



The Coal  
Authority

# Update for Skewen residents

9 February 2021

## This leaflet is for all those in Skewen affected by the mine water flooding incident and evacuation on 21 January or who lives in the immediate area.

We know that not everyone was able to attend the online Residents' Meeting that was held on 4 February and wanted to share the key information with you. If you would like more information or to discuss this further there are contact details at the end of the leaflet.

### Here to help

Everyone at the Coal Authority is genuinely sorry that so many residents were affected by the flooding incident on 21 January 2021. We have been working with partners since then to get people back to their homes and to investigate what caused the flooding and design remediation works and a new mine water management system to give the community peace of mind. The Coal Authority does not have liability for flooding and residents who have been flooded need to work with their insurers regarding any damage that has been caused. We have put in a package of support to help with the outdoor clear up and to support the reinstatement of gardens and outside areas. There is more information in this leaflet.

### 21 January 2021

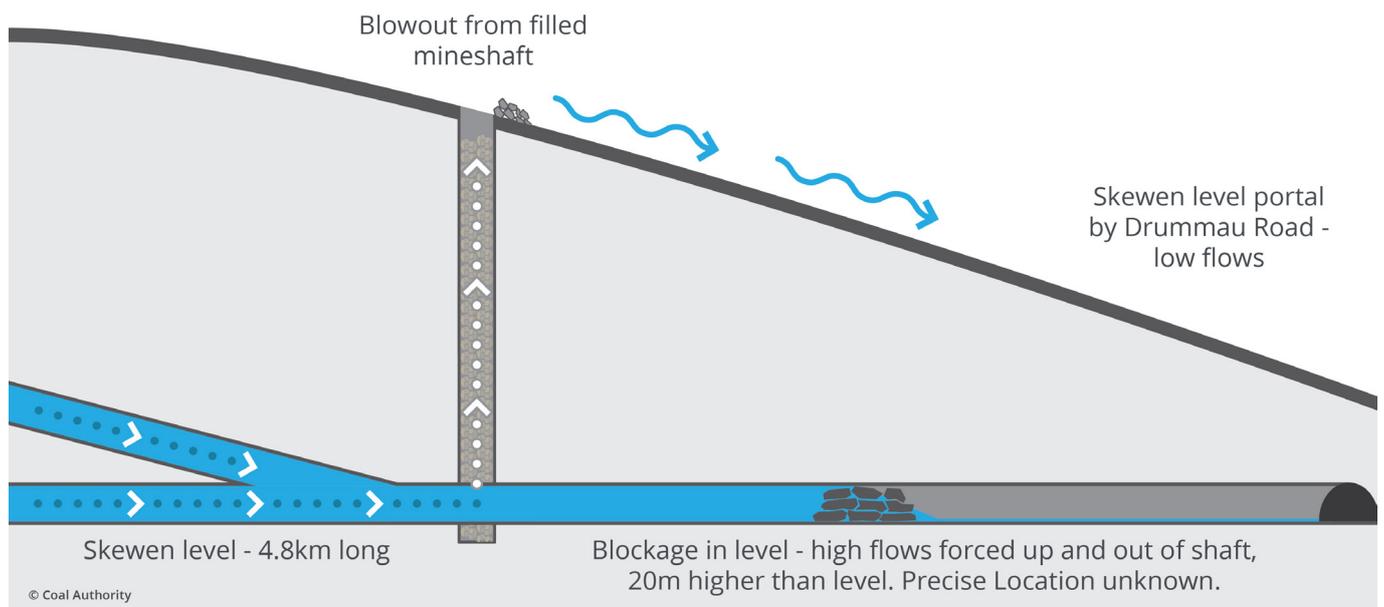
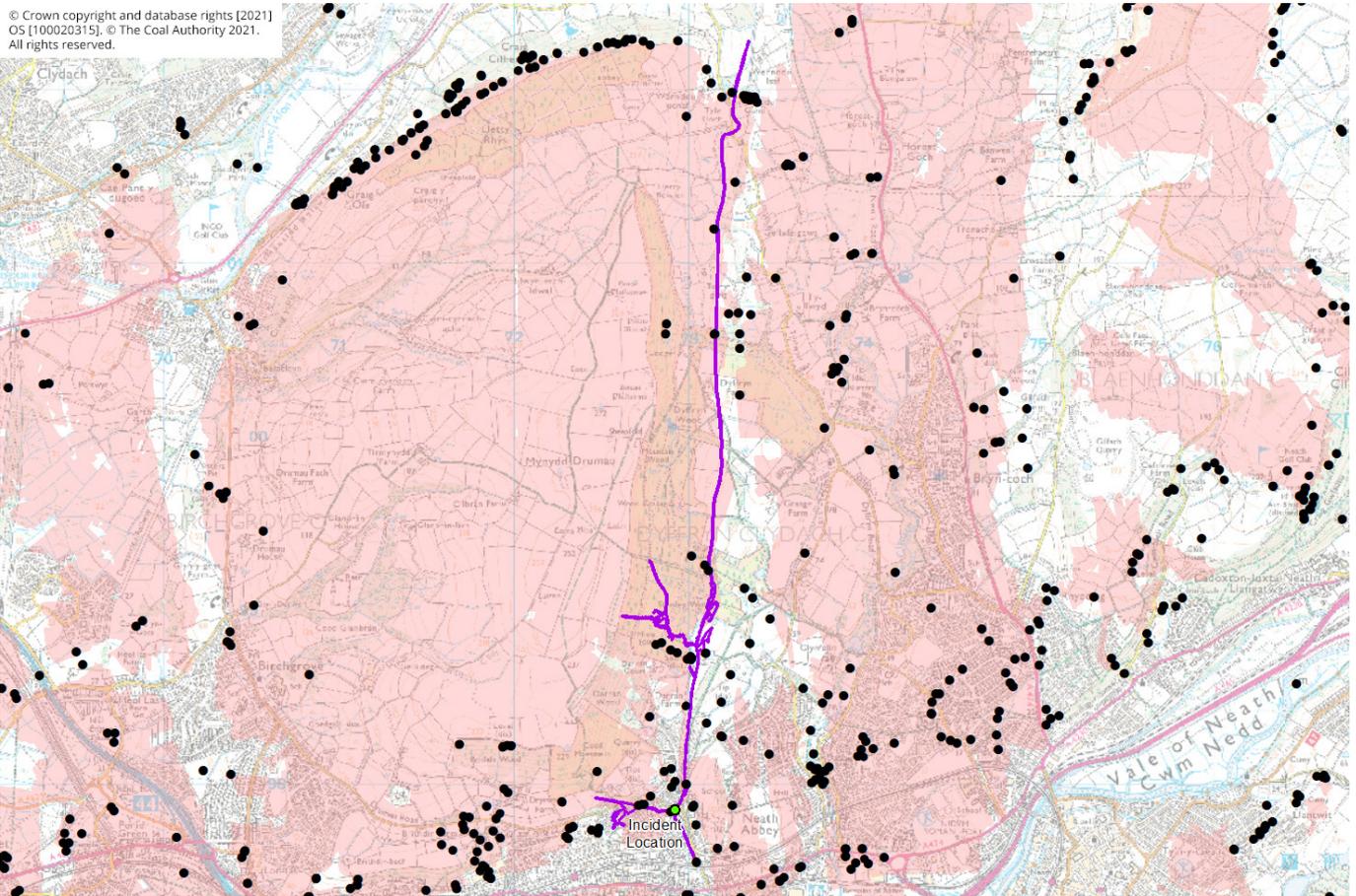
Coal Authority staff were on site as soon as we were informed of the incident. We supported the emergency services to keep everyone safe and began an immediate investigation into the information we and others hold about the mining legacy of the Skewen area to get the clearest picture possible. It is not unusual for heavy rain to expose mining features or cause mine water to rise but the scale, length and impact of this event is extremely unusual. Our investigations showed that the mine water from the workings above Skewen now needs a new management solution and that the mine shaft on the Goshen Park junction which was damaged by the mine water needs to be remediated. We can clearly state that there is no wider stability risk to the area and no new or increased risk to any property in the Skewen area from mining subsidence or other mine shafts / mining features in the local area.

