

**TRAWSGOED ESTATES LIMITED**  
CANOLAFAN, LLANAFAN, ABERYSTWYTH, CEREDIGION SY23 4AY

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Mike Hedges Esq. AM  
Committee Chair  
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Our Ref: Trawsgoed /NRW12

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2019

Dear Mr. Hedges

**Trawsgoed Estates Limited – Mineral Rights in NRW Forest Areas in Ceredigion**

I am writing to draw your attention to an on-going dispute my company has with National Resources Wales (NRW) and, hopefully, that I might also enlist your support with this matter.

The dispute concerns two large areas of NRW forest where the mineral rights were retained by my grandfather, the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lisburne, and his successors in title (i.e. my late father and Trawsgoed Estates Limited). The two forest areas affected by these reserved rights are:-

**1. Ystwyth Forest**

This area, of some 2,206-acres, comprising let farms and in-hand woodlands and now forming part of the Ystwyth (or Myherin) Forest area, was sold by my grandfather and his trustees to the Forestry Commission on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1931. The exception and reservation of mines and minerals is very clear in the conveyance.

However, in 2016, it came to light that no payments for the minerals, extracted by the Forestry Commission, had ever made to my father or his land agents. It seems that the payments were overlooked from the time of the building of the Ystwyth forest roads from the late 1960s onwards.

Whilst we entered into a Licence agreement with NRW in August 2016, and received a payment for stone, we have since been seeking reasonable terms with NRW on the historic use of the stone in the forest area. However, there have been no meaningful discussions since 2017 and I regret we doubt the sincerity of NRW's approach and commitment to a genuinely reasonable settlement.

Since 2018, NRW has made the excuse that the matter is 'in the hands of solicitors' and that they cannot comment. That said, the NRW solicitors have refused to discuss the matter with our solicitors and to respond to their letters, etc.

**2. Tywi Forest**

Trawsgoed Estates Limited has reserved mineral rights over some 6,878-acres (2,783 ha) of the Tywi Forest. This large area was originally made up of mountain sheepwalks which were sold in the 1920s, but subject to mines and mineral rights.

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And there were also areas of manorial land, where the rights of pasturage were sold to hill farmers, at about the same time.

The conveyances of the land all have mineral rights reservations that in some cases allow the Forestry Commission (now NRW) to use the stone for the construction and repair of roads, ditches, etc. However, there is no right for the stone to be taken from one area to be used in another. The size of the quarries is indicative that stone has been removed to make roads elsewhere.

Although we have recently sold some of the mineral rights in the Tywi Forest to a third party, we are claiming for the historic use of stone by the FC/ NRW. As with the Ystwyth Forest area, we have met with next to no response. Of note is that I wrote to Claire Pillman, CEO of NRW, in April and May last year but received no written reply from her, only a badly drafted and inaccurate letter from an assistant at her office in Bangor.

It seems obvious to me, and to my company's advisers, that NRW are attempting to hide the significant potential liabilities for their use of our stone in these forest areas.

Of note is that on the 6<sup>th</sup> November last year the, Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee wrote a letter to you with regard to Natural Resources Wales. I have not read the full Annual Report & Accounts 2017-2018, but in the letter it refers to 'Potential Liabilities' and the Annual Report states that: 'Formal proceedings has been served for a civil claim by a third party of the use of stones by Natural Resources Wales and one of its predecessor bodies'. Apparently NRW quantified its related potential liability, at 31 March 2018, to be £225,000. In fact the claim, I understand made by the Wynnstay Estate Trustees, is very much larger, as is the potential liability of the Trawsgoed Estates claim, which NRW is well aware of and has not even mentioned.

Also, noted is that in the last Committee Scrutiny Meeting the by the committee of NRW on the 13<sup>th</sup> February, the issues of potential liability were not raised. Clearly we would much like to know what investigations the Committee will be undertaking.

I have copied this letter to Andrew Davies, who is a member of this Committee, and to Neil Hamilton, AM for Ceredigion.

Yours sincerely



**John Vaughan**

Director

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c.c. Andrew Davies AM, Neil Hamilton AM