



The Coal  
Authority

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Michael Meredith  
Ecological Owlthorpe  
22 Royston Avenue  
Owlthorpe  
Sheffield S20 6SG

Reference: FOI 43-2024

04 October 2024

Dear Mr Meredith,

### **Request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 7 September 2024.

We have reviewed our records, and I have responded to your questions below:

**Environment Woodland sealed off after a '200ft deep' sinkhole was found near Birley Wood Golf Course in Sheffield. By David Kessen Senior reporter Sheffield Star Published 3rd Apr 2024, 05:00 BST Coal Authority notified over concerns '200 ft' sinkhole may lead to old Sheffield colliery shaft. Officials have issued a warning after a feared 200ft deep sinkhole appeared near a popular Sheffield golf course and beauty spot. Staff at Sheffield City Trust, which runs the city's municipal golf courses, have sealed the hole off. Sheffield City Council Planning department have re-introduced plot F in Owlthorpe back into the housing plan. As the Birley Wood Golf Cause is situated just across Moor Valley Road adjacent to plot F. This brings up several questions.**

### **Question 1: Has the coal authority inspected the 200ft deep sinkHole?**

The ground collapse was reported to the Coal Authority on 2 April 2024. It was inspected and fenced on the following day and the remediation has been subsequently managed through our normal incident processes. Prior to this an inspection of the surface location of the mine entry where the collapse formed was undertaken on 15 November 2017 as part of the Coal Authority's

mine entry inspection scheme. There was no indication of any concerns or instability issues at that time.

### **Question 2: Why has the old colliery shaft collapsed?**

Mine shaft collapses and sinkholes can form for a number of reasons. Our records indicate that this mineshaft was originally capped 1 metre below the ground surface. Our investigation of the collapse has identified that the top of the shaft lining on which the cap was sitting has failed allowing the cap and ground above it to sink.

### **Question 3: Is the land on plot F safe to build on?**

The safety of land for potential building is dealt with through the planning application process overseen by Local Planning Authorities. We would suggest that you contact the relevant Local Authority with your queries, which in this case would be Sheffield City Council.

When a site is affected by land instability, the responsibility for securing safe and stable development rests with the developer, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework paras. 189 and 190. For a planning application that falls within a Coal Mining Development High Risk Area it would need to be accompanied by a Coal Mining Risk Assessment, or equivalent Report and the LPA would consult the Coal Authority for advice on coal mining legacy issues.

The Coal Authority has an adopted policy for development in the proximity of mine entries and there is further guidance in the CIRIA C758D – Abandoned mine workings manual:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-on-or-within-the-influencing-distance-of-mine-entries>

**Question 4: Although you do not have any information regarding pit props, I have investigated and found that many old mines have collapsed and sinkholes have appeared. This is usually because the old mine workings have become flooded and the pit props have rotted away. When in operation, water had to be pumped out of the mines in Owlthorpe to stop the miners from drowning. Do you have any comments to make regarding this?**

Mine workings can be supported in many different ways which can also vary under different local conditions. Ground collapses and subsidence can occur for a number of reasons. If these are related to old mine workings rather than mine entries this is often related to the depth of the abandoned mine workings. The Coal Authority has little information on roof supports used in historical mines and therefore cannot comment specifically on your point.

The Coal Authority manages the legacy from Great Britain's coal mining past. If anyone has any concerns regarding the safety of historical coal mining features, they can contact us during office

hours on 0845 762 6848 or by emailing [customerservice@coal.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@coal.gov.uk). Outside of these times, you can contact our 24 hour emergency number on 0800 288 4242.

**Question 5: How is the depth of a mine measured? Is it measured from the pit head? Or other means?**

The depth of the coal workings at this location have been calculated as the difference between the level at the surface (relative to Ordnance Datum) and the actual or estimated level (relative to Ordnance Datum) at the base of the coal workings.

Once again thank you for your interest in the Coal Authority. If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your request, details of your complaints rights appear at the end of this letter.

For further information about the Coal Authority, please visit our website:  
[www.gov.uk/coalauthority](http://www.gov.uk/coalauthority)

If you have any further queries, please contact our Records Management team on 01623 637225 or email: [recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk](mailto:recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely

Matthew Cheetham  
**Records Officer**

## Complaints rights

If you are not content with the way we have handled your request or our response, you have the right to appeal. This is known as an internal review, and is intended to be a fair and impartial means of reviewing your request.

This process is separate to the Coal Authority's complaints policy [Complaints procedure - Coal Authority - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## How do I appeal?

All appeals should be made in writing within 40 working days of your response and sent to [recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk](mailto:recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk) or:

Records Management  
The Coal Authority  
200 Lichfield Lane  
Mansfield  
Nottinghamshire  
NG18 4RG

When contacting us to appeal, please provide the unique identification number provided with your response and the reason for your appeal.

## What if I'm still not satisfied following an internal review?

You can appeal to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted as follows:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)

Web: [www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints](http://www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints)