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## UK's first deep coal mine in over 30 years given go-ahead in Cumbria

Woodhouse Colliery to produce 2.4m tonnes of coal a year for use in steelmaking

Chris Tighe 37 MINUTES AGO

The first deep coal mine in the UK for more than 30 years was given the go-ahead on Tuesday by Cumbria county councillors.

The £180m Woodhouse Colliery, on a coastal site near Whitehaven, West Cumbria, will access underground, offshore reserves of coal. Developer West Cumbria Mining Ltd says it will produce around 2.4m tonnes of coal per year, for use in the UK steel industry and for export to Continental European steel producers.

The mine, due to begin production in about two years time, is expected to employ 500 people, with an estimated 2,000 more in its supply chain.

The proposed job creation and diversification in an area highly dependent on the nuclear industry was an important factor in winning local support. West Cumbria has a coal mining heritage but its last pit, Haig in Whitehaven, closed in the mid-1980s.

The underground reserves could, West Cumbria Mining estimates, last for more than a hundred years but the mine is expected to operate for 50 years.

Welcoming the councillors' unanimous approval, Helen Davies, the company's head of communications, said it was the culmination of five years of preparatory work. "This is an important milestone for our journey to develop world class mining in Cumbria."

Announcing the approval, which is subject to conditions, councillor Geoff Cook, chair of Cumbria county council's development control and regulation committee, said it was not an easy decision and there would be mixed views.

"All of us would prefer to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and we recognise that during construction there will be disruption to many local residents," he said.

"However we felt that the need for coking coal, the number of jobs on offer and the chance to remove contamination outweighed concerns about climate change and local amenity," he added. "We now hope that WCM go on to be successful in obtaining their environmental permits and attract the investment they need to make this work."

He said the council would have preferred to take the decision several months ago but the scale of the project had been enormous, with four rounds of public consultation needed to meet Environmental Impact Regulations. "Failure to comply with the regulations would have left the decision at risk of legal challenge," he said.

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