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Peak Resources reveal £70million Wilton investment plan

Australian firm Peak Resources has revealed plans to base a £70m mineral processing site at Wilton International – potentially creating 100 jobs.

Perth-based Peak Resources has confirmed the Wilton International Site as its preferred location for a £70m “rare earth” refinery.

The refinery would process minerals for use in a range of products, including mobile phones, wind turbines and for the automotive sector.

If the proposal gets the go-ahead, production is expected to start in 2019.

And if Peak Resources does set up at Wilton, it will be the site’s second mineral processing facility, with Sirius UK already planning to process and ship the minerals it mines at Wilton International.

Peak Resources has opted for Wilton after a global search of over 25 countries. The company has cited access to global shipping, cheap and reliable bulk reagent supplies, a skilled labour force and readily available power and water as some of the reasons for its decision.

Peak Resources MD Darren Townsend said: “The choice of Tees Valley as the location for a rare earth refinery is compelling.

“Whilst the long-term impact of Brexit is not yet fully understood, the devaluation of the pound is expected to improve operating costs and the UK’s progressive stance on maintaining competitive corporate fiscal regimes post Brexit are both positives.”

Councillor Sue Jeffrey, leader of Redcar and Cleveland Council and Tees Valley Combined Authority member, said: “The Combined Authority has worked, and will continue to work, closely with Peak Resources to support its project in Tees Valley.

“It is great that our area has been recognised as a preferred location by a company from the other side of the world, signalling a very clear indication of our global reputation for successful manufacturing.”

Peak Resources is concentrating on mining and processing neodymium and praseodymium - two soft metals, found in the Ngualla mine in Tanzania. Both are used in the “permanent magnet” market, which is expected to grow due to increasing demand for electric cars and bikes, and wind power generation.

In reaction to the announcement Stephen Hands, site director of Sembcorp Utilities UK, said: “We are delighted that Peak Resources have selected Wilton International.

“They are well aware of the advantages of locating at the site, not least because of our competitively priced energy, superb site infrastructure, excellent logistics and close proximity to the River Tees.

“These factors - along with the availability of a trained, skilled workforce – mean minerals processing has the potential to be an important growth sector for the site in the coming years.”

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