

## **Policies and Proposals**

Hargreaves Surface Mining Limited (HSML) supports West Lothian Council's recognition of the importance of coal to the local and national economy, energy security, and of their continued support for the industry.

### Policy MRW 3 – Minerals extraction assessment (Not supporting proposals)

Point 'd' states that the proposal is less likely to be given favourable consideration where available rail transport opportunities are not utilised. HSML recommend that this point is removed as rail haulage may bring additional cost to haulage, which may impose an unnecessary additional financial burden on a prospective operator. In addition, transport impacts will be assessed by the Transport Assessment required as part of a minerals application.

Point 'h' states that mineral extraction will be less favourable where there would be irreversible damage to a peat habitat. HSML believe that this point is too restrictive in that it limits extraction activities from even severely degraded peat which may benefit from improvement works post restoration, or compensatory improvements to more locally or nationally important areas of peat. For this reason HSML recommend that this point should be relaxed and allow for extraction in and around areas of peat that would benefit from environmental improvement.

## **Supplementary Guidance for Minerals**

### 4) Areas of Search – Page 4

HSML supports the Council's position to continue to identify areas of search for coal extraction within West Lothian. HSML also welcomes the Council's position that the British Geological Survey maps, which are used by the Council to identify areas of search, are only an interpretation of the likely coal resources in the region, and that there may be additional unidentified resources. To account for this, HSML recommend that the Council include a provision that should an economically viable reserve of coal be identified outwith the area of search for coal extraction, and be acceptable in policy terms, then extraction of this reserve should be supported by the Council.

### 4) Areas of Search – Page 5

HSML support the Council's aspirations to protect Natura 2000 sites, however recommend that on page 5, the sentence, "For permission to be granted, proposals must demonstrate that mineral extraction would not adversely affect Natura 2000 site(s) either alone or in combination with other plans or projects." reflect the benefits surface mines can bring to an area of importance for wildlife by changing this sentence to "For permission to be granted, proposals must demonstrate that adverse impacts caused by mineral extraction would not outweigh environmental benefits or cause

significant or long term adverse effects on Natura 2000 site(s), either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.”.

7) Page 9 – Section 7: Circumstances in which the Council would not generally support minerals extraction

Point ‘C’ states that the Council is unlikely to support proposals where the proposal fails to maximise rail haulage opportunities when there are reasonable opportunities to do so. HSML recommend that this point is removed from the SG as rail haulage may bring additional cost to haulage, causing a viable development to become unviable. In addition, transport impacts will be assessed by the Transport Assessment required as part of a minerals application.

Point ‘D’ states that the Council is unlikely to support proposals where the proposal lies within, or lies outwith, but will adversely affect a SSSI, SAC, SPA or SLA. HSML believe that there should not be a presumption against coal extraction within these areas providing that there is appropriate mitigation, compensation, or the economic or environmental benefits of the proposal outweighs the adverse impacts.