



The Coal  
Authority

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Michael Meredith

Reference: FOI 16-2021

25 June 2021

Dear Mr Meredith

### Request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write in connection with your request for information, which was received by the Coal Authority on 4 June 2021.

Following receipt of your request, searches were conducted within the Coal Authority to locate information you require.

### RESPONSE

Under S 1 (1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), I can confirm that the Coal Authority does hold the information you have requested.

**• Who is responsible for maintaining mine floodwater discharge into the drainage system? The damage it does to wild life and the environment downstream is horrendous not to mention the destruction to property and livelihoods of citizens living downstream.**

The scope of your question is too broad for the Coal Authority to provide you with a definitive answer. In general, there is no person liable for discharges from mines abandoned before 1999 (Water Resource Act 1991). The Water Framework Directive which has been implemented into UK Law has put an obligation on Member States to achieve good chemical and ecological status in inland and coastal waters. The Environment Agency in England are responsible for monitoring and administering this requirement.

Under the Coal Industry Act 1994 the Authority may take such action as it considers appropriate (if any) for the purpose of preventing, or mitigating the effect of, the discharge of water from a coal mine, if owned by the Authority, into or on to any land or into any controlled waters. The Coal Authority currently operate 67 mine water treatment schemes to protect watercourses and drinking aquifers.

• In (2.) CD2.27 The Coal Authority Mining Report, you state “that coal mining was last worked in 1932” but research suggests that mining continued until at least 1964 and possibly into the early1970s. This was the reason for my question in previous communication “1.Exactly how much coal was extracted by Dent Main Colliery?” Research indicates that vast quantities of coal where extracted from Dent Main Colliery after 1932 and up to at least 1964. What effect will this have on the condition of the mines and is the landscape above safe?

(2.) CD2.27 The Coal Authority Mining Report.

<http://www.dlppanningappeals.co.uk/Docs/CD2.27%20-%20App%20submission%2023.8.19%20-%20Coal%20Mining%20Report%20-%20Mining%20Report%208718.pdf> It seems to me that Lithos Consulting are relying on information provided by the Coal Authority Mining Report which also does not address what happens to the water which was pumped out of the mines when open. What happens to it now and who is responsible when it floods out? The Coal Authority Mining Report also states “that coal mining was last worked in 1932” I think this may be referring to the Moorhole Colliery” but research evidence shows that mining in Dent Main Colliery <https://www.mindat.org/loc-376953.html> continued until at least 1964 and possibly into the early1970s.

From a review of Coal Authority data and plans, the site (planning ref 19/034341/FUL, Coal Authority report ref: 71000493264001) has not been underworked by Dent Main Colliery. Recorded workings in the Parkgate Seam from this colliery, at closest proximity, are approximately 500m due west. As such, it can be concluded that there has been no direct interaction between the two. Incidentally, we can confirm that plans held by the Coal Authority indicate workings at Dent Main Colliery until October 1962.

The site though has been underworked in both the Parkgate and Silkstone seams from the Birley group of collieries. Our source records confirm the findings in the aforementioned report. The shallowest of the recorded worked seam is the Parkgate at approximately 60m below ground level in the vicinity of the west of the site deepening in a broadly easterly direction under the site. Working dates of this seam in the area of interest are in the years around 1930.

The Silkstone seam is deeper at approximately 146m just to the west of the site and are older with an abandonment plan signed 1907, again this seam deepens under the site.

- **In your response dated 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 you do say: “From 1872, legislation required mine owners to record on mine plans the areas of coal that were extracted. These historical plans are held by the Coal Authority but their accuracy cannot be verified by us.” Could you please supply copies of the unverified records held by the Coal Authority with regard to Dent Main Colliery <https://www.mindat.org/loc-376953.html> , Moorhole Colliery and any other collieries that may cause subsidence or collapse in the Owlthorpe area?**

Copies of abandoned mine plans are available to purchase from the Coal Authority, if you wish to purchase plans for these collieries our customer services team can provide you with a quote by contacting them at [thecoalauthority@coal.gov.uk](mailto:thecoalauthority@coal.gov.uk). This engages exemption Section 21(1)(2) Information accessible to the applicant by other means.

- **Research shows there are many Hazards in Underground Mines including: Explosions – Fires – Toxic Gas – Floods – Collapse. The mines in Owlthorpe were gas free, but evidence shows that when the mines were worked flooding was problematic, water had to be constantly pumped out. Although the Coal Authority holds no evidence of the condition of water damage to pit props, there is genuine concern that this damage may cause collapse as reported in April 2016. Site E in Owlthorpe has now been fenced off and Avant Homes are preparing to build. In view of the evidence I have provided and Comments made by the Coal Authority: “In view of the mining circumstances a prudent developer would seek appropriate technical advice before any works are undertaken. Therefore if development proposals are being considered, technical advice relating to both the investigation of coal and former coal mines and their treatment should be obtained before beginning work on site.” It seems to me that Howard Baxter Sheffield (LPA) and Avant Homes are relying on information dating back to 1932 as supplied by The Coal Authority which does not cover floodwater and the damage to the workings of the pits. In light of this information, do Avant Homes need investigation of former coal mines and their treatment before beginning work on site? Or are the Coal Authority happy for Avant Homes to continue to build over old flooding mine works without further exploration?**

The Coal Authority as a Statutory Consultee for planning does not comment on hydrological issues. Our response to Sheffield City Council is published with the application 19/03143/FUL and a copy was also supplied to you in response to your previous request. In our response to Sheffield City Council, we referred to the investigation that had been made by the developers, and in which we raised no objection to the proposed development. Any further actions by the developer are a matter for the local planning authority as part of the conditions of the planning permission.

The application of an exemption constitutes a refusal notice under Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, with Section 21(1)(2) being applied.

Details of your complaints rights are enclosed with this letter.

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

Yours sincerely

Coryn Reynolds  
**Records Officer**

### **Complaints rights**

The Coal Authority has a duty to implement a complaints process in relation to Freedom of Information Act requests. If you are not content with our response, you may appeal, this process is known as an 'Internal Review'

Internal Reviews are intended to be fair and impartial means of reviewing the original request process.

### **How do I appeal?**

All appeals should be made in writing and sent to:-

Records Management

The Coal Authority

200 Lichfield Lane

Mansfield

Notts

NG18 4RG

or alternatively [recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk](mailto:recordsmanagement@coal.gov.uk)

To deal with your appeal as quickly as possible please provide the unique identification number provided with your response and reason for appeal.

### **What if I'm still not satisfied?**

You can appeal to the Information Commissioner. You can contact the Information Commissioner's Office at the following:-

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)