



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin



LAIDLAW
FOUNDATION

Elemental Principles: How the European Union and United Kingdom are Dealing with Critical Raw Material Supply Chain Issues, and the Public Perception of Mining

Meabh Ní hÉalaithe
24/08/26



Department for the
Economy

An Roinn
Geilleagair

GSNI Geological
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Laidlaw Scholars Research and Leadership Program

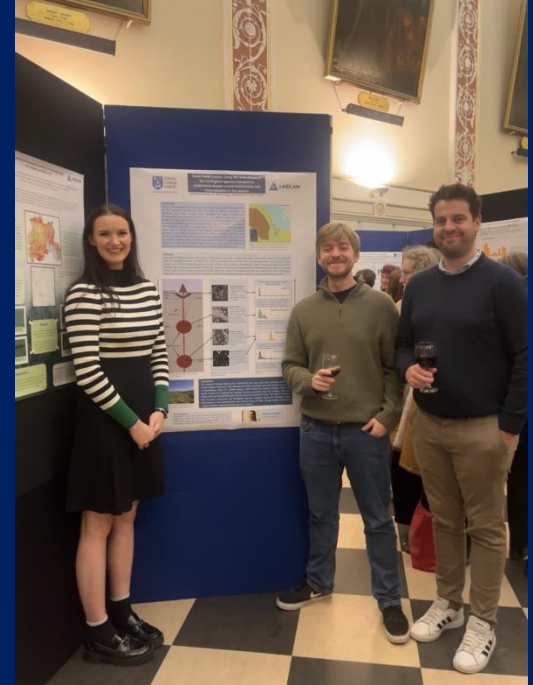


The Ladies of the TCD 2025 Laidlaw Cohort

- Set up by Lord Laidlaw in 2014
- 18-month program for undergraduate students
- 22 universities across the world
- 1 summer of research
- 1 summer of leadership in action
- Aims to invest in students passionate about research and leadership, to help shape future world leaders

Summer 1 Research Project

- 6 weeks of research
- Gauging magma storage depths beneath the Carlingford Igneous Complex to understand PGM mineralisation better
- Cone sheet cpx thermobarometry found a potential deeper magma reservoir at approx. 36.01km depth
- Research was presented at the Laidlaw Global Conference in Durham
- Poster chosen by Taylor & Francis for publishing



Why Critical Minerals Matter

- Demand rapidly rising as economies head toward a green transition and electrify
- UK lithium demand to increase ~1,100% by 2035, EU demand by ~1,500% by 2030
- Critical raw materials underpin all green technology (EVs, wind turbines, solar panels, etc.)
- Recent geopolitical conflicts put into perspective how fragile CRM supply chains are for EU and UK
- Framework must be put in place to designate raw materials status, stabilise supply chains and strengthen partnerships to reach sustainable development goals

Shared Critical Status	UK Only	EU Only
<i>Aluminium/Bauxite</i>	Indium	Arsenic
Antimony	Iridium	Baryte
<i>Bismuth</i>	Iron	Beryllium
<i>Boron/Borate</i>	Magnesite	Coking Coal
<i>Cobalt</i>	Nickel	Feldspar
<i>Gallium</i>	Rhenium	Fluorspar
<i>Germanium</i>	Rhodium	Phosphate Rock
Hafnium	Ruthenium	Scandium
<i>Helium</i>	Sodium	Strontium
<i>Lithium</i>	Tellurium	
<i>Magnesium</i>	Tin	
<i>Manganese</i>	Zinc	
Natural Graphite		
Niobium	Growth Mins	SRM but not CRM
<i>Phosphorus</i>	Chromium	<i>Nickel</i>
<i>PGMs</i>	Copper	<i>Copper</i>
<i>REEs</i>	Uranium	
<i>Silicon Metal</i>	Graphite	
Tantalum		
<i>Titanium Metal</i>		
<i>Tungsten</i>		
Vanadium		<i>Italic = EU SRM</i>

List of EU and UK CRMs (European Commission & UK Government)

Separate Approaches to the Same Problem

- EU and UK developed framework in 2024 and 2025 respectively
- EU CRMA is a regulation, with mandatory targets for Member States
- UK Vision 2035 is a government strategy
- Both reduce vulnerability, both have very similar aims
- EU developed lists of Critical and Strategic Raw Materials
- UK developed list of Critical and Growth Minerals

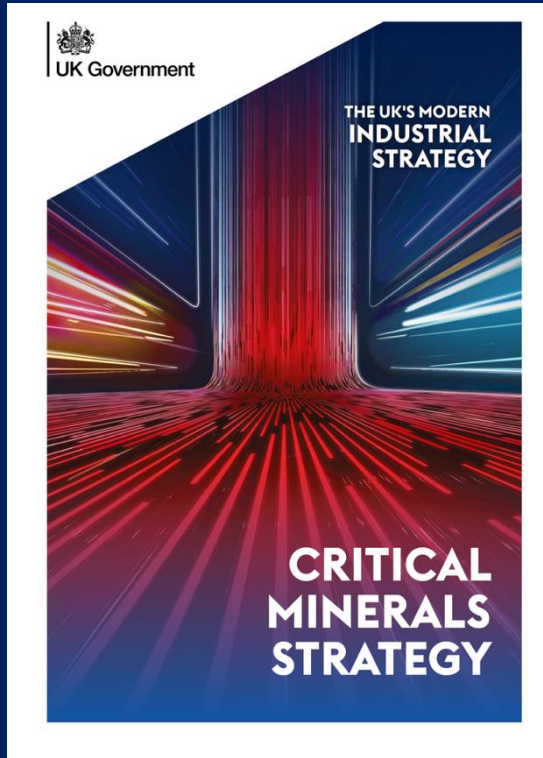
EU CRMA	UK Vision 2035
2030 target	2035 target
10% domestic production	10% domestic production
25% recycling	20% recycling
<65% supply from any one country outside EU	<60% supply from any one country outside UK
Focus on security, domestic production, and circularity	Focus on economic growth, midstream processing, and resilience

