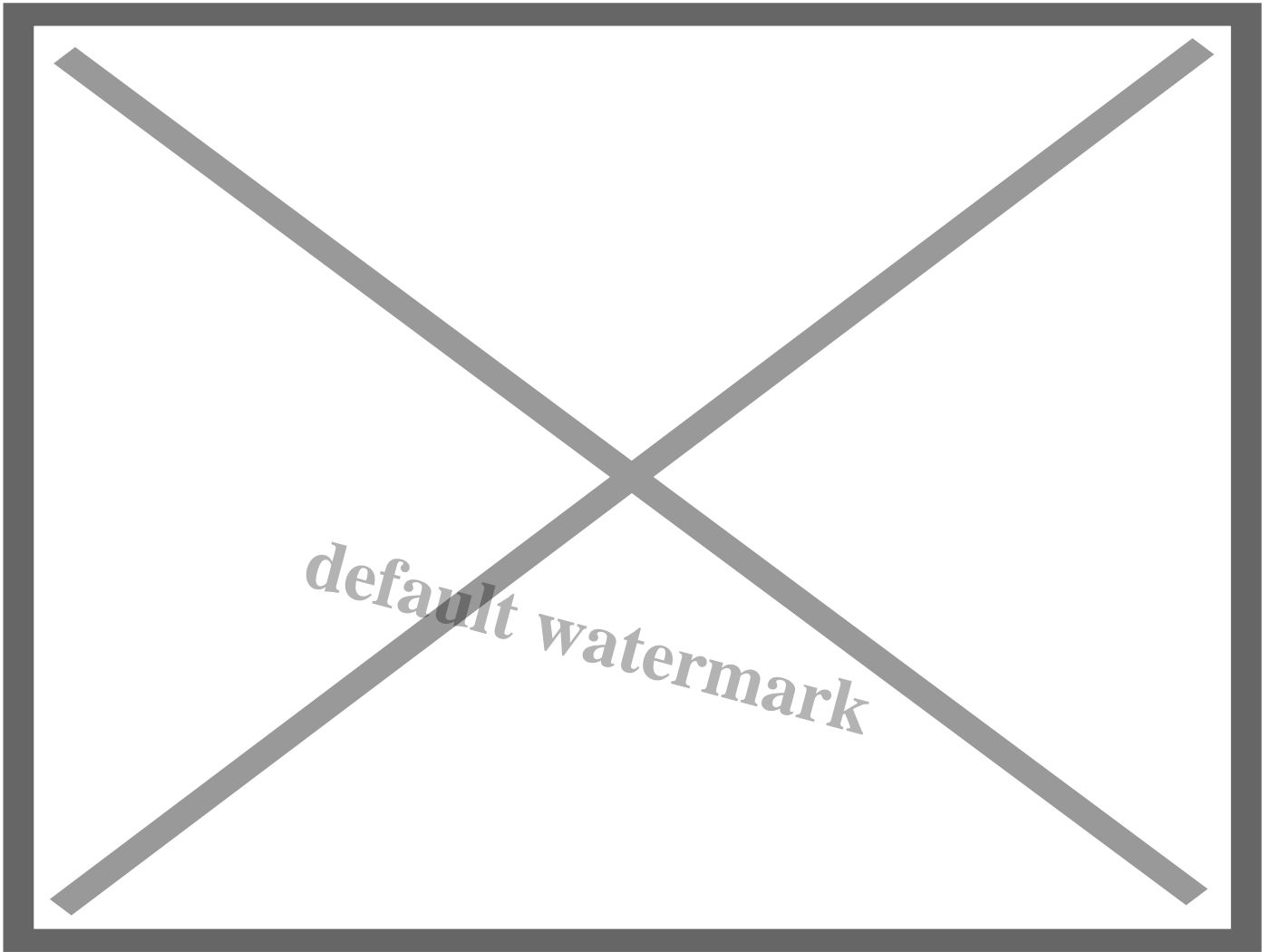




Ancient woodland saved in council's rejection of UK's last opencast coal application

Description

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Carmarthenshire County Council has rejected Bryn Bach Coal Ltd's second attempt to expand and extend the currently dormant Glan Lash [opencast coal mine](#) about 15 miles north of Swansea. This followed [hundreds of hand-written and online objections](#) from residents in the county.

[The decision](#) reflects a clear, strategic commitment to climate leadership, rare habitat protection, and safeguarding the health of surrounding communities.

There are no live applications for new coal mines, and only two active coal mines remain in the UK. One is a large underground mine in Aberpergwm, Glynneath, the other a small underground mine called Ayle Colliery in Northumberland. There is a further proposal (pre-application stage) to mine the Bedwas coal tips of waste coal.

Coal emissions

The proposed expansion was the mining company's [second application](#). And it followed unanimous rejection by councillors of the company's first application in September 2023.

The second application [reduced the amount of coal to be mined from 95,000 tonnes to 85,000 over 5.4 years](#) with a slightly smaller area to be excavated. However, the latest application remained incompatible with [Wales's coal](#) and [protected habitats](#) policies.

Rejecting this application has prevented the release of hundreds of thousands of tonnes of CO2 and methane. It also avoids exhaust emissions from years of heavy machinery use.

The would-be commercial buyers of this coal, as listed by the mining company, sell anthracite coal to burn on the international market, undermining the company's claims that coal from Glan Lash would not be burned.

Selling Glan Lash coal on the international market would fuel dependence abroad on the world's number one dirtiest fossil fuel, whilst the UK itself transitions to greener, cleaner industry and air quality.

Habitats and planning

Beyond emissions, [an independent ecologist's report](#) outlines in stark terms how the [mine expansion](#) would have destroyed 25 hectares of woodland, including sections of listed ancient woodland, as well as over 400 metres of protected narrow habitat.

It also would have delayed the excavated area's restoration (a planning permission originally required by 2019) by a further 5.4 years. The mining company originally committed to start restoring the site in 2018. But it delayed this with successive attempts to extend mining instead.

These delays have coincided with the deterioration of [protected habitats](#) on the site such as those supporting threatened [marsh fritillary butterflies](#) whose numbers have [plummeted across the UK by 64% since just 2005](#).

This refusal paves the way to require the company finally to return the land for the benefit of nature and local communities.

With the closest homes just 30 metres from the edge of the opencast site, the application was also clearly incompatible with the 500 metre minimum buffer zone. [Welsh government policy](#) requires this to protect surrounding communities from excessive noise, dust, and air pollution and disturbance.

Carmarthenshire Planning Authority's decision reflects alignment with the Welsh government's [positions on coal](#), [climate](#) and [nature recovery](#), the UK government's [commitment to prevent new coal mining licences](#) and the [international movement to phase out coal](#).

Local campaigner Philip Hughes said:

Following yet another year of record-breaking temperatures we are so grateful that Carmarthenshire County Council has rejected the application.

As was mentioned by so many residents visiting the petition stall, we need to keep fossil fuels in the ground, create green jobs, and protect our beautiful county.

Agreeing this application would have been disastrous on so many levels. Coal is our heritage but it is not our future.

Daniel Therkelsen, campaigns and communications manager of [Coal Action Network](#) said:

We congratulate the Local Planning Authority on making the right decision for Carmarthenshire's sustainable future.

We worked alongside local campaigners to secure this outcome, and we'll continue to engage with the Authority on the restoration to ensure it is delivered to the standard promised, and to avoid the tragic outcome currently unfolding at the [Ffos-y-fran](#) ex-opencast coal mine site, also in South Wales.

Featured image via [Coal Action Network](#)

By [The Canary](#)

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