

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 03 March 2025 16:22

To: Gruffydd, Llyr (Aelod o'r Senedd | Member of the Senedd) <Llyr.Gruffydd@senedd.wales>

Cc: Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee | Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith <SeneddClimate@senedd.wales>; Jewell, Delyth (Aelod o'r Senedd | Member of the Senedd) <Delyth.Jewell@senedd.wales>

Subject: Ffos-y-fran restoration proposal - urgent

Dear Mr Llyr Gruffydd MS,

In your capacity as Chair of the CCEI Committee, and in relation to my recent in-person oral evidence testimony, and my [connecting follow-up letter](#), we ask that the CCEI Committee urgently requests a meeting with Huw Irranca-Davies to discuss Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd's [application](#) to hugely downgrade the extent of restoration to take place at the site of the recently closed Ffos-y-fran opencast coal mine that the Committee visited in 2024. The coal mine operator is spinning this budget scheme as more environmentally friendly, but we are understandably sceptical of that coming from a coal mining company - the truth is that this is an application to do as little as possible to justify Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd to draw down the £15m held beyond its reach in an ESCROW account that was never intended to fund the restoration unless Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd were to liquidate and abandon the site. However, the new application states that it is to "be funded by the proceeds held in the ESCROW account." - which is to say that Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd intends to put no more of its own money to fund the restoration. As set out in our follow-up letter to the CCEI Committee, not only can Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd afford to fund the agreed level of restoration, it appears the company has even been claiming tax relief from HMRC on setting those funds aside. The new application will truly condemn Merthyr Tydfil residents to live below a water-filled void with a capacity of over one million cubic metres of water and in the shadow of three colossal coal tips containing 37 million cubic metres of colliery spoil. Merthyr Tydfil residents are understandably concerned by that in light of the recent coal tip slip in Cwmtillery, and the destabilising effects of climate change.

We stand on the precipice of Merthyr Tydfil citizens being sold short of tens of millions in restoration works, the impacts of which will be felt for generations to come and will leave significant hazards near to a population centre. After 15 years of coal mining and a further 1.5 years of illegal coal mining, Merthyr Tydfil deserves for the promised restoration to be delivered. However, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, which has already been heavily criticised in its handling of this by the Mining Remediation Authority and the CCEI Committee, seems intent to rubber-stamp the application through in fear of the mining operator otherwise abandoning the site - and hasn't shown any appetite to investigate the company's financial ability to fund the original quality of restoration, despite the fact that this is clearly set out in the [company's most recent public accounts](#), even adjusting for rising costs - "the provision was re-assessed during the year and as a consequence the estimate was increased by £ 18.0m" (page 19) - that incremental funding increase, set aside for restoration by the company, alone amounts to somewhat more than the ESCROW account total.

We know that the CCEI Committee will want to pursue this given its short committee inquiry into Ffos-y-fran and restoration issues, and its scrutiny of the Disused coal tips bill. We also underscore again that this is a matter of urgency as the application was posted on Merthyr Tydfil

County Borough Council's website on 21/02/2025 and the statutory deadline for public consultation is **14/03/25** - though this may be extended. We hope that the CCEI Committee impresses this urgency on Huw Irranca-Davies in the strongest terms, **asks him to step in to freeze this major plan being rushed through on the seemingly false premise that the company cannot afford to deliver a quality restoration scheme, and to commit to investigating Merthyr (South Wales) Ltd financial capacity to deliver the promised quality of restoration.**

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Regards,

[REDACTED]

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