

United Valleys Action Group (UVAG)
c/o Terry Evans
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**Re-United Valleys Action Group (UVAG) Views to
Petition Committee on Ministers response to
P-04-575 Call in on all Opencast Mining Applications over
10 years Duration or 350 Hectares in Size.**

Petitions Committee

UVAG's initial view to the response of the Minister is that again it is not the Minister's response to this petition, but the Minister's official's response, where they are just stating the conditions required for a 'call in'.

A responsible Government should consider all opencast applications of over 10 years or 350 hectares in size because

The long term economic viability of opencast mining is very uncertain. Is there likely to be a market for coal in 10 years time? The need for coal is diminishing rapidly, so the demand for coal beyond 10 years will be greatly reduced and cannot be predicted with accuracy. Emission controls alone could kill off the coal industry by making its use not financially viable

Climate change is now accepted by nearly all countries in the world that CO2 emissions must be reduced drastically, burning of fossil fuels is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and is being reduced by all countries

drastically, the Welsh Government must decide on all opencast over 10 years because they should take into account climate change and what the rest of the world's policy is on fossil fuels will be, this is to ensure there is a market for coal, local authorities do not have the necessary knowledge or responsibility to make this very important decision only the Government.

Following on from this, is the 'failure to restore opencast sites', Welsh Government needs to look at what has happened in Scotland, the Welsh government as done research on this and produced a report and therefore should understand the importance of this. The report is at

- 1) <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/planningresearch/publishedresearch/failure-to-restore-opencast-coal-sites-in-south-wales/?lang=en>

Again for this reason the Welsh Government should 'call in' all opencast mining applications over 10 years' duration or 350 hectares in size, because they could be left with a Scottish scenario of un restored sites.

All restoration bonds should be set by the Welsh Government as they are crucial to safeguarding the public purse

Local Authorities do not have the resources, skills or knowledge to handle applications of this size, with regards to Ecology, Hydrology, Biodiversity, Health and European Law; they rely on the applicant's evidence which is unacceptable behaviour

Normally with applications of opencast mines of over 10 years duration or over 350 hectares in size, there will be massive financial incentives under the name of community benefits which will be offered to the local authorities. In this time of austerity and government cutbacks these financial benefits can be of such a magnitude that the local authority's decision will be blinkered or clouded. The Welsh government should determine these planning applications so that the correct decision is made.

Finally there is a very strong risk that local authorities would be legally challenged on their decision, further adding to the costs of handling the application.

UVAG would like to see this petition progressed with the view of having a very important plenary debate on it to urge the Welsh Government to implement the petition.

Terry Evans
Chair, United Valleys Action Group (UVAG)