

# Crofty is capable of providing free hot water for all

**J**OHN Webster's mother had a favourite saying which has influenced her son throughout all his years in the mining industry.

"She said that before you can plan something you must have a dream – because if you don't dream then the plan you come up with will be very, very boring."

As chief operations officer at South Crofty, John is certainly not short of plans – and none of them could be described as boring. As well as prospecting for copper, zinc, silver, gold, lithium and a host of other base metals and minerals, he dreams of providing constant free hot water to homes and businesses across a wide area of West Cornwall.

Taken to its logical conclusion, the use of naturally-occurring hot water, pumped from the very deepest levels of the vast complex, could not only heat homes and businesses but conceivably create a health and leisure industry in its own right. Although this might initially appear outlandish, who would have thought semi-tropical greenhouses would be created in an old clay pit? All it takes imagination. After all, Bath has been enjoying the benefits of natural hot water for 2,000 years. And the stuff that bubbles to the surface there is only two degrees hotter than the water under Cornwall.

John Webster says you only have to look at Iceland to see the benefits of

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In the third of his series of articles looking at the prospects for South Crofty, **Simon Parker** reports on plans to provide free hot water for every household in Camborne and Redruth

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exploiting vast resources of hot water: no one there pays a penny for their heating. And with climate change delivering the sort of winter we've just experienced, perhaps this is just the time to be thinking radically.

John, who has been a mine manager for many years, is no dreamer but a hard-nosed realist with high ambitions for South Crofty.

"We are going to be pumping out in the order of 20,000 tons of water a day and it will come out of the hole at between 25 and 44 degrees," he said. "You can't put that in the Red River because you'd soon have freshly boiled trout – so it seems logical to use it. In theory it should be possible to heat the entire town and no one would pay for hot water every again, whether for the taps or the radiators. And when the current mining operations are long gone, hopefully the legacy will be hot water for the community because that hot water isn't going anywhere and it will stay hot for a very long time."

He says it could also be tapped as an energy source, as a hydroponic heating

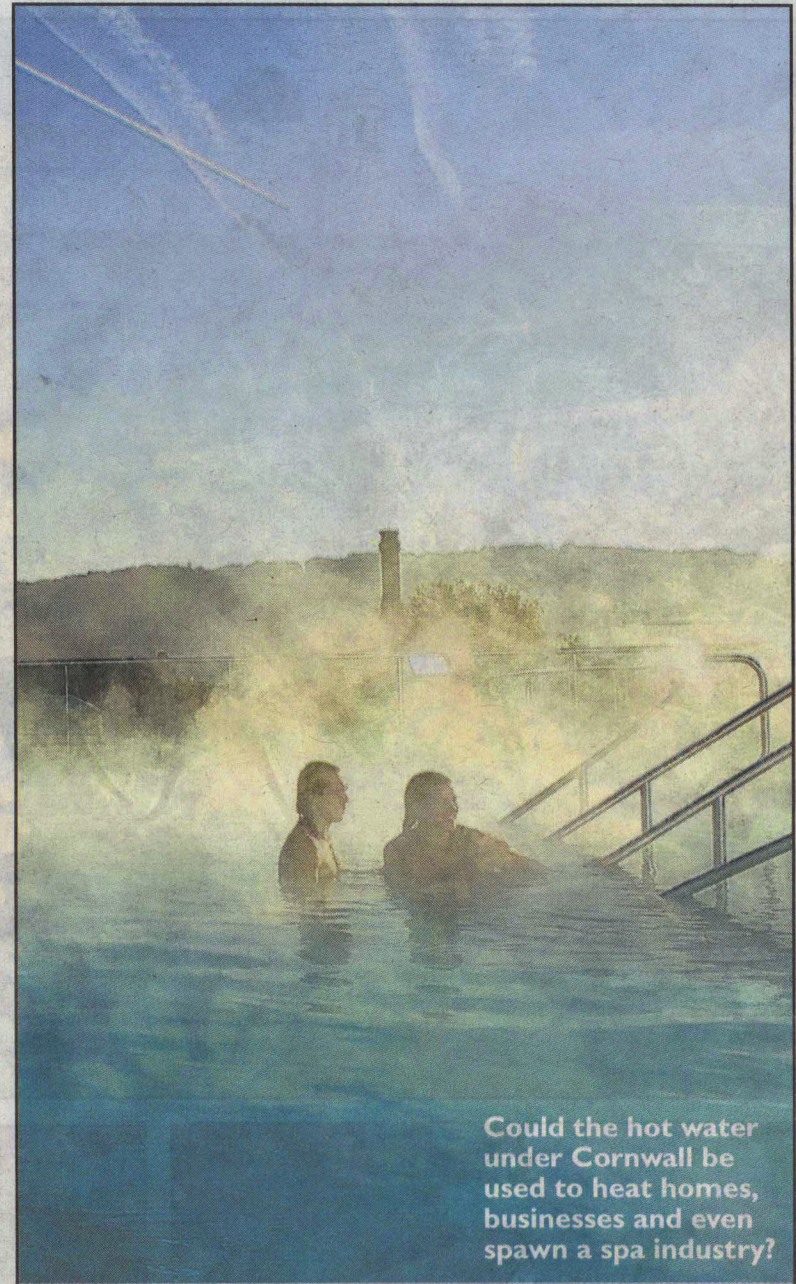
system for commercial greenhouses, or even a spa.

"If you went into dream mode, you'd run a tunnel between Camborne, through Pool and into Redruth, full of hot water," he said.

"I actually think something of this kind will come and I think it would be of great benefit for the whole community. And if we can leave the legacy of hot water forever – even when the mines are long gone – the workings will never be flooded to adit level, which means the Red River would never have any rubbish in it."

John believes that the spirit of ingenuity that drove world-class innovation during the 19th century lives on in the people of Redruth and Camborne. He can see a time when the area will again be at the forefront of industrial technology with a new breed of Trevithicks, Murdochs, Harveys, Wolffs and Bickford-Smiths.

"The only reason it was never done before was because the technology wasn't there – that is no longer the case," he said.



Could the hot water under Cornwall be used to heat homes, businesses and even spawn a spa industry?