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## NEWS RELEASE

28th September 2015

### Designation of the Esgair Mines, Ceredigion as a SAM

Esgair Hir and Esgair Fraith are two historic metal mines situated close to the source of the Afon Lluestgota to the east of Tal y Bont in the Cambrian Mountains. They produced lead, copper and silver and were mined from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century until the early 1900's.

The mines' structures are 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 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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. This is a rich archaeological resource that demonstrates the character and evolution of metal mining technology, backed up by exceptional documentary evidence.

The 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 C17<sup>th</sup> 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.

Dr Sandy Gerrard, an archaeologist, submitted an application to Cadw in 2014 asking for both mines to be designated as a SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument). Unfortunately, Cadw were unable to progress this. The Cambrian Mountains Society now believes that the site is under further threat from fly tipping, off-roading and other activities.

The mines are already designated as an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) on the basis of their rich fern flora and rare lichen community but the site needs protection for its industrial archaeology. The Society supports the case made by Dr. Gerrard and has written to the Minister responsible, Ken Skates, to press for protection of this important example of Wales' mining heritage.

Professor Roger Earis remarks;

*Our Welsh mining heritage is an important tourist asset and needs preservation.*

#### Background information on The Cambrian Mountains Society (CMS):

The Society was established in 2005 and 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.

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