

Ewing calls for return of coal cash



Energy Minister Fergus Ewing has accused the UK Government of showing 'disrespect' to coal communities across Scotland, as they fail to answer calls for £15m coal levies to be returned to Scotland – over a year after the issue was first raised.

Mr Ewing has again challenged the UK Government to return the £15 million coal levies – raised from coal produced in Scotland – to be reinvested in restoring opencast sites here.

The calls comes after the Chancellor's Autumn Statement failed to deliver measures to ensure at least some of the coal levies raised from coal produced in Scotland be made available to restore opencast sites in Scotland.

Speaking ahead of the final meeting of the Scottish Open Cast Mining Taskforce, Mr Ewing said:

"I have written on numerous occasions to my counterparts in the UK Government, on this issue since September 2013 and I have yet to receive a substantive reply. Even in the Autumn Statement there were no provisions for coal communities. The UK Government's lack of engagement in this manner is a disrespect to the people of Scotland.

"These monies could go some way to assist in reducing the financial burden that our local authorities are feeling across Scotland due to the huge costs of restoration.

"The money collected by the UK Government over the years from coal mined in Scotland, now in the region of £15 million, should be put to good use to help with the restoration of opencast sites.

“We have a significant restoration legacy to deal with in Scotland and that money – paid into the central funds in London – has not been used for the industry or affected communities. It is now needed to help restore these sites.”