

Mayor: - Who will own the enormous values that lie in the ground under Dalane?

British and Swiss capital currently spends at least 250 million research kroner in the heath at Helleland. 25 researchers are uncovering one of the most promising mineral deposits in the world.

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Geologist Eirik Skåra tells mayor Odd Stangeland how they read the samples taken from the rock. Photo: Jan Inge Haga

Av **Arnt Olav Klippenberg**
Journalist

- This is big, says mayor Odd Stangeland (Labor) and looks out over the valley where the large mining crater is planned. He has long spoken positively about mining:

- Remember, I'm an industrialist.

Values of at least NOK 300 billion are estimated to be hidden in the ground between Helleland and Ualand. Where does the number come from? According to Norge Mining, these are NGU's figures from a report to the government in 2012. Norge Mining believes that this figure can eventually be multiplied many times over.

Pål Thjømøe is a geologist and leader of Magma Geopark.

- I know of over 400 published, scientific articles about the occurrence, so it has been known for a long time in the environment.

He says that there are four minerals to be excreted. On Titania, by comparison, there are two. We are therefore talking about a labor-intensive process that will provide many jobs.

- Noe av det fine med denne gruva er at den ligger rett ved jernbanelinja. Det går an å se for seg at det ferdige produktet skipes ut på tog og så med båt via havna i Sirevåg, sier Thjømøe. Han forteller at Magma nylig ble med ei et stort EU-prosjekt. Her skal de blant annet jobbe med bærekraftige gruveindustri.



The barn, which is used for rock samples, is part of the disused New Life Center at Heskestad. Photo: Jan Inge Haga

Record hole

A number of test holes are currently being drilled in the terrain around Helleland. However, there is one hole that everyone is talking about, the Hole itself with a capital H.

- We are in the process of drilling down to 2.2 kilometers, says geologist Eirik Skåra.

It will be the deepest that has ever been drilled in Norway. It may turn out that there is a huge nickel deposit hidden deep down in the earth's interior, but this is still uncertain.

We meet Eirik Skåra in a barn inside the heath by Heskestad. 10 geologists work here, plus a number of other professional groups. They analyze the samples taken from the rock. Afterwards, it is sent to Stockholm for further analyzes. Skåra is the only one from the local community who works here. The people are from different countries in Europe and are recruited through a company in Cardiff.

- It is a dream for a geologist to be part of such a treasure hunt, he says.

Twin

It has long been known that the Dalan nature has its twin in Canada (triplets if we count the moon). Among geologists, it is called the Bjerkreim - Sokndal - intrusion. Some believe that it is the same anorthosite deposit we see in the two places and that it originates from the time the continents were connected.

- On this deposit in Canada is the world's largest mine. Norsk Mining, which conducts the investigations on Helleland, told me that the deposit at Egersund is probably larger, says Odd Stangeland.

All this is what gets the mayor up on the barricades. He does not think people have understood the dimension of what is happening in the region. Stangeland is excited, but at the same time on guard. He fears that the nation is not equipped for what is happening.

- It is probably Rogaland's largest research project that is going on here, he says.

Now he believes that Norway must take control. The state must learn from what happened when Norway became an oil nation and people like Arne Rettedal took action. We missed out on wind power. There, the ownership ended up in foreign hands. We must not miss out on minerals, he believes.



Many places in the landscape are being drilled, and right now what is probably Norway's deepest hole is being drilled. Mayor Odd Stangeland believes we here are witnessing a future industry for Norway. **Photo: Jan Inge Haga**



After analysis, the samples are sent to Stockholm **Photo: Jan Inge Haga**

State-owned companies

Norway Mining spends at least NOK 250 million on checking out the area on Helleland. At the same time, they have secured the rights to start mining. Norwegian Mining is not as Norwegian as the name would suggest. British and Swiss capital is behind it. It is noted that the website is in five languages. One of them is Chinese.

- Hydropower has gone from being control-vertical to becoming hereditary silver. With wind power, we are not there. With oil and gas, Norway made some incredibly wise decisions right from the start. Several companies were established. Petoro invests in the oil industry. I want us to establish a Minoro for investments in the mineral industry. Then I want a state operating company for minerals similar to Equinor.



The mining crater will be located in the landscape behind Mayor Stangeland. E39 towards Umland can be seen in the background. **Photo: Jan Inge Haga**

Take grip

Mayor Stangeland is concerned that this is a national issue that should have broad support in all parties.

- The most important thing for me is not to get my will, but that no one should come in five years and say that we did not know this. The train is leaving now, and we are already late, so this matter is urgent. We must invest in the mineral resources that exist in Norway. Then we will have better control over what comes in the future.

Stangeland says that now he gives information about what applies to Eigersund, Dalane and Rogaland. Afterwards, he trusts that the Storting will make wise decisions about what could quickly become a future industry for Norway, mineral extraction.

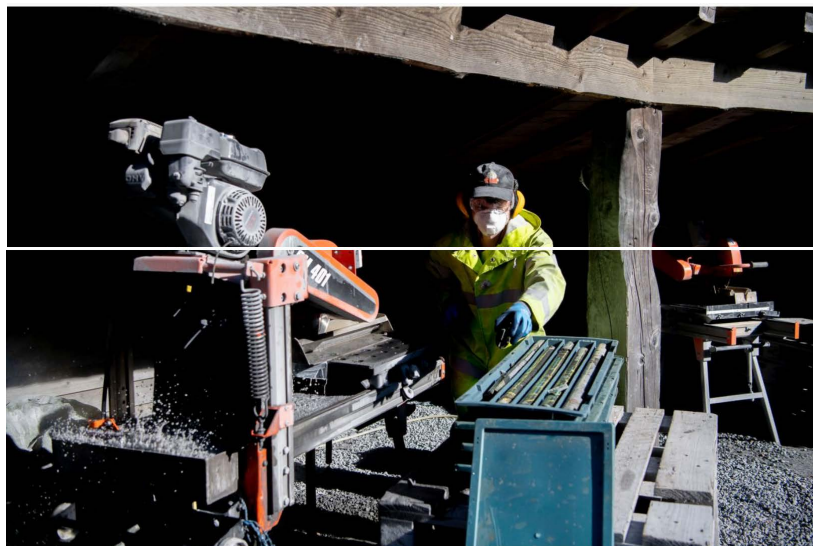
- We have the natural resources. Now it's about taking ownership and management.

He adds that almost no one in Rogaland and Norway "gets to see the enormous research project that is taking place on Helleland". They think there is someone walking around collecting stones.

- But my proposal is not about what is happening here, it is about Norway. It is a national matter to have ownership and control over the mineral resources.



This is roughly how mining craters will extend on the lower side of today's E39.



Magne Olten cuts the rock samples into pieces so that geologists can more easily analyze the minerals. **Photo:** Jan Inge Haga