

PRESS RELEASE

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Mining skills shortage threatens Cornish revival

A report published today by the UK Mining Education Forum (UKMEF) shows that a possible revival in the UK mining industry is threatened by a shortage of mining and mineral processing engineers. The transition to renewable energy and electric vehicles necessitates a domestic supply of metals such as lithium and tin in order to avoid dependency on imports of these vital metals.

Report Highlights

- UKMEF estimates that at least 48 mining engineering and 18 mineral processing graduates are required per year to sustain the UK mining industry
- Figures from the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) show that there is a significant and growing shortage of these engineers
- The shortage will threaten the future of the UK mining industry and the domestic transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy and electric vehicles.
- Of the 1,237 mining and mineral processing engineers registered with the Engineering Council, 80% are over the age of 50, with 39% over the age of 66
- The lack of UK mining engineering graduates threatens important relationships with the major mining companies with presence in London.

Faced with a damaging decline in the number and calibre of recently-qualified professionals in the minerals extractive sector, a group of leading figures in the UK mining industry formed UKMEF. This group has written a report (**see attached**) to highlight the local mining industry's urgent need for geologists, engineers and mineral processors, and to justify the continued delivery of these qualifications at Exeter University's internationally respected Camborne School of Mines (CSM).

Steve Bedford, Chairman of UKMEF said, "I welcome this report, which highlights the imminent shortfall in UK graduates with mining related education, and the likely impact on the country's prospects for economic growth.

"This is particularly important in Cornwall which has a very long metal mining history dating back to the Bronze Age up until 1998, when South Crofty, the UK's last tin mine, closed. It is now one of the poorest areas of the UK with the local economy reliant on agriculture and tourism.

"Ongoing problems in global supply chains and the recognition of the need for domestic sources of metals important to the energy transition, have seen signs of a re-emerging mining sector in Cornwall and the recognition of the potential to find new mineral deposits. Recent gains in the tin price have resulted in Cornish Metals successfully raising £40 million to advance the South Crofty tin project through to completion of a feasibility study. If successful, South Crofty could generate approximately 275 direct jobs at the mine site, as well as several hundred jobs on the supply side.

"Another example is Cornish Lithium, which has spent the past six years investigating the potential for recovering lithium from deep geothermal brines and from hard rock sources. British Lithium is also hopeful of extracting lithium in commercial quantities in Cornwall, although it is focussed on hard-rock mining around St Austell."

The founder and chief executive officer of Cornish Lithium, Jeremy Wrathall, described Exeter University's earlier decision to pause the degree courses at CSM as "deeply regrettable" and "certain to adversely impact on the speed of his company's growth". It is anticipated that Cornish

Lithium alone will require several high-status, well paid mining engineering vacancies every year as the company grows. However, he welcomes Exeter University's recent decision to work with the Mining Association of the UK to offer mining engineering degree apprenticeships as an important first step.

The CEOs of British Lithium (Andrew Smith) and Cornish Metals (Richard Williams) concur with the concerns of Cornish Lithium. Smith spoke of "stunted economic opportunities in Cornwall", while Williams described the county's prospects as "an incredible opportunity to diversify the economy and generate highly skilled, well-paid employment that will have a meaningful positive impact on the local and regional economy. To achieve this, CSM has a very important role to play in training the next generation of mining professionals.

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