

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Test success brings £250m Cornish lithium quarry a step closer

Company carries out test drilling for valuable metal vital for batteries and new technologies

By **William Telford** Business Editor, Plymouth Live

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Geologist Edward-Hill left with MetAmpère chief executive Andrew-Smith testing for lithium in Cornwall

The first company to drill lithium exploration holes in the UK is carrying out further excavation work in Cornwall with aim to build a quarry and processing plant – and pump £120million a year into the county's economy.

The idea is for the £275million quarry and plant to produce up to 20,000 tonnes of the highly sought-after metal each year – sufficient to power 350,000 electric vehicles.

MetAmpere has successfully completed six exploration drill holes, and now its team of geologists are digging kilometres of trenches to establish continuity of the discovered ore body.

Laboratory analysis of that drilling revealed more than 200 metres of continuous lithium mineralisation from the surface.



MetAmpere is testing for lithium in Cornwall

The trenching and further drilling will allow an Independent expert to declare a Maiden JORC Resource Statement next year.

This is the Australasian code for reporting of exploration results, mineral resources and ore reserves and a professional code of practice that sets minimum standards for public reporting of minerals exploration results, mineral resources and ore reserves.

MetAmpere, based in Roche, is planning to undertake more drilling in the next two months.

Lithium is used in an increasing number of devices, such as thermometers, remote car locks, laser pointers, MP3 players, hearing aids, calculators and battery backup systems in computers.



MetAmpere geologist Edward Hill next to a drill hole as he explores for lithium in Cornwall

Lithium has never been extracted from the mica in granite before and the experts behind the project say they are very excited about what they've so far discovered.

"The results from the drilling we've done to date are staggeringly good," said MetAmpere chair Roderick Smith, who has built and officially opened five mines of different kinds worldwide.

"We've spent the past two years undertaking a range of reconnaissance activities and are looking at another three years before construction is planned.

"Our approach is always to research thoroughly and ensure feasibility before moving on to design, build and operation.

Those benefits include an estimated £275million spent during the construction phase, 400 high value, full-time jobs once operational, indirect supply-chain employment for more than 3,000 people and projected annual expenditure in Cornwall of around £120million.

"Cornwall has a very proud mining heritage and, from what we can see, a global future in lithium production," said MetAmpere chief executive Andrew Smith, who previously ran a large international mining team for the Cinovec lithium project in the Czech Republic.

"The world needs far more lithium than is currently being produced to make the batteries renewable technology depends upon.

"China is dominating the industry at the moment, but Cornwall could soon be taking its place on the world stage too."



MetAmpere chief executive Andrew Smith in a trench dug to explore for lithium

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