EU CRMA 2024

- Focuses on economic security and green transition/technology
- Framework that, coupled with the EU Net Zero Industrial Act, forms a pillar of the EU Green Deal
- Legally binding for all member states, with penalties and amendments set out if Member States don't comply
- CRMA 2030 metrics are non-binding benchmarks
- Strategic Projects avail of permitting support, and accelerated opening of developments (mines, processing plants etc.)
- Common framework across all Member States
- Emphasis on monitoring and risk preparedness



UK Vision 2035



- Focuses on economy and industry
- Names strengths such as R&D, midstream processing, and finance and trading
- Not legally binding
- Main objectives are to optimise domestic production and build resilient networks
- UK is more limited in mineral potential than EU, must focus more on trade relationships and midstream processes
- Works in tandem with the UK Industrial Strategy
- Uses government funding and investment mechanisms

Public Perception and SLO

- Mines are notoriously controversial
- CRM mining coming more to the fore
- Social License to Operate
- Not legally required, but massively important, can severely delay projects



- Some mines appear to be without controversy, why?
- What makes one mine more acceptable than another?

Public Perception (EU)

Kiruna Mine

- Underground iron ore mine
- In operation since 1900
- Generally well regarded – long term relationship with the community
- Most press about subsidence related to mine
- Main concerns around Sami rights and relocation of town centre
- New REE deposit found 2km from mine – EU Strategic Project

Freedom from China? The mine at the centre of Europe's push for rare earth metals

Swedish producer is trying to accelerate the process of extracting the elements vital for hi-tech products

By [Lisa O'Carroll](#) in Kiruna

The Sinking Town with The Most Modern Underground Mine: Kiruna, Sweden



Some liberated fragments of a restless mind :)

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Public Perception (EU)



Miña do Barosso

- Planned operation in the Cuevas de Barroso area in northern Portugal
- Proposed open-pit lithium mine (largest spodumene Li deposit in EU)
- Facing strong opposition on a local level, with further support of some international NGOs
- Concerns surrounding secure waste storage
- EU Strategic Project

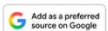
Portugal's Barroso lithium mine project faces villagers' ire

🕒 19 October 2023

“Something isn’t right” in way Portugal’s AD government is railroading people’s lives in favour of foreign big business

Lawyer Ana Inês Patrício goes to the heart of Covas do Barroso’s fight to be left in peace

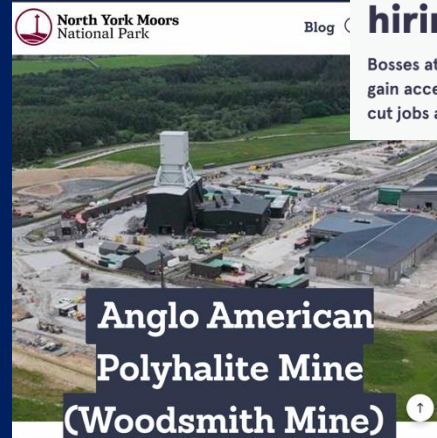
BY NATASHA DONN
© May 30, 2026



Public Perception (UK)

Woodsmith Mine

- Largest Polyhalite deposit in the world
- Underground mine being developed
- Located in North York Moors National Park
- Designated as Nationally Significant infrastructure
- Negative press associated with job layoffs in 2024
- Was quickly accepted by locals
- Very open about projects and development
- Concern over environmental impact



Mirror > News > UK News > Anglo American Plc

EXCLUSIVE: Yorkshire bosses face backlash for axing UK miners while hiring Belarus workers

Bosses at the Woodsmith Mine project in north Yorkshire – which is trying to gain access to the world's largest known deposit of polyhalite fertiliser – have cut jobs at the site while hiring workers from Belarus



Public Perception (UK)



Curraghinalt Mine

- Europe's largest gold deposit
- Underground mine proposed
- Located in Greencastle, Co. Tyrone AONB
- Strong organized opposition
- Negative press across many media outlets
- Social media used to encourage pushback
- 'Silent Majority' counters claims that local community are against it
- Concern over environmental and local impact



The war over Omagh's gold: the £21bn mine plan tearing a community apart

On Monday, a public inquiry will reopen, nine years after the plan was proposed and a toxic local battle began

Summary

- Both EU and UK acknowledge importance of CRM supply chain stability
- EU more focused on development of CRM potential
- UK more focused on investment opportunities and economic growth
- Both strategies work in tandem with other acts and strategies to form broader framework
- Social acceptance of mining is incredibly nuanced, many factors lead to acceptance or rejection
- Older mines are generally better regarded
- Companies must promote clear and open communication with communities
- Education on the benefits of domestic mining practices essential



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Thank You!

Questions?

