

## **GREAT HUCKLOW, LITTLE HUCKLOW, GRINDLOW, WINDMILL AND COPLOWDALE PARISH COUNCIL – OCTOBER 2023**

### **MILLDAM MINE - CESSATION OF OPERATIONS**

Fluorsid British Fluorspar (FBFL) have recently ceased operations at Milldam Mine and Cavendish Mill. Nearly all staff have been made redundant and there is now only a core of 5 workers who will be responsible for keeping the mine on "care and maintenance". FBFL say they have stopped mining because the mineral extraction operation was operating at a loss and they need to focus on making a 'section 73' application. This is basically a request to vary the planning consent which they already have so that it better reflects the way they are actually operating. Preparation of the application is expected to take up to 18 months.

FBFL have been stripping out and selling all of the equipment from the mine and the Mill. This may appear to be disposing of resources which they will need for returning the mine to production when that day comes. However, in the overall context of running a multinational, multi-million pound operation, the cost of selling the equipment (much of which is very old and very tired) to raise some cash with which to help pay off FBFL's current debts seems like a sensible measure since the replacement of old, tired kit with new equipment will aid the profitability of the operation in the long-term.

All mines operate in global market where the world price of the mineral they produce governs their income. A mine which is a small stand-alone operation has to generate income which exceeds its costs or it very quickly runs out of cash. A mine which is part of a much bigger global operation does not necessarily have to generate a profit - the owners can afford to sit on the reserves until the world price increases to a level where extraction makes financial sense. However, if it's not operating at a profit then the priority will be to minimise the losses, and employing staff who are no longer needed because production has stopped are a major part of those losses.

Most importantly for local residents and landowners on Hucklow Edge, the work to re-fill the stope collapse holes is continuing despite nearly all other operations being stopped. In the longer term there is a question about where the material to re-fill the holes comes from if the mine is not operating, but for the moment the plan to fix the holes is continuing despite the mine being closed. The next step is to perform a survey across the SHS site with a ground penetrating radar to try to determine if there are any voids which could present a danger to the operation of earth moving machinery on the site. Once this is complete then the plan to move material from the stock pile already located at the eastern boundary of the SHS site can move forward.

So, in summary, the message is that (1) the mine has not been abandoned, it has just stopped production in order to minimise financial losses, and will re-open in due course; (2) work to remediate the ground collapses is continuing; and (3) members of the Parish Council and the SHS Management Committee are in daily contact with FBFL, PDNPA and others to ensure that the interests of the village are taken into account.

If you have specific questions regarding the above please contact Nick Williams, either by e-mail to [nick.williams@hucklowparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:nick.williams@hucklowparishcouncil.gov.uk) or by phone to [07702 995135](tel:07702995135).