

Devon ‘war metal’ mine to help power Britain’s rearmament

telegraph.co.uk/business/2026/04/07/devon-war-metal-mine-to-help-power-britain-rearmament

Matt Oliver

April 7, 2026

Matt Oliver is The Telegraph's Industry Editor, covering manufacturing, energy policy, car making and the defence industry. [See more](#) ^



The Hemerdon mine, near Plymouth, is being developed again by Tungsten West

One of the largest tungsten deposits in the world is set to be mined in Devon as the Middle East crisis turbo-charges demand for the critical “war metal”.

The Hemerdon mine, near Plymouth, was discovered in 1867 and exploited through both world wars, as well as briefly from 2015 to 2018 before it was closed because of a lack of funds.

Now the site is being developed again by Tungsten West, with the wars in Ukraine and Iran triggering a [surge in demand for munitions](#).

Tungsten is widely used in defence because of its tough, dense nature and its 3,422C melting point. The metal is used in everything from hypersonic missile nose cones to armour-piercing bullets, bunker-busting bombs and “airburst” counter-drone shells.

The price of the metal has risen sharply since China – which produces 80pc of global supplies – [imposed export restrictions](#) a year ago, prompting Western countries to seek alternate sources.

Prices also surged following the US attack on Iran in late February, as both America and Gulf countries deployed a large number of interceptors that use the metal.

Tungsten West is hoping to begin production of small amounts at Hemerdon later this year before ramping up to full capacity by 2027.

At peak production, the London-listed company estimates the site will produce around 3,300 tonnes of tungsten concentrate per year – or around 20pc of global supplies outside China.

That is enough to meet about a third of all [defence-related demand](#) globally.

Analysts have described the Devon deposits as among the largest untapped tungsten resources in the world.

Once fully up and running, the project – which will conduct mining operations for about 11 years – is expected to support more than 300 permanent jobs and generate hundreds of millions of pounds in economic value.

Nick Lawson, the boss of investment group Ocean Wall, said: “Hemerdon is one of the world’s great tungsten deposits and it sits in Devon.

“At a moment when Western supply chain vulnerability has become a strategic liability, Britain producing its own critical minerals is not an option, it is an obligation.”

Jeff Court, the chief executive of Tungsten West, said the mine represented a “very significant” chunk of the “non-China-sourced market”, adding that his customers “certainly understand the risk of being fully dependent, or highly dependent, on a China supply chain”.

“That is why they’re now looking at how to diversify,” he said.

While the mine will deliver a [boost to defence](#), Mr Court said the mine’s primary buyers would be companies in industries such as construction, transport, manufacturing and medicine.

He added: “We’re a very good hedge and a good way to achieve supply chain resilience and support a variety of sectors, including defence, for a number of Western economies.

“As you can imagine, there’s a lot of people who were pretty keen for us to accelerate. So if we can accelerate and we can move faster, we’d like to bring forward production.”

The US has been attempting to rally allies behind initiatives to develop critical mineral supply chains that Beijing cannot strangle.

The Trump administration has also been striking deals around the world to invest in mines or processing facilities.

Mr Lawson said the search for alternatives to Chinese supplies had become “urgent” following Beijing’s decision to crack down on exports last year amid sparring over trade with Washington.

He said: “When China controls 83pc of global supply and chooses to weaponise that position, the rest of the world has no good options.”