

# COAL MINE APPLICATION GRANTED AT NIGHTCAPS

*Takitimu Coal Limited has been granted resource consent to develop a coal mine known as Coaldale northwest of Nightcaps.*

The company, which is owned by Bathurst Resources, has been granted an eleven-year consent but it is expected that the mining operation and reinstatement of land will take approximately seven years.

“Work at the newly consented site will take place 24 hours a day for the first 12 to 24 months to remove a large quantity of overburden to obtain access to the coal,” Council resource planner Marcus Roy said.

The Nightcaps region has a long mining history with works taking place since the 1950s. As Southland District Council is the owner of the adjoining site, which is currently used by Takitimu Ltd, the application was brought before an independent Hearing Commissioner who found in favour of the mine proceeding.

The Hearing Commissioner granted consent on the proviso that a number of conditions are adhered to. Earthwork restrictions, noise management, rehabilitation provisions and conditions pertaining to the accidental discovery of kōiwi, taonga or artefact and in-situ (natural state) pounamu or greenstone have been imposed. These stipulations ensure that the location of the mine and the surrounding community will not be disadvantaged by the mine’s presence.

“One of the key issues addressed in the application was that of reinstatement,” said Mr Roy. “When finished mining, the area will be fully reinstated back to productive farmland.”

The application was publicly notified in April and 15 submissions were received in total. Concerns were raised about the proximity of the township to the mine, noise pollution, visual effects and dust from prevailing winds caused by the mine. These issues along with the application were presented to the Commissioner at a public hearing on 21 June.

The application for the resource consent contained reports from noise, visual, geotechnical and hydrological experts as well as Environment Southland discharge consents. The Commissioner found that the proposal, subject to the conditions outlined, appropriately addressed landscape, noise and general amenity issues.

Coal has been identified as an essential resource that will be used in large industries and organisations in the area such as Fonterra and for community buildings such as schools. Local contractors will be employed on site to work at the mine.

In his decision, the Commissioner concluded that: “Mining is clearly an important component in the Nightcaps community providing for their social and economic wellbeing. Consequently I am of the view that the proposal promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources and consent has been granted accordingly.”

## DISTRICT PLAN PROGRESS

*The District Plan review project is progressing with staff and Councillors currently working through a series of four methods workshops.*

The purpose of the workshops is to seek Councillor and Iwi input and feedback on draft methods for the Regional Policy Statement for Southland and additional draft policies for the Southland District Plan.

Councillors from the Southland District Council and Environment Southland have been involved in these workshops along with representation from Te Ao Mārama Incorporated on behalf of Iwi, Gore District Council and the Invercargill City Council.

Southland District Council and Environment Southland have developed and implemented a collaborative review project for the second generation Regional Policy Statement for Southland (Environment Southland) and Southland District Plan (Southland District Council).

On completion of these workshops the two plan review processes will diverge and the two planning documents will go through formal public notification processes separately.

The collaborative plan review project has enabled both councils to achieve a number of efficiencies while also ensuring that both planning documents are aligned and consistent. The next step for the Southland District Council on completion of the current methods workshops will be the formulation of the draft second generation Southland District Plan.

The draft District Plan will then go before the Resource Management Committee for initial approval before a final draft is approved by the full Council later this year. Consultation with key stakeholders is also planned throughout the latter part of this year.

The final stage of the review project will be public notified of the proposed Southland District Plan. Southland District Council is aiming to have the draft second generation Southland District Plan ready for notification early in 2012.

