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September 17, 2019 Business Stuff, Features, Industry, Lithium, Mining



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New mining in Poldark country offers route to a green future

by Milo Perrin – article first appeared on feedmenews.site



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Lithium batteries are seen as key to any global energy demands that won't rely on fossil fuels.

A crucial contributor to meeting the UK 2050 zero emissions target is the development of a new generation of cars and vans that don't use petrol or diesel.

The global change to electric vehicles is not only driving the development and efficiency of lithium batteries but also the need for the metal itself. Because of this, **Goldman Sachs called it "the new gasoline" and suggests demand could triple by 2025.**

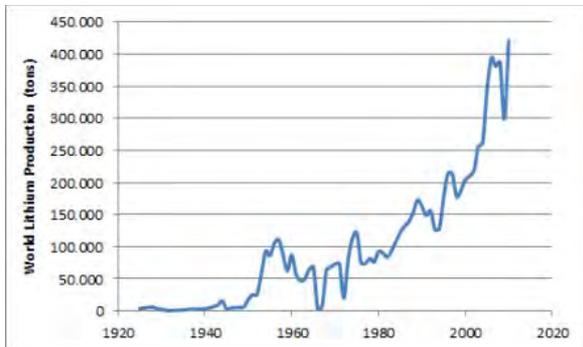
Lithium is a soft silvery alkali metal, the lightest metal and the lightest solid element. The need for lithium has never been stronger. There are many other uses apart from car batteries from phones and fridges to aeroplanes and industry robots, which should see a **global 'lithium rush'** in the foreseeable future.

The UK Government has highlighted lithium as 'a metal of importance' within the technology sector. This means it recognises how beneficial to the future economic outlook of the country a secure supply of this precious metal would be.

Lithium is found in both hard-rock deposits and in salty brines. Right now, it's mainly mined in large brine lakes or "salars" in what's known as the "Lithium Triangle" in Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia.

In China and Australia it is currently extracted from huge open cast mines.

These important sources are facing expansion challenges which makes new sources of supply ever more important and crucial to the growth of environmentally friendly technologies.



Lithium production from 1920 to present. Wikipedia

If only the UK had it's own source of Lithium...

Well, it does, in a place that taught the world about hard rock, hot rocks mining: **Cornwall.**

Currently world famous as the setting for Poldark, Cornwall has a long history of exploiting the resources beneath our feet. The landscape is littered with many reminders of the mining industry and the skills and expertise developed here were exported around the world.

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Cornwall's historic mining landscape

This week **MetAmpere, the first company to drill lithium exploration holes in the UK**, described their test results from Cornwall as “staggeringly good”.

Having successfully completed 6 exploration drill holes at the site near St Austell, MetAmpere’s laboratory analysis of that drilling revealed over 200 metres of continuous lithium mineralisation from the surface.



MetAmpere Chair Roderick Smith.

In the end, several hundred million tonnes could be extracted from the site. The initial project is to build a quarry and processing plant capable of producing 20,000 tonnes of the highly sought-after metal each year – **sufficient to power a whopping 350,000 electric vehicles**.



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Work at the Lithium exploration site in Cornwall

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Lithium has never been extracted from the mica in granite before but the experts behind MetAmpere's St Austell 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.



Lithium Mica from Cornwall

"We've spent the last 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.

I can't emphasise enough how very excited we are about this project – its extraordinary potential will bring huge economic benefits for Cornwall."



Those benefits include an estimated 400 high value, full-time jobs once operational to one of the poorest regions in the UK and an indirect supply-chain employment for more than 3000 people.

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



MetAmpere CEO Andrew Smith at the St Austell site

“**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.” Smith added.

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