

Press release

## **Are the old flooded mineworks under Ecological Owlthorpe safe?**

On our website there is a short video of the Ochre Dyke flooding which was taken at the same time as Beighton, Rotherham and Fishlake flooded. <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/Ochredyke2.mp4> This proves that the disused mine workings that run under Owlthorpe do flood when the water table is full.

## **Public Enquiry Evidence CD2.27: The Coal Authority, Mining Report**

### **SITE AT, MOORTHORPE GATE, OWLTHORPE, SHEFFIELD,**

“Information from the Coal Authority Underground coal mining past: The property is in the likely zone of influence from workings in 2 seams of coal at 60m to 180m depth, and **last worked in 1932**. Any ground movement from these coal workings should have stopped by now. In addition, **the property is in an area where the Coal Authority believe there is coal at or close to the surface. This coal may have been worked at some time in the past.**”

### **Comments on Coal Authority information**

**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.** All proposals should apply good engineering practice developed for mining areas. No development should be undertaken that intersects, disturbs or interferes with any coal or mines of coal without the permission of the Coal Authority. Developers should be aware that the investigation of coal seams/former mines of coal may have the potential to generate and/or displace underground gases and these risks both under and adjacent to the development should be fully considered in developing any proposals. The need for effective measures to prevent gases entering into public properties either during investigation or after development also needs to be assessed and properly addressed. This is necessary due to the public safety implications of any development in these circumstances.”

**“In addition, the property is in an area where the Coal Authority believe there is coal at or close to the surface. This coal may have been worked at some time in the past.”** Is the Coal Authority referring to **“Dent Main Colliery”**?

**The above statement that the mine was last worked in 1932 is ambiguous.**

**Please read extracts from post by Ken Wain December 19th 2013 Sheffield history Professor.**

<https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/dentandmoorholecollieries.htm>

**In 1947 when the mines were nationalised the N.C.B. granted the pit an operating license**

**Dent Main was one of the last pits in the Sheffield area to use ponies, they were well looked after and regularly taken to Hackenthorpe village blacksmiths to be re-shod.**

**The pit was very successful and supplied the local steel works in Sheffield and the collieries own two lorries took coal to Blackburn Meadows Power Station at Meadowhall.**

**The workings at the colliery were always in orange coloured "Ochre Water" due to the iron deposits in the workings, the water being continually pumped from the pit.**

**Mr. Brian Hutchinson was the sole remaining director when the colliery closed in the early 1970s.**

Water enters the old mine workings in Owlthorpe between the culvert opposite the garden centre and the capped off mineshaft. The video shows that Ochre is being washed out of the disused mine workings in Owlthorpe.

This is supported by information from Interpretation Boards. (Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail)  
"Ochre was in the water pumped out of Moorhole Colliery into the Dyke and this is what coloured the water of the Dyke."

**It is believed that the Coal Authority is responsible for all mine workings no matter what age they are.**

**There are many questions local residents need answering before any building takes place in Ecological Owlthorpe?**

- Exactly how much coal was extracted by "Dent Main Colliery"?
- Was the Coal extracted "in addition, the property is in an area where the Coal Authority believe there is coal at or close to the surface. This coal may have been worked at some time in the past." Does this refer to "Dent Main Colliery"?
- With regard to flooding, what effect does flooding have on the timber props that hold the roofs up in these old mineworkings?
- I cannot see any evidence that Avant Homes have investigated former mines with regard to potential flood risk and damage done to pit props as the Coal Authority states: "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."
- Who is responsible if the mines collapse under the weight of New Housing?
- What if subsidence causes damage to properties near the Development? Who can they claim compensation from?
- Will household Insurance premiums increase?
- Can residents living downstream from the disused mine workings claim compensation from the Coal Authority for previous and potential new flooding events?
- Deforestation is the cause of downstream flooding so should the Coal Authority and Sheffield (LPA) look to reforest Owlthorpe to mitigate downstream flooding?

I believe it is no coincidence that after I delivered my evidence to the enquiry about the Ochre Dyke flooding, workmen were seen working on Moss Way above the Ochre Dyke. I think this is where water from the old Mine workings is probably pumped into the drainage system. When the drains are overwhelmed the Ochre can be seen as it was in the flooding event that flooded Beighton, Rotherham and Fishlake. Somebody knows all about this. Is it the Coal Authority and/or Sheffield (LPA)? Do Avant Homes know that they are proposing to build over unstable mine workings that are known to flood? I do not think this was included in the prospectus, when Sheffield (LPA) put the land up for sale.

There is a description of how the coal is formed in Owlthorpe <https://www.ecological-owlthorpe.org/ochredyke.htm> "The coal deposits in Owlthorpe indicate that trees and vegetation have been present in this area for millions of years. I have had a look upstream in the Ochre Dyke and found some trees that have lived and died and are in a state of decay and are in the long process

of biodegrading. It seems to me that the coal that runs under Owlthorpe was originally trees and vegetation which has washed underground by the Ochre Dyke.”

The SUDS system that is proposed by Avant Homes for the development in Owlthorpe looks very pretty on the drawing board, but in a major flood event the drainage system will be overwhelmed because of water pressure. If more proof was needed that the SUDS system would fail, it was evident during a site visit to the proposed development area. As we passed by the spot where the SUDS system would be, the path had turned into a river that we all had to paddle through. Members of OAG and local residents are witnesses to this fact. The Building Inspector, Howard Baxter of Sheffield (LPA) and Avant Homes representatives seemed oblivious to this fact. It is the water pressure from Birley Wood Golf Course standing approx.: 650ft above sea level, Culvert opposite Garden centre: 420ft, capped off Colliery Drift 382ft, that caused the problem, as by the time water reaches Moss Way at 212ft, it is too powerful for the drainage system to cope. Ochre washes out of the mine workings which can be seen behind Crystal Peaks at 178ft, video of flooding taken at the same time as flooding occurred in Beighton, Rotherham and finally Fishlake standing approx.: 23ft above sea level.

Please remember Fishlake is not local and is sited 31.2miles downstream from Ecological Owlthorpe.

“I was caught up in the Sheffield floods of 2007, on that day sadly two people lost their lives in Sheffield: The pressure of water overwhelmed the drainage system, water shot up 5ft in the air out of the grates.”

Michael Meredith