



Hauraki Prospectors Association Inc.

(HPA) Submission to TCDC District Plan Hearing Committee.

Dec 2014

Tena koe, tena korua, tena koutou katoa.

Introduction

This submission is not about mining on a commercial scale. That discussion has been thrashed out around here for years. None of that matters today because that is not what we are talking about today.

We are a non-profit association of volunteers promoting the Thames historical legacy while providing what is Thames' largest tourist attraction. We are demonstrating traditional, artisanal gold mining methods to up to 10,000 visitors a year, from home and abroad. We are in effect an eco-tourism organisation using the historical legacy of the Thames goldfield to create jobs and incomes, making a significant contribution to the tourist trade in Thames, with spin-offs to motels, cafes, restaurants, retail outlets and other local businesses.

It gives me much pleasure to note that every year we provide a unique education experience to bus loads of school kids from all over the country as part of their primary and secondary school studies, and have assisted a succession of Thames students into the tertiary study of geology, engineering, biology and environmental science. Often they return to work their vacations as tour guides telling the story of their unique local history to visitors.

Visitors, including school children, teachers as well as tourists tell us they enjoy the fact we are an authentic and traditional mining operation. We utilise non-chemical gravitational separation methods, powered by the traditional water, steam, and air and for convenience electricity. Much of the technology predates the industrial revolution of the 1860's and is of great interest to those who understand vintage machinery.

HPA Members

The HPA is supported by a dedicated group of amateur prospectors, artisans and tradesmen, many of whom have unique professional skills that have enabled us to restore the Golden Crown Battery and historic relics from local gold mines. This long-term and on-going voluntary work has allowed the community to benefit substantially from Thames' mining legacy.

For many of the past and present members, this project is their main interest, passion, pass-time and hobby.

HPA History

The HPA was started by prospectors in the 1950s with the provision of a single stamp in the Sawyer Battery, a building that remains on-site. The idea was to create crushing facilities for amateur, hobby prospectors.

Battery

With the reconstruction of the Golden Crown battery we evolved to five stamps and recently to 10 stamps to provide a facility for the hobby mining of Thames bullion.

Because of a keen interest from tourists, locals and schools, we had to form Goldmine Experience Ltd to accommodate the demand, which has at times reached 14,000 people a year. There is potential for much more. This contradicts those who assert that mining ceased here in 1930's.

Submission

The purpose of this submission is to enable us to utilise the gold and silver resources of the Hauraki goldfields to accommodate hobby, recreational and tourist mining. We know that this activity provides a significant income stream for the region and generates jobs. Any added yield from gold and silver mined would be a bonus to help fund future activity.

We are asking that underground mining of up to one truckload a day be allowed as a non-notified permitted activity in all areas under the District Plan. Further controls under the District Plan are not required as adequate controls are applied under the Resource Management Act and the Mining Act.

We require the ability to maintain a supply of ore to enable the continued operation of the battery. Up to one truckload a day will employ four to 10 people and perhaps many more, with little or no surface impact. The environmental impact from the mining operation will be limited in extent and short in duration. There will be no lasting trace of underground operations.

Historical Factors

We support the preservation of local mining history and are happy to work with Heritage NZ to ensure that it is preserved. In the same way that historic buildings and roads are maintained by modern use we expect the same for the continued use and maintenance of underground mines.

We recognise that the mining industry built early New Zealand. Thames was at one time bigger than Auckland. The industry supplied Thames, the region and the nation with towns, roads, churches, hospitals, foundries, jobs, homes, schools, and the country's first tertiary education facility – the Thames School of Mines. The local mining industry also provided New Zealand's first Stock exchange.

Economics

Thames produced 2.3 million ounces of bullion according to the official record, including one sample of 2 ton at 80% bullion. The Hauraki Goldfield is a bonanza goldfield, internationally renowned for the occurrence of very high-grade bullion (a mixture of silver and gold).

In the 1980s, exploration expenditure on the Hauraki Goldfield exceeded \$25 million a year. The mining industry has and is demonstrating that its impact is, and can be, confined, clean, and temporary and that it can provide a significant driver for growth in the rural towns of the Coromandel. There is a compromise that will provide the benefits of mining without any damage.

This submission will give the local community the opportunity to access these benefits, while protecting and enhancing the environment that we all enjoy.

Environment

The Mining Industry has shown that enormous benefit can derive from small temporary disturbance with no lasting damage. Exploration and mining activities during the 1980s have left no trace at Coromandel, Monowai, Waitotahi, Una, Neasville and Maratoto, for example.

We support the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment and its biodiversity. DOC funding has recently been cut by \$150 million. A substantial part of current DOC funding has come, and is coming, from mining activity on DOC land. This has increased our ability to deal with pressing issues of biodiversity and predator control. We submit that the wise use of our mineral resources has the potential to substantially enhance the natural environment in exchange for minor and temporary disturbance.

Since the introduction of the RMA, fears of water pollution in the Coromandel are now unfounded because we have strong and effective regulatory controls to prevent it and which make it illegal.

Objections

1. As we have illustrated, neither mining nor its benefits stopped in the 1930s. Mining continues today on the Coromandel and has more than 150 years of unbroken history. For this reason, we strongly support the background explanation on mining in the current District Plan. The plan provides an accurate representation of history and current mining. It doesn't reinterpret facts for narrow ideological agendas. We submit that the current wording should be retained.

2. It is evident from our submission that we strongly support, and for good reason, the retention in the current Plan of the last sentence in paragraph 4: "The Plan includes provisions to enable the Council to take the presence of mineral

resources into account when assessing proposals for the subdivision, use and development of land”.

3. Proponents of the “No Mining mantra” need to define what they mean. Does this mean?

- We cannot take shells or pretty stones from the beach.
- We cannot take clay for the potters kiln.
- We cannot take sand for the farm race.
- We cannot clear sediment and spoil from flood-choked waterways.
- We cannot dredge our harbours.
- We cannot remove spoil for road works.
- We cannot build stop-banks or sea walls.
- We cannot take aggregates for cement.
- We cannot dig a super pit to house a casino, or dig huge tunnels for sewer and water pipes, cables and traffic, as they do in Auckland.
- That open cut mines to supply roading aggregates must be closed.
- That hundreds of tons of aggregates must be transported over long distances at great expense to the community and the “green house”, as is the case for the residents on Gt Barrier Is.

Or does it refer only to gold? In which case can we take silver, or quartz, or calcite, or clays. If it only refers to gold, why is that? Gold, the most noble of metals, has been the international reserve currency and a means of exchange for over 6,000 years and has a myriad of industrial uses from medicine to electronics.

4. “Where she be, there she be” the old Thames gold miners used to say. We submit that the District Plan cannot predict, “Where she be” and that it heeds this adage in allowing the consideration of each proposal on a case-by-case basis, by competent processes, under the Mining Act and Resource Management Act.

Conclusion

One of our members, an amateur prospector, brings gold from the West Coast to put in our panning trough for the kids in Thames. It is an expensive irony that the District Plan is demanding that we bring “coals to Newcastle”. We seek your support in providing for the needs of the HPA, amateur prospectors, tourists, schools and local business so that our children don’t have to go to Australia to get a job, and that the plan heeds its charter in providing for the economic, and social needs of the Coromandel District community.

Under a far-sighted and reasonable District Plan, future generations should be able to utilise, in a sensible way, the rich resources of the Hauraki Goldfields. We request that our submission be included in District Plan as there is no sensible reason not to do so.

Thank You.

End.