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Professor Roger Earis,
Pantfedwen,
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SY25 6ES.

Mr. K Skates AM,
Deputy Minister for Culture,
Sport and Tourism.

28th September 2015

Designation of the Esgair Mines as a SAM

Dear Minister

Firstly let me introduce myself, Prof. Roger Earis the Chairman of the Cambrian Mountains Society (CMS). The Society was established in 2005 and now has a membership of around 350, representing people from all backgrounds but all with a common interest in the future of the Cambrian Mountains.

The objectives of CMS include promoting, for the benefit of local communities and the wider public, measures which will sustain or enhance the landscape, natural beauty, biodiversity, archaeology, scientific interest and cultural heritage of the Cambrian Mountains. For several years the Society has concentrated on seeing the whole of the Cambrians brought into the Protected Landscapes Family probably as an AONB. Alongside this CMS has promoted and backed other campaigns to bring notable areas within the Cambrians under more specific types of protection.

Recently the Society helped in a local initiative to have Coed y Bont close to Pontrhydfendigaid designated as a Community Woodland. CMS are also backing the Cambrian Heritage Regeneration Trust in its project set around the medieval Strata Florida, the Abbey itself being under Cadw's care. The Trust hope to restore the surrounding buildings and promote activities related to the Abbey's long history.

Moving further north in the Cambrians, to the flanks of Pumlumon, the Society has long taken an interest in neighbouring metal mines, Esgair Fraith and Esgair Hir. The combined site is of great importance in the history of non-ferrous metal mining, not just in Wales but in the UK as a whole.

One of the earlier owners, Sir Carberry Pryse, on acquiring the site during the late C17th successfully challenged the Crown's monopoly on gold and silver deposits. Just ten years later the mines were promoted as being so rich in ore that they became known as the 'Welsh Potosi' – a reference to the huge silver mine in Bolivia.

Just as with their historical documentation the mines' structures are also well preserved, but in urgent need of further care. Investigations have revealed that the mines have a long history, perhaps even dating back to the Bronze Age, but with their heyday in the 18th and 19th centuries. Fine examples of; wheel pits, an engine house with connecting flat rod channels, a barracks, powder house, shafts and adits can still be clearly seen around the site.

The Society is in contact with the Archaeologist, Dr Sandy Gerrard who submitted an application to Cadw last year (2014) asking that both mines be designated as a SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument). We believe that Dr. Kate Roberts, a Senior Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Archaeology for Cadw, agreed with Dr Gerrard that the Esgair mines were potentially of considerable importance but, at the time, could not commit the organisation's limited resources to the scheduling process. CMS now believe that this site is under further threat, notably from the more destructive elements of the 'off road' community, fly tipping and also damaging commercial operations.

The Society is aware that that the Site is designated as an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) largely on the basis of its rich fern flora and rare lichen community but it feels that these historically important metal mines need conservation work based on their industrial archaeology as well as their biology. The Society strongly commends the work of Dr. Gerrard and asks that you contact Cadw and ask them to take another look at both his research and to start the scheduling process for this very important example of Wales' mining heritage. We attach just the first section of Dr Gerrard's scheduling application by way of an abstract but his entire scheduling application can be found [here](#).

Yours

Professor Roger Earis

cc.

Mark Williams MP Ceredigion constituency,
Elin Jones AM Ceredigion constituency,
Ellen ap Gwynn Leader of Ceredigion County Council and member for Ceulanmaesmawr ward, the ward in which the Esgair mines are sited.

Appendix. See following page

**Scheduling Application to Cadw
for Esgair Hir and Esgair Fraith Metal Mines
[NGR SN 73523 91270]**



Submitted by Dr Sandy Gerrard, 27th August 2014

Scheduling Application to Cadw

Site Name: The two historic non-ferrous metal mines known as Esgair Hir and Esgair Fraith

“Such sites deserve the respect and protection currently afforded to all others of antiquarian importance”

(Bick, D. 1976)

Background

This pair of conjoined non-ferrous mines are situated close to the source of the Afon Llestgota at an altitude of between 400m and 450m above sea level within the Cambrian Mountains at NGR SN 73523 91270. The output is known to have included lead, copper and silver. Reliable documentation indicates several periods of exploitation from the late 17th century until 1904 with suggestions that the mine may have been worked in prehistoric and Roman times. A considerable variety of surviving earthworks and structures attest to the presence of an informative mining complex which provides a rich archaeological resource regarding the character and evolution of metal mining technology. Abundant, early and exceptionally informative documentary evidence further enhances the importance of this exceptional group of industrial archaeological remains. The importance of the mines is further indicated by the considerable body of archaeological literature demonstrating a sustained interest in the mines and the significant information they hold. The mines are situated within public access land and represent an important and popular educational and visitor resource.