

Cancel all planned coal projects globally to end ‘deadly addiction’, says UN chief

Call comes at event hosted by UK government, which is under pressure over planned coalmine in Cumbria



An artist impression of UK's planned first deep coal mine in 30 years in West Cumbria near Whitehaven. Photograph: West Cumbria Mining Company

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All planned coal projects around the world must be cancelled to end the “deadly addiction” to the most polluting fossil fuel, the UN secretary-general António Guterres said on Tuesday.

Phasing out coal from the electricity sector is the single most important step to tackle the climate crisis, he said. Guterres’s call came at the opening of a summit of the **Powering Past Coal Alliance** (PPCA), a group of governments and businesses committed to ending coal burning for power.

The PPCA was founded by the UK and Canada in 2017. The UK is on track to end coal burning in power plants in 2024, but it has come under **recent**

pressure for allowing a new coalmine to go ahead in Cumbria, which will produce coking coal for use in steel making. The UK is hosting a vital UN climate summit, Cop26, in November.

The PPCA announced two new national members, Hungary and Uruguay. PPCA members commit to ending coal burning for power by 2030 in developed nations and reducing it by 80% globally.

“Today, I am calling on all governments, private companies and local authorities to take three steps,” said Guterres. “First, cancel all global coal projects in the pipeline and end the deadly addiction to coal. Second, end the international financing of coal plants and ... third, jump-start a global effort to finally organise a just transition [for coal industry workers], going plant by plant if necessary.”

UK energy minister **Anne-Marie Trevelyan** told the PPCA summit: “Having gone over 5,000 hours without using coal for electricity last year, the UK is powering forward with the transition away from coal for power generation and into the enormous economic potential of clean technologies.” She did not mention the Cumbria mine.

Canada’s environment minister Jonathan Wilkinson said: “By working together we are creating a healthier future for our children and grandchildren.” However, critics point out there are plans for **new coal mines in Alberta**.

Doug Parr, at Greenpeace UK, said: “The UK is supposed to be leading this alliance, but far from Powering Past **Coal** – we’re scaling back up. Unless plans for the new mine are immediately scrapped, Boris Johnson will have damaged the credibility and moral authority needed to demand action from world leaders as host of this year’s global climate conference.”

One of the UK’s most eminent environmental scientists recently called the government’s failure to block the new coalmine in Cumbria “**absolutely ridiculous**”. The government’s official climate advisers said the mine gave a “**negative impression of the UK’s climate priorities**”.

Supporters of the £165m mine say it would provide 500 jobs in an area which is among the most deprived in the country. Ministers have said the matter is a “local issue”.

The mine would produce 2.7m tonnes a year of coking coal, with about 85% planned for export, although there is no shortage of such coal globally. A recent report suggested the **sulphur content of the Cumbrian coal** could mean British steelmakers would be unable to use it. Green experts say steelmakers will have to **deploy new technology** to reduce their emissions under the UK’s net zero targets.