

Richard Harrington MP
Minister for Business and Industry
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

26 September 2018

Dear Mr Harrington

Please do not undermine the protections for designated landscapes

We are writing to express our deep concern about the comments you made to the BEIS Select Committee on 10 July. We believe the evidence you gave to the committee risks undermining the long-established protections against damaging major development in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). We are particularly worried by your use of the example of the polyhalite mine in the North York Moors to argue for the adoption of a national policy statement on geological disposal infrastructure which fails to take account of the additional protections in designated landscapes. The approval of one inappropriate development should not be used to justify further damage to areas which are protected for the nation for their wildlife, natural beauty and recreational opportunities.

When granting approval for the Woodsmith Mine (as it is now known) in 2015, members of the North York Moors National Park Authority chose to prioritise the potential economic benefits of the project over the environmental impacts. But it was clear from the officers' report that the proposal would do significant harm to the National Park's special qualities and this is now proving to be the case. Even before full construction activity has begun, peaceful agricultural land has been transformed into a large industrial complex. The construction traffic and light pollution associated with the site are already reported to be having a major impact in an area that was previously valued for its tranquillity and dark skies. Far from leaving "very little blot on the landscape" as you suggested in your evidence, the development will continue to have a significant visual impact for many years to come, even if the proposed new planting is fully successful.

Implying that such development has no negative impacts is particularly disappointing at a time when designated landscapes are getting a lot of positive coverage following the launch of the Glover Review in May. It is also inconsistent with the messages in the 25 Year Environment Plan, which was launched by the Prime Minister in January 2018, and describes the creation of designated landscapes as one of the "outstanding environmental achievements of the past 100 years". Next year is the 70th anniversary of the legislation which led to the designation of these stunning landscapes but we will have little to celebrate if key elements of their protection have been completely undermined.

With increasing demand for land for a range of different uses, it is more important than ever to have places where people can escape from the stresses of modern life. 260 million people visit the English National Parks and AONBs annually, most of whom are specifically drawn to the high quality environment in these areas. These visitors spend over £6 billion annually and support thousands of

jobs and businesses. National Parks and AONBs are living, working landscapes which have adapted over time to changes in society and the economy. We recognise that safe disposal of nuclear waste is one of the key challenges our society currently faces but this should not be used as an excuse to put at risk the huge range of benefits these areas deliver for society, the environment and the economy.

Supported by the following 19 organisations:

Brecon Beacons Park Society

British Mountaineering Council

Broads Society

Campaign for National Parks

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Cymdeithas Eryri Snowdonia Society

Dartmoor Preservation Association

Exmoor Society

Friends of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Friends of the Dales

Friends of the Lake District

Friends of the Peak District

Friends of the South Downs

National Trust

New Forest Association

North Yorkshire Moors Association

Open Spaces Society

Scottish Campaign for National Parks

Woodland Trust

For further information or to respond to this letter, please contact Ruth Bradshaw, Campaign for National Parks (email:ruthb@cnp.org.uk, tel: 020 7981 0896)