

Suggested Bullet Points to consider:

This is by no means an exhaustive list and you may feel compelled that your justification leans more strongly on some points than others or you may adopt a completely different stance. Adding personal impact/anecdote would be very helpful.

Background and Context:

- The steam-based heritage sector is a quintessential British identity, recognised the world over and a significant source of domestic and international tourism.
- The road steam sector alone contributes an estimated £745M per annum to local businesses and charities through ever popular steam rallies, events and museums attracting circa 10 million visitors.
- A working demonstration of a steam engine embodies and inspires great engineering prowess but also brings to life the cultural and social context of life during and after the industrial revolution, helping to educate and inform on the positives and negatives from history.
- Most UK built steam engines were designed to burn dry steam coal, to maximise the best efficiency and cleanest burning characteristics obtainable at the time of construction.

Steam Coal:

- Ffos-y-fran Mine near Merthyr Tydfil has provided the heritage sector with a high quality hard coal, which has generally become the favoured fuel for its:-
 - Clean burning characteristics (low to no visible smoke and emissions.)
 - Long-lasting burning – leading to very efficient use.
 - Indigenously mined, washed and distributed reducing transport miles.
 - Available (pre-2022) at an economically viable rate.
 - Giving employment to UK workers from mine, transportation, merchants etc.
- Sourcing an alternative good quality lumped steam coal, even on a global scale is extremely challenging and currently a similar or better fuel has not come to fruition.
- Ffos-y-fran is possibly the last bastille of the high-grade coal with which the UK heritage sector's steam engines were designed to run on.

Impact of Closure:

- The UK steam-based heritage sector is collateral damage to the closure of Ffos-y-fran.
- Whilst alternatives will enable the sector to continue it may be threatened by:-
 - Escalating costs of seeking fuel.
 - Difficulty in supply of an alternative fuel.
 - Inferior fuel in terms of quantity consumed and visible emissions.
 - Increase of overall transportation emissions if not indigenous.
- Sanctions on coal from Russia and the impact of some other coals' transport routes as a result, along with the 2022 escalation of global coal price has made other less favourable but potentially viable sources disappear in the last 12 months.
- The steam-based heritage sector is united in exploring the possibilities of alternative fuels but is in its infancy of truly understanding the viability of these. The closure of Ffos-y-fran leaves a short-fall in the timeline that may see some steam-based heritage sectors falter or struggle to continue.
- The loss to society may never be known if steam events, museums, railways etc were to diminish or demise. The social impact of the enjoyment, relaxation and mental well-being to both participants and visitors is not measurable but is palpable and far further-reaching than just seemingly a niche hobby.