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Where would the coal be used?

WCM envisaged 0.18 million tonnes / year each at British Steel (Scunthorpe) and Tata (Port Talbot).

But the coal’s expected high sulphur content is a problem for British Steel, so just Tata in the UK?

So 0.18 million tonnes (6.5%) would be used in the UK and the remainder (93.5%) exported to the rest of Europe and beyond.

High sulphur content likely to add to costs elsewhere.

And steel companies looking to move away from coking coal use towards low-carbon alternatives.
Why does Friends of the Earth oppose the mine?

- Climate change impacts
- Declining need for coal for steel production
- Not the best way to create new jobs
Climate change

Estimated total emissions up to 9 million tonnes CO2e per year

Cumbria CC: “the mine would have a beneficial effect in reducing global GHG”

Accepted view of WCM that mine would replace US coal so no overall increase in global emissions.

Disputed by academic experts eg Professor Paul Ekins: “economic nonsense” and no evidence that WCM coal would reduce total global volume of coal extracted.
Climate change

Lord Deben, chair of the Climate Change Committee, in letter to Robert Jenrick, 29 January 2021:

“The opening of new deep coking coal mine in Cumbria will increase global emissions and have an appreciable impact on the UK’s legally binding carbon budgets”.

Criticism from many climate scientists in UK and globally.

Impact on UK credibility ahead of global climate talks in Glasgow in November – UK ambassadors critical

Powering Past Coal Alliance
Alternatives: steel

We aren’t saying we don’t need steel

Committee on Climate Change: “Coking coal use in steel making could be displaced completely by 2035”

Alternatives:
- electric arc furnaces (recycled steel)
- hydrogen

Supporters say no fossil free steel anytime soon, but industrial-scale production with green hydrogen starting in Sweden in 2024 and lots of investment elsewhere
Alternatives: jobs

No dispute that West Cumbria needs new jobs, but these don’t have to be in fossil fuels – wrong to characterise as jobs vs environment

Need to look at green jobs: energy efficiency, solar power, offshore wind, low carbon heating etc

Local Government Association: potential for 600 green jobs in Copeland by 2030 and over 6000 across Cumbria
Alternatives: jobs

Climate and youth unemployment emergencies

Calling on Chancellor to invest up to £10 billion to create 250,000 green apprenticeships nationwide.

Needs close involvement of local councils.

Young people unemployed:
Copeland 350, Cumbria 2800

Green apprenticeship targets next 3 years:
Copeland 160, Cumbria 1310

Full report: foe.uk/cfxgd
What should and might happen next?

Cumbria County Council should refuse planning permission

- If they do, WCM will probably appeal, which
  - would lead to a public inquiry

- If they don’t, Robert Jenrick should call in
  - the decision, which would lead to a public
  - inquiry

Legal challenges? Regulatory routes?
For further information

Email: tony.bosworth@foe.co.uk

Twitter: @tonybosworth

Website: http://friendsoftheearth.uk