### What happened and why

The area around Skewen has a large number of historic mine workings, which date back to before 1850, predating the legal requirement for mine owners to lodge mining records.

Rainwater seeps into the hillside and enters the mine workings. The mine workings above and around Skewen cover over 12km<sup>2</sup>. The main underground water drainage channel (or adit) is 4.8km long.

The drainage channel has operated effectively for a very long time but has become blocked, causing water to build up in the adit. The pressure of the water forced a connection with the nearby mineshaft which allowed the water to rise much closer to ground level and weaken the mine shaft and area around it causing the water to 'blow out' from the mineshaft and cause the flooding we saw on the 21 January 2021.



The mine water contains iron from the mine workings which is why it was so orange (like rust) at first. We have been taking regular samples of the mine water since the incident and can confirm that there is nothing in the mine water which is of concern or would affect the clean-up. All floodwater is unfortunately contaminated from sewers and drains and the NPT website (<https://www.npt.gov.uk/27177>) provides advice on sensible precautionary measures.

## What's been done?

Public safety, working with emergency partners, was our first priority. The area was fenced and the gas to Goshen Park disconnected. Some residents were evacuated due to this and because of the unsafe access at the Goshen Park cul-de-sac entrance near the blow out.

We worked with Neath Port Talbot Council to put in place a temporary mine water management system. As flows reduced from the mine workings this was changed to an alternative system to allow access back to more homes. Everyone other than Goshen Park residents regained access to their homes on or before 28 January. The temporary system is monitored daily and is coping well with the flows.



We undertook drilling work in the area around the blow out to identify the extent of the damaged mine shaft at the junction. This allowed us to facilitate short term access to Goshen Park (29/30 January) to allow residents to collect cars and precious / essential belongings. Work then began to repair and reconnect the gas line and to install a new temporary access for Goshen Park residents which opened 6 February and has allowed all but 3 families to have full access to their homes. To support residents we established a dedicated community support helpline 0800 2884268 which is available 9-5 Monday to Friday to deal with practical questions and administer the support which we could put in place and are providing 24/7 security at Goshen Park and providing additional security patrols to support the Police in the wider areas.

## What's next?

Now the temporary access is in place at Goshen Park the cul-de-sac junction will be closed and work to remediate the mineshaft and to finalise and install a new water management system will begin. The road junction to Goshen Park will be open within 3 months and the new system will be in place within 6 months. The new mine water management system will be of sufficient capacity to manage all mine water flows from the hills and workings above and will take into account the potential impacts of future extreme weather. The system will have 24/7 flow monitoring and telemetry alarms so that it can be continuously monitored and swift action taken if there is any change. We aim to minimise disruption as much as possible during the works and will keep you updated as the design details and works progress. We will continue to work closely with Neath Port Talbot Council to provide support and share information.

## Reporting concerns

Since the incident many of you have provided information to suggest that unusual occurrences had occurred in the days, weeks and months before the blow out occurred. We have listened to this feedback and will be running a public awareness campaign with local communities, Local Resilience Forum partners and utility companies in the weeks and months ahead to help more people be aware of our work and know that they can report such things directly to us. We know that local people know their area best and on average we receive 800-1000 reports a year which we investigate promptly and take action as needed.

You, or any of your friends or family who live in coalfield areas (52% of people do across South Wales) can call us 24/7 on 01623 646333.

## How can I find out more?

- you can call our residents' helpline 0800 2884268 Monday-Friday 9-5pm
- we will provide a weekly update to all residents that we have email addresses for. If you haven't provided your details (or would prefer your update to be posted) then please let us know using the residents' helpline
- our updates, and answers to questions you have posed, will also be shared on the Neath Port Talbot Skewen residents' website at <https://www.npt.gov.uk/skewen>
- we will continue to share our information with Councillor Mike Harvey who will share on his residents' WhatsApp groups and his Facebook page
- we will be employing a local community liaison officer and will provide more information asap

## What support is available?

Whilst the Coal Authority does not have legal liability for flooding and people do need to work with their insurance companies on the majority of the flood recovery work we recognise the impacts on people's homes and lives and want to help where we can. This includes:

- cleaning external areas around flooded properties of ochre, mud and debris. Crews have been on site since 1 February and will continue until this has been done for all residents who want it – please give your permission through the residents' line
- support towards the reinstatement of gardens and outside areas up to a total of £500 of materials (plus VAT and reasonable labour costs) – you can request this and fill out a form of the specifics through the residents' line

Full details can be found at <https://www2.groundstability.com/skewen>. Our residents' helpline team can discuss this and other practical support (such as the reimbursement of hotel accommodation or an allowance for the time residents were evacuated / without access).

## Follow up to residents' meeting

A large number of questions were raised and answered at the online meeting and more were raised in the chat function. All of these have been captured and will be answered in the following ways:

- property or resident specific questions will be answered directly to the resident who asked them
- general questions / answers and associated information (for example mine water monitoring data) will be shared through the residents' briefing and the FAQ pages on the NPT website (<https://www.npt.gov.uk/27177>).

The Coal Authority has also offered follow up meetings at a street level if residents would like this. Please can you request this through Councillor Mike Harvey ([cllr.m.harvey@npt.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.m.harvey@npt.gov.uk)) if you and your neighbours would find this helpful?

A full recording of the meeting is available on request via a secure transfer to all residents who have been affected or attended the residents' meeting. Please contact the residents' helpline or email [customerservice@coal.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice@coal.gov.uk)

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To request a large print version of this leaflet or another format please phone **0800 2884268** or email **customerservice@coal.gov.uk**

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