Key Issues –
The surface mine site and surrounding area supports a number of protected species and locally and nationally important habitats. In order to secure planning consent for the original mine scheme and subsequent extensions, the project requires long term ecological mitigation and restoration, as well as an excellent working relationship with consultees, particularly Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) East Ayrshire Council (EAC), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

Description of the project
Greenburn Surface Mine is operated by Kier Mining and is situated near New Cumnock in East Ayrshire, in an area of intensive mining operations. Since 2002 when the original scheme became operational, the site has been through a number of expansion phases, with ongoing restoration being carried out on the earlier phases. The mine site currently extends to approximately 550 ha and Kier Mining currently has two planning applications for further extension areas with EAC for determination.
Lessons learnt
ENVIRON's initial involvement onsite was limited to ecological impact assessment rather than completion of the full Environmental Impact Assessment. Due to the presence of protected and important species including bats, otter, barn owl, salmonid fish and wading birds and sensitive bog and heath habitats on site, ecology is one of the key considerations on site. Under a planning permission of the original scheme and carried forward and updated with each subsequent extension, a conservation management plan (CMP) for the site was prepared. This document was agreed by the Greenburn Technical Support Group (TSG) made up of key stakeholders. This approach has been invaluable to the work on site as the CMP provides the perfect location to capture all of the ecological mitigation and enhancement measures in the various Environmental Statements (ES) and the TSG provides an excellent forum for discussing all environmental matters relating to the mine.
Environ recently completed the full EIA and associated ESs for two further proposed extensions to the Greenburn surface Mine. One of these extensions called Carsgailoch Hill, posed particular challenges in terms of EIA.

Lessons learnt cont. -
Part of the proposed extension site stretches into degraded bog habitats to the north of the Greenburn site in close proximity to good quality blanket bog. The extension application is with EAC for determination but the lessons learnt so far from the EIA have involved: early identification of key constraints (in this case, the loss of bog habitats, albeit degraded ones), the benefits of early and frequent consultation with stakeholders (in this case, the TSG) and the importance of an innovative approach to mitigation. With respect to this last point, the mitigation in the EIA includes the restoration of a comparable area of currently forested bog habitat, prior to the work, as a replacement for the degraded habitat to be lost as well as the restoration of the degraded bog area to a heath peatland post mining. In this way, the proposed extension would deliver an increase in the quality of bog habitat in the area and an increase in peatland habitat in the local area whilst still allowing the mineral resource to be accessed.

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