



WEDNESDAY October 5th

Hello again,

I appreciate I am in danger of being the daily bearer of bad news. I have spoken to UK Coal this morning and they have confirmed they will renew their application for open cast mining at Shortwood Farm, Cossall.

Both my predecessors campaigned against attempts in the past and you can be sure I will do the same with full determination to see off the application.

An application was anticipated last year and working with Notts Against New Coal (NANC) we held public meetings in Cossall and in Trowell, which I helped to organise and attended.

UK Coal are looking to remove an anticipated 1.275 million tonnes of coal and a quarter of a million tonnes of fireclay from a site covering 130 hectares in some of the finest countryside in Nottinghamshire. Shortwood Farm lies in green belt and is part of a rolling piece of countryside in what is often known as "DH Lawrence land". In my opinion it is the loveliest part of countryside in the constituency and I referred to it in my maiden speech in June. I spoke about the threat to the land from open cast mining and pledged to follow both Jim Lestor and Nick Palmer in campaigning against any such application.

I am no fan of opencast mining – I know that there has to be full and thorough restoration of the land once all the required material is extracted, but opencast is a real scar on the landscape and creates all manner of pollution. By way of example UK Coal say if their application at Shortwood is successful it will involve 8 "movements" (that's journeys of HGV's) an hour, 6 days a week, between 7am until 7pm, for almost 6 years. I could rehearse all the arguments for and against it but in my mind it's a bit of a no brainer – opencast mining at Cossall must be thoroughly opposed by all of us. I should add that the plans will have profound effects on Trowell so this is an issue that will affect people there as well as in Awsworth, Cossall and Kimberley.

UK Coal have organised two "Public Information and Consultation Exhibitions" at Trowell Parish hall on Sunday 17 October between 10am – 2pm and another on October 21st between 4pm and 8pm at Awsworth Village Hall.

UK Coal tell me they are trying to arrange another meeting in Cossall - full details when I get them. I urge all residents to attend and make their views known.

Getting the campaign started.

Last year's meetings and activity mean we have good strong foundations of support and

some experienced and seasoned campaigners against open cast mining well on board.

I will contact NANC to make sure they are up and running. We obviously need to organise petitions, letter and email writing campaigns and the like. I will email out contact details in the next few days to help start that campaign work.

Political action locally and in Parliament.

As the local MP I will write today to all the relevant Parish Councils, Borough and County Councillors to arrange an urgent meeting. My view is that we need to work together and attack any application on solid planning grounds. To that end I am of the view we need (amongst other things) a first rate planning “expert” to advise us and act for us if necessary.

Councillors of all parties need to be persuaded that both Broxtowe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council (to whom the application will be made) must oppose the application and that their officers make all effort to fight UK Coal’s plans.

I have asked to meet with UKCoal in the next few days.

On a Parliamentary level you may know I was lucky enough to be drawn in the private members bill ballot. I considered proposing a new law similar to a piece of Scottish legislation that prohibits open cast mining within 500m of residential property. I was approached by Andrew Bridgen the MP for North West Leicestershire where UK Coal have already made an application for open cast coal mining (you may have seen an item about this on the BBC1 programme Countryfile, this summer). Andrew said that given the application had been made he wanted to make the “buffer zone” the subject of his private members bill. I have given him my full support and together we will work to get this law introduced in England and Wales. The best thing would be for the Coalition Government to agree to take up the law and introduce it and I will certainly work to achieve that.

Time scales

UK Coal tell me the initial assessment and first stage consultation will take anywhere between 4 and 12 months after which they anticipate they will make an application to the County Council. There is then more consultation which can take anywhere between 6 months and 2 years.

We should not be complacent – I am aware that initially the battle was lost last time UKCoal made an application and open cast was only stopped because of legal action. I would very much hope that UKCoal face such strong, united and well founded opposition they don’t cross the first hurdle – but I fear we face a long and difficult campaign.

On a different note - child benefit

Can I thank everyone who has contacted me about the Coalitions announcement to cut child benefit to higher rate tax payers. I fully appreciate that the proposals, which will not be implemented until 2013, fail to recognise joint household incomes and accordingly there are some families who will lose their child benefit even though a neighbouring family with a higher household income will retain their child benefit. I agree that this does not appear to be fair and many people are understandably cross and disappointed in the Coalition. I will make sure that both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer are fully

informed as to the strength of feeling in Broxtowe. I had intended to attend today's Conservative Party Conference but the open cast issue and my meeting with the Chief Executive of Boots this afternoon means I will not be able to go and accordingly I will not be able to speak to David Cameron directly today. If you would like me to represent your family's situation to both the Prime Minister and George Osborne please let me know either by email or by post.

Please let me know if you want to be put in contact with NANC or help in anyway with the campaign to stop open cast mining at Cossall.

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