

PRESS RELEASE

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Skills shortage threatens mining revival

A modern, high-tech mining industry is essential to the future of the UK as British industry shortens its supply chains and moves to a low carbon economy. A report published today (see attached) shows the sector could be at risk because of a shortage of suitably skilled graduates.

That is the message from the UK Mining Education Forum (UKMEF), which represents senior industry and professional organisations, in a report which calls for education schemes to equip sufficient numbers of recruits to the industry with the skills to support a wide range of mining activities both in the UK and abroad.

In its report, UKMEF reveals that the UK needs over 60 new mining engineering and minerals processing graduates every year, but none have enrolled on undergraduate courses since 2019. This is despite mining remaining essential for everything from agriculture and construction, to transport and electronics.

There are many hundreds of mines, from the Highlands of Scotland to Devon and Cornwall in the southwest of England. Examples include:

- Gold in Stirlingshire
- Barytes in Perthshire
- Polyhalite (a fertiliser) in North Yorkshire (see attached)
- Fluorspar and lead in Derbyshire
- Salt in Cheshire and Yorkshire
- Gypsum (for plaster and plasterboard) and aggregates (for construction) in various locations
- Tin and tungsten in Devon, and
- Lithium, china clay and kaolin in Cornwall (see attached).

In addition, mining graduates are essential to many important infrastructure projects (including HS2 and Hinkley Point C), and a high proportion are employed in the consultancy and banking sectors. Through these various roles, mining graduates support thousands of jobs in the UK, and make a huge contribution to the national economy.

In its report, UKMEF highlights the UK mining industry's urgent need for geologists, engineers and mineral processors, and justifies the continued delivery of these qualifications at Exeter University's internationally respected Camborne School of Mines (CSM). Industry leaders have described Exeter University's recent decision to pause the Mining Engineering degree courses at CSM as "deeply regrettable", and certain to constrain corporate growth and job creation.

The Forum calls for informative programmes directed at school students and staff to encourage an understanding of the essential contribution which mining makes to society, and the many rewarding careers it can provide.

UKMEF is seeking to encourage an improvement in the UK's ability to provide mining engineering and associated degrees in the UK without which, it believes, the country will be increasingly unable to utilise its many and varied natural resources, and will necessarily become more reliant on imports of these vital minerals and materials.

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