



## Economic future of Afghanistan grounded in Copper

A British Geological Survey (BGS) project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) addresses the need to alleviate poverty in Afghanistan by encouraging inward investment, commercial and infrastructure development and provides an alternative source of income to poppy cultivation.

Afghanistan is well endowed with mineral resources such as copper, gold, iron ore and gemstones. During the late 1970's and 1980's, Russian geologists carried out wide ranging exploration surveys for metals. One of the most advanced of these prospects, the Aynak Copper Deposit, located 35 km south of Kabul, consists of 240 Mt grading 2.3% Copper. This copper was formed within marbles and schists deposited some 500 million years ago.

Anthony Benham, project geologist at BGS explained: *"BGS geologists have been assisting the Afghanistan Geological Survey (AGS) over the past two years with scanning, digitising and re-interpreting data from the Aynak Copper Deposit. My colleagues and I have created a detailed three-dimensional model of the deposit. We also helped in carefully archiving and cataloguing all geological information and with rebuilding the AGS library, museum and laboratories. Teaching English to AGS geologists, developing computing capacity and updating their geological knowledge have formed a vital part of this project."*

Assistance from the World Bank and BGS enabled the Ministry of Mines in Afghanistan to prepare a new Mining Law in 2005. This law will enable it to effectively and efficiently manage an emerging mining industry. The development of a minerals industry in Afghanistan has a potential value of at least 300 million dollars a year.

In late 2006 tenders were invited for the Aynak Copper Deposit. Currently expressions of interest have been received from mining companies based in Australia, India, Canada, Kazakhstan, China, USA and Russia. Central to this tendering process is the availability of the original Russian data now translated into English and available in digital format.

Much more detailed work remains to be carried out, and multi-million dollar investment will be needed before a mine can be brought into production, but the BGS work forms the essential basis for these future developments. Indeed BGS works world-wide in aiding developing countries to rebuild their geological infrastructure.

The BGS will be attending The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Conference in Toronto from 4 to 7 March 2007 and will be showcasing their work in Afghanistan on Stand No. 1130.

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**Notes for Editors**

Pictures: stills of Afghanistan and 3-D model images of Aynak Copper deposit are available from the BGS Press Office