

## Restoration of opencast mining sites

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Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

### **Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee**

**Adfer safleoedd glo brig | Restoration of opencast mining sites**

Tystiolaeth ychwanegol gan Sue Jordan | Additional evidence from Sue Jordan

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The **Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee** ('the Committee') has agreed to undertake a short piece of work to explore the restoration of former opencast mining sites in south Wales.

This work will focus on:

- the financial and practical arrangements for the restoration of the Ffos y Fran opencast site;
- how restoration of opencast sites can be secured, and contingency planning in the event of insufficient funds being available; and
- the findings and recommendations from the Welsh Government report on **Research into the failure to restore opencast coal sites in south Wales (April 2014)** and whether these still apply.

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I have summarised the outcomes we need as a country, below, and hope you will circulate to the chair and committee.

There was more we could have said about the loss of our home, and how it was allowed to happen. To ensure this does not happen to others, we need to give the full story.

Climate Change committee 9.5.24

We need:

1. Assessments from chartered, indemnified engineers, hydrologists, and geologists (to report on the likelihood of further earthquakes). Assessments should not be funded by the Coal Authority (CA), the LPAs, the UK Department of Business or the mine owners. They must be placed in the public domain.
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2. Checks and confirmation that all buttressing and stabilisation recommended in earlier (2015) reports to the local planning authorities (LPA) has been completed. (submersible drones are one option)
  3. Fill in the voids at Ffos y Fran, Margam and East Pit, as promised in original planning applications. Water becomes acidic and polluted from contact with mining waste and seeps into water courses. There is also the danger that the voids will overflow and flood the valleys below, particularly where they are situated on the sites of recent earthquakes.
  4. No more opencast, no new coal, despite rising coal prices. Full recognition of the risks to the unborn child [1-3], (including lead and cadmium pollution [4]), children [5-7], and adults of releasing air pollutants [8-10], including the sulphur gases [3].
  5. Enforced procedures to ensure that no more homes are destroyed by mining subsidence. The CA, NRW, and LPA were unable to do this.
  6. A devolved Coal Authority, accountable to Welsh government, with residents and victims on the governing body. (Hugh Towns, from the LPA indicated that residents are not consulted regarding restoration.) Jan Adamson has described the control and coercion of the Westminster government. The current CA/ LPA arrangement is not fit for purpose, having failed in many areas:
    - Gleision mine disaster and fatalities <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-west-wales-26931513>
    - Lead and cadmium pollution in Ceredigion , <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv2rzj3v2leo>
    - Homes destroyed and reduced to insurance write offs, despite external warnings.
    - Absence of oversight on subsidence
    - Opencast mining without consent at Ffos y Fran and East Pit
    - 40million cubic metres of water left on an active earthquake fault, 150m above the valley floor.
    - Subsidence of the A4069
    - Floods at Skewen <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-60069085>
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- Tips across South Wales: 41 now categorised as high risk.
- Failure to address or even mention the effects of mine-generated pollution on the unborn child, child and adult health.

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