

Frances Wilkinson
Development Services
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland, NE61 2EF

7 December 2015

Dear Frances

Highthorn Coal Opencast: 15/03410/CCMEIA

The Natural History Society of Northumbria is a regional charity whose aims include the protection of the flora and fauna of the North East; a role that we have played for nearly 200 years. We are a membership organisation and I am responding on behalf of the 1,200 households who support us.

I am writing to **object** to the above planning application on the following grounds:

- The mitigation proposed is not sufficient to avoid an overall negative impact on flora and fauna, as well as on local communities and visitors. Previous mining activities in Druridge Bay have left a positive legacy in this respect and the Highthorn project has the potential to do the same. However unlike the previous schemes the applicant and landowners have not committed to do so (for example through long term management agreements with conservation partners or land transfer), and therefore there is no guarantee that this will be the case. The future of the coal extraction industry in the UK is uncertain. It would seem reasonable to assume that the reluctance to make a guaranteed commitment to leave a positive legacy for wildlife and people towards the end of this mining scheme is due to this financial uncertainty, however without it we do not believe that it should be granted permission.
- We do not believe that the EIA has adequately considered the impact of the lowering of the water table on adjacent wetland wildlife habitats, in particular Cresswell Pond SSSI. This could have negative environmental impacts and yet there is no proposed mitigation or solution for these should they arise.
- Climate change is not a material consideration in determining planning applications however given that there are global efforts to reduce CO2 emissions and coal is one of the worst fuels in this respect (and is being phased out by 2025 as a result), we believe that allowing further coal extraction in Northumberland would exacerbate global warming, which in turn is having a negative effect on flora and fauna.

In conclusion, there is not a realistic mechanism to guarantee a positive legacy for wildlife and people, the EIA is inadequate and the project would increase global CO2 levels. As it stands this is not a sustainable development and should be refused.

We trust that you will consider our response and act accordingly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Littlewood', written in a cursive style.

James Littlewood
Director