

The Big Story

CornwallLive.com

Mining revolution could transform Cornish economy

Cornwall will need major investment in both people and infrastructure projects if it is to fully exploit the economic benefits of its lithium deposits. **Olivier Vergnault** spoke to one of the companies in the vanguard of a new Cornish mining industry

ONE lithium prospecting company says it believes an entire infrastructure of businesses and skills providers will need to get ready for the start of a rush for the precious metal.

British Lithium is one of two firms

in Cornwall drilling into the earth's crust in search of the strategically important mineral.

Lithium is used in batteries, notably those for electric cars, and at present is mostly imported.

However, both British Lithium,

based in Roche, and Cornish Lithium, which has its HQ at the Tremough Innovation Centre in Penryn, agree Cornwall holds the key to the UK's decarbonised electric future.

Both companies are looking to tap into the county's vast reserves of the



“Having local sources of lithium right here in Cornwall would be a huge advantage, as it keeps the supply chain short

John Walker

stuff and kickstart a new mining revolution in Cornwall.

While both firms compete, they are using different processes to extract lithium, mainly from granite and both say the market is big enough for the two of them.

“It's great news for the UK to have two sources of lithium, as it ensures reliability,” said Cornishman John Walker, who has just been appointed as a strategic adviser by British Lithium to help move the firm towards production.

“There are a lot of positives coming out of Cornwall when it comes to lithium and what our two companies are doing. It's great Cornish Lithium they are progressing their project. We want them to succeed

because it's good for Cornwall and good for our industry.”

British Lithium is currently finalising its second round of exploration drilling ahead of starting up its own pilot plant on-site in Roche.

Mr Walker said at present all core samples and tests had to be shipped to Australia but when specialised equipment and processes were brought back from Down Under to Cornwall, trials should begin on site by Easter next year.

“If all goes well, we're looking at a three- to five-year time scale before we can start production,” Mr Walker said. “Before we can do that we'll be engaging in discussions with local stakeholders on how we go from project to a real production phase.

“We need a tremendous amount of input from the local community, national and local government. I think that's key to the success of this project.”

He said drilling tests in and around the clay country had shown a potential yield of 21,000 tonnes of battery-quality lithium carbonate a year, which represented about one-third of what the UK would need for its electric revolution by 2030.

Demand for lithium, either for

goodmove
We buy any house!

Rated
4.9/5
stars on
Reviews.co.uk

WE BUY HOUSES FOR CASH

- ✓ Sell in days - or in your timescale
- ✓ No fees & no obligation
- ✓ Any condition or location
- ✓ NAPB approved & RICS regulated

GET UP TO
£30,000
CASH ADVANCE

BEST
PRICE
PAID

Call us **FREE** today for a cash offer available 24/7

0800 031 9071

goodhousemove.co.uk



marketplacelive.co.uk
Your local place to buy and sell



Any item
any price
free online

“ I’d have loved to stay in Cornwall but the career opportunities didn’t exist then. I want us to help develop those opportunities for young people to do something interesting and fulfilling in this county

21,000

The tonnage of lithium carbonate which could be extracted every year from the clay country



»Roche-based British Lithium has been test-drilling at a number of sites in Cornwall. New infrastructure will be needed if the county is to reap the economic benefits
Paul Richards PR4Photos Ltd

employs eight staff directly and works with other contractors, but CEO Andrew Smith says the potential for more high-quality, well-paid jobs is huge.

Mr Walker said Cornwall and its reserves of lithium certainly had a role to play in decarbonising the UK’s economy, and that in return would create jobs and wealth.

“We’re looking at 400 direct jobs when we’re in full exploitation phase and a further 1,200 indirect jobs,” he said. “This has the potential to contribute £120 million to Cornwall’s GDP [gross domestic product].

“More than that, it’s about helping develop local talent so young people no longer have to go out of the county, like I did, to get a well-paid job.

“Our timescale gives other business organisations, colleges and universities time to prepare.

“We don’t just yet need 50 geologists, and another 50 mineralogists, but we will: and by having discussions with colleges we can ensure the skills that we’ll need are there when the industry needs them.

“Colleges such as Cornwall College, Truro College or the Camborne



School of Mines will have to adapt to the change to provide those future job opportunities and skills.

“As a Cornishman, to help develop the county is fantastic.

“I had to go overseas to find work.

I’d have loved to stay in Cornwall but the career opportunities didn’t exist then. I want us to help develop those opportunities for young people to do something interesting and fulfilling in this county.”

cars or for gigaplants which store electricity for the grid, has risen around the world from 250,000 tonnes to 800,000 tonnes in a few years. While the UK may not be a global player, to be able to produce what it needs would place it at a serious advantage over non-lithium-producing countries.

“From the UK point of view, we need to have battery plants here to stay competitive”, Mr Walker said. “Having local sources of lithium right here in Cornwall would be a huge advantage, as it keeps the supply chain short. With Covid we’ve seen how easy it’s been for global supply chains to be disrupted.

“Our automotive industry will need battery plants built here to keep the cost down and stay competitive. There’s a massive drive to bring the cost of batteries down to make electric cars affordable.”

Simon Price, CEO of lithium-ion battery consultancy Exawatt, said: “British Lithium’s project could provide enough lithium to produce half a million electric vehicle batteries per year, satisfying approximately one-third of projected annual electric vehicle battery demand in the UK by the early 2030s.”

“British Lithium’s project could provide enough lithium to produce half a million electric vehicle batteries per year”
Simon Price

Mr Walker says he believes that with Cornwall Lithium projecting similar figures from other parts of the county, though it planned to extract lithium from geothermal brines rather than from the rock itself, almost all if not all the UK’s future need for the metal could be met by Cornwall.

He said another advantage Cornwall had over mining areas such as South America or Australia was that the infrastructure to ship the lithium out, to battery manufacturers either in the UK or abroad, was already in place, as existing railways and roads offered easily connections to deep-water ports such as Falmouth, Fowey and Plymouth.

At present British Lithium

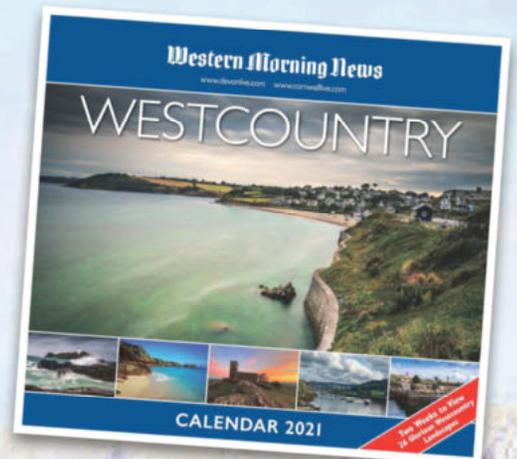
Westcountry Calendar 2021

View 26 glorious Westcountry landscapes in this stunning calendar, the perfect Christmas gift for locals or loved ones far away to enjoy our beautiful region.

HOW TO ORDER

ONLINE: Simply visit www.calendarclub.co.uk

BY PHONE: Call the order line on 0808 178 1344. Lines are open 9:30am - 4:30pm Monday to Friday. Pay by credit/debit card.



£5.99 plus p&p



Western Morning News
Voice Of The Westcountry

CALENDAR CLUB