



PRESS RELEASE

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New publication addresses security of supply concerns for vital rare earth raw materials

The British Geological Survey today released a profile on rare earth elements. This comes amidst increasing concerns over the security of supply for natural resources, especially for high tech electronic, military and environmental applications

Rare earth elements play a vital and increasing role in a wide range of consumer electronics, in environmental technologies and in military applications. Although rare earth deposits are known in several countries, production in recent years has been strongly concentrated in a very few locations. In the light of this, and some issues relating to trade restrictions, there is now considerable concern about the security of supply of these critical materials. To help inform discussion on this issue, the British Geological Survey has published a succinct guide to rare earth elements which profiles their uses, geology, mining, processing and trade.



Gadolinite, Arran

Rare earths are indispensable in electronic, optical, magnetic and catalytic applications and play a vital role in environmental technologies, improving energy efficiency and enabling digital technology. The term 'rare' as applied to rare earths is something of a misnomer and arises from the rarity of the minerals from which they were first isolated in the 18th Century. The crustal abundance of rare earths as a whole is greater than silver, although individual elements in the group show very wide variation. Consumption of rare earths is growing rapidly, driven by our increasing reliance on digital technology and the growth in use of hybrid and electric vehicles which require relatively large amounts of certain rare earths in their motors.

'World production of rare earth elements has more than doubled in the last 15 years' says BGS Head of Minerals Andrew Bloodworth 'Our new publication is the latest in a series which aims to provide up to date, impartial and authoritative commodity profiles to inform debate and policy on security of supply'.

The Rare Earth Elements profile can be downloaded FREE from the British Geological Survey dedicated minerals website: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/downloads/start.cfm?id=1638>

Ends



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Notes for Editors

Available for interview will be:

- Andrew Bloodworth, Head of Minerals and Waste, British Geological Survey
- Gus Gunn, Team Leader for Mineral Sustainability, British Geological Survey
- Paul Lusty, Economic Geologist, British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.