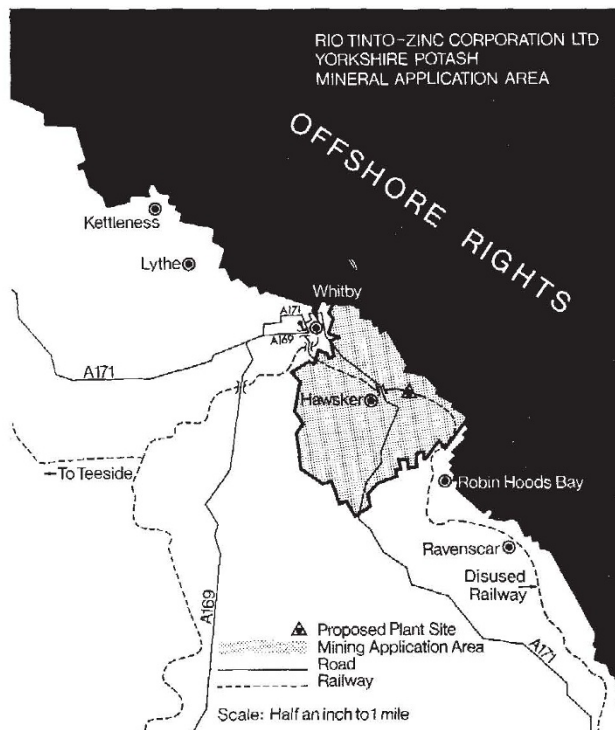


sible for the Dungeness contract. Technical difficulties which could delay completion of the project clearly affect the terms of the merger. Until it is clear how serious these delays are likely to be, no further progress on the establishment of the second company is likely. This could mean that it will be 1969 before the second company is finally unveiled.

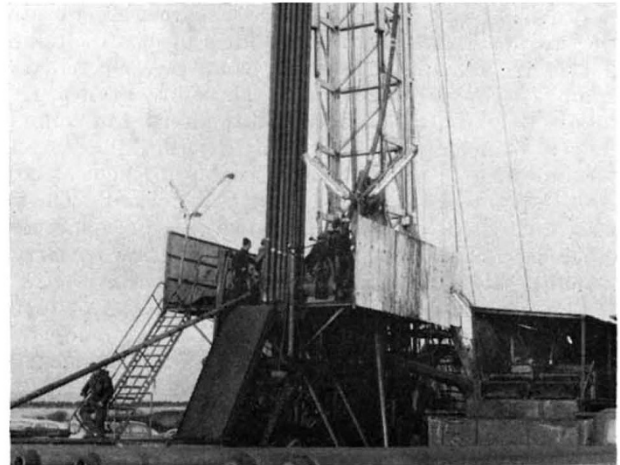
MINING

Potash Boost

LAST week Yorkshire Potash Ltd, a subsidiary of the Rio Tinto-Zinc Corporation, applied to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for outline planning consent for a potash mine three miles south of Whitby, in part of the North York Moors National Park. This follows the application in April by Cleveland Potash Ltd, a company owned jointly by ICI and the Charter Consolidated Group, for a site near Boulby, north of Whitby. Although the prospect of industrial encroachment on National Park land is hard to swallow, Mr R. O. Atherton, chairman of Rio Tinto Finance and Exploration Ltd, has estimated that the mines could together improve the balance of payments by £25 million a year, and it is not surprising that the minister has given the go-ahead, at least to Cleveland Potash.



Of the two sites, Cleveland Potash has applied for the larger—200 acres compared with 90 acres for Yorkshire Potash. Both organizations have appointed consultant architects to work out how the mines could best be “disguised”. Yorkshire Potash is proposing to raise hillocks around the site composed of material removed from the proposed 4,200 foot shaft so that only the pithead gear, it seems, would be visible from the coast footpath. At a public inquiry



on the Cleveland Potash scheme, there was some evidence that the county council hopes that new industry will make good the financial loss suffered by the North Riding when the large ICI plant at Wilton passed into the hands of Teesside County Borough. All being well, the Cleveland Potash mine should go into production in about five years time and is expected to yield some 1–1.5 million tons of potash a year.

As well as controlling effluent discharge, Cleveland Potash will have to comply with a percentage rate of potash extraction. The siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, machinery and plant, and the landscaping of the minehead area and means of access, will also have to have the blessing of the local planning authority.

SCIENCE MUSEUM

Computers on Show

A CASUAL or even mildly conscientious visitor to the Science Museum in South Kensington could well be forgiven for passing an afternoon there in complete ignorance of the miniature exhibition on “Computers Past and Present” tucked away on the second floor. Failure to spot a discreet sign near the entrance guarantees a conscience-free avoidance of the exhibition. Admittedly the exhibition is small. Sponsored by International Computers Ltd, it consists of a brief résumé of the history of computing from the early Hollerith equipment, used for the 1890 census in the United States, up to the present-day computer based on integrated circuits. Verbal history is interspersed with a selection of components from each vintage of computer, and a few photographs of machinery—old and new—round off the display.

Microcircuits are undoubtedly the most stimulating parts of the exhibit. One of these is set up under a magnifying lens to enable the one or two millimetres of complex circuitry to be seen, but visitors can be forgiven for asking why there is so little publicity for such an important development. It is quite understandable to mount only a small exhibition if that is all that time and finance allow, but it is nevertheless important that the magnitude of the display should be clearly seen not to represent the importance or relevance of the scientific content.