

A Zombie Staggers from the Grave

The Gloucester Resources Limited web-site is alive again, meetings are being held again and consultants are back to make another buck from the optimism of miners. The zombie mine is up and staggering again.

If you missed the developments of the last few years, GRL want to dig a new coal mine, "Rocky Hill" at Forbesdale, south east of town. The exploration lease comes to about a kilometre from the built-up area. In 2009 a public meeting about the mine uniquely filled the recreation centre where opposition was strong and hostile. GRL applied to develop the project in 2012 when coal was hot. Last year when coal was not they asked the Dept. of Planning to put the project on hold.

The coal industry internationally is in cyclical decline due to oversupply and structural decline due to the replacement of coal as a power source with renewables. Conventional wisdom has it that small new mines such as Rocky Hill will never be economic in this climate and so Gloucester is safe.

The difficulty is that the mine is said to produce coking coal not thermal coal and the metal industries, especially steelmaking, depend on processes needing coking coal. Whether new technology can replace coking coal on a large scale in future and when this might be cost effective is unknown. It is possible that one day Rocky Hill will be economic.

The latest plan from GRL is to avoid the capital cost of building their own rail head and processing plant and use those owned by Yancoal at the existing Stratford mine. This would be done by trucking coal from Rocky Hill on a haul road south to Stratford. Exactly where this will be and what the consequences will be is unknown as GRL have not published their revised Environmental Impact Statement.

So why is GRL now arranging consultants to ask people about their concerns? According to Ellen Davis-Meehan who spoke to some residents at Forbesdale it is to allow GRL to address concerns in their new EIS. Respondents are left to say what they think might be a problem based on vague non-binding information put out by GRL. We can only hope that there will be time for proper study and consultation after the EIS comes out.

If this attempt to start the project fails there could be another try under a different coal market in a few years. Currently, if developers want to put more money into reviving any such project then they can: any number of times. If it looks like making a profit then they will. State governments past and present have shown consistently that money is always more important to them than communities.

How many times must the community go through the threat of coal mines or gas fields before the state government says; enough is enough - go and get on with your lives - you will be bothered no more?

There is no limit to zombie resurrections, under the present system you cannot drive a stake through its heart.

David Hare-Scott
President Groundswell Gloucester