

December 2025

Dear Stakeholder

We are contacting you to share information about the Water and Abandoned Metal Mines (WAMM) programme, and our forthcoming plans to conduct surveys and ground investigations near the Sharnberry mine to the west of Hamsterley Forest.

### What is the WAMM programme?

The government's Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP2023) published in 2023 stated that abandoned metal mines are the largest source of metal pollution to English rivers and into the marine environment. Before 2000, mine operators could abandon mines without having to take responsibility for dealing with ongoing pollution of rivers after mining ended. If the Government does not act, rivers will continue to be severely polluted by metals from these mines for hundreds more years. The WAMM Programme was set up in 2011 to start cleaning up rivers polluted by abandoned metal mines in England. It is a partnership between the Environment Agency, the Mining Remediation Authority and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

### Pollution from Sharnberry Lead Mine

Monitoring by the Environment Agency has shown that contaminated groundwater (mine water) from Sharnberry mine pollutes 15km of the Euden Beck and Bedburn Beck with zinc, cadmium and/or lead, all the way down to the River Wear. The Sharnberry adit (a man-made drainage tunnel used for mining) releases around 900kg of these harmful metals each year.

### Ground Investigations

In the new year we will carry out ground investigations at two locations:

- On the access track as it approaches the northwest boundary of Hamsterley Forest.
- In the verge of the access track just inside the northwest edge of Hamsterley Forest.

These works are essential to allow us to develop options to address the pollution of the rivers that is being caused by the abandoned Sharnberry mine.

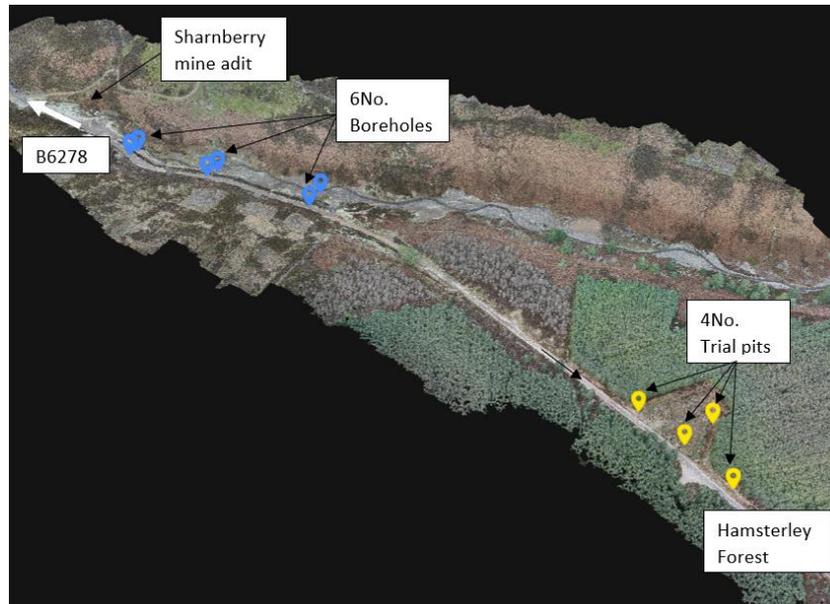
Nature of the works:

- Ground investigations: This will involve borehole drilling and trial pit excavation to assess underlying ground conditions.
- Tools and Machinery: Excavator and a drill rig will be used. A welfare unit will also be based at the works site.
- Works will be undertaken on and adjacent to the existing track.



#### Planned Schedule:

- Start Date: Mid to late January 2026
- Duration: Approximately 4 weeks
- Working hours: Monday to Friday 8:00am to 6:00pm
- Access to the site will be from the B6278 via a gate onto the public right of way through Eggleston Estate.



*Figure 1 Plan showing location of proposed ground investigation works*

We do not expect the works to cause any disruption to the local community, and they will be carried out in line with environmental best practices and safety regulations. Access will be maintained along the track for pedestrians, cyclists and horses. There will be limited noise associated with machinery and drilling, and we will endeavour to keep this to a minimum.

We appreciate your patience and understanding as we carry out these essential investigations.

#### **Northern Powergrid**

We are currently consulting with Northern Powergrid about providing a new power supply to the proposed mine water treatment scheme. We will be writing in the new year to provide further information about these proposals and the associated works.



## Find out more

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss the content of this letter my contact details are provided below.

David Lane, Project Manager, Mining Remediation Authority  
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07827 467 840

Alternatively, you can also contact the project team by:

- emailing [wamm@miningremediation.gov.uk](mailto:wamm@miningremediation.gov.uk) or
- calling **0345 762 6848**

We are in the process of publishing a dedicated Sharnberry website, this will have detailed information about the project to date and updates on works in the area. We will let you know when this is available.

In the meantime, you can find out more about our work across England by visiting the WAMM programme website at <https://www.miningremediation.co.uk/project-spaces/>

**Yours sincerely,**

**David Lane,**  
**Project Manager, Mining Remediation Authority**

