

'UNITE TO FACE CORUS CRISIS' SAYS TEES VALLEY UNLIMITED CHIEF

A call for 'total unity' in responding to the announcement that the Corus plant on Teesside is to be mothballed has come from Hugh Lang, Chair of the Tees Valley Unlimited economic partnership.

He was speaking after the news that the apparent collapse of the consortium which has signed a ten-year deal of buy products from Teesside Cast products meant that the plant was left with a virtually empty order book, leaving the company with no choice but to give 90-days notice of redundancies, with 2000 thousand workers faced with losing their jobs.

Mr Lang said it was undoubtedly a 'very black day' for the area but stressed that TVU would be working with all other agencies—including local authorities, the regional development agency One North East and the Government office for the region—in considering what measures could be taken to help the workers and families affected, as well as assessing the impact on other local businesses supplying goods and services.

Said Hugh Lang "On the basis of what we know so far it seems that the both the management and workforce of the Corus Teesside plant, who have worked so hard over recent years to secure its future, have been badly let down by partners with whom they thought they had a long-term agreement.

"Obviously the legal implications of the decision by some members of the consortium involved in the agreement will be a matter for Corus, but our most immediate concern has to be the impact on the thousands of workers who now facing very worrying times. It has never been more important for the Tees Valley to be totally united in our efforts to provide every kind of assistance and support, recognising that, in the current economic climate, finding alternative employment will not be easy.

"That does not mean we should be defeatist—our area has a long record of dealing with body blows of this kind and I have no doubt that people will come together to support those directly affected and ensure that we continue to bring new investment, new industries—and new jobs—to the area."

TVU Board member and leader of Redcar and Cleveland Council, Councillor George Dunning, said that, as a former steel worker himself, he felt desperately sad for all those affected, especially since the plant's workforce and management had put in tremendous efforts to make the business a success.

He added "Obviously this will have a major impact on our immediate area in terms of the direct job losses but the spin-off will be felt right across the Tees Valley—and indeed the North East as a whole. That is why we need to involve all those who can help in any way possible to respond to the immediate needs—and work to drive forward the economic regeneration of the area, building on our existing strengths, including steel, at the same time as attracting the industries of the future."

Added fellow TVU Board Member and Leader of Darlington Council Councillor John Williams “The first priority has to be the workers and their families but we need to look to the longer term as well...and the crucial importance of ensuring that steel—one of our bedrock industries—continues to have a future.

“The implications of this crisis now facing Corus on Teesside go far beyond our immediate area. We need to use every possible avenue to emphasise that manufacturing...whether it be the motor industry or steel-making...is critical to ensuring that the country has a strong economic base to drive recovery from the current recession.

“We have had a successful steel industry, we need a successful steel industry and so does the country as a whole.”

8-5-09

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