

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED ON BEHALF OF
GORE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Under	The Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)
In the Matter	of the Proposed Gore District Plan Rural Chapter
Between	GREENBRIAR LIMITED Submitter (s128)
And	GORE DISTRICT COUNCIL Territorial Authority

**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF JOHN HOWES ON BEHALF OF
GREENBRIAR LIMITED**

DATED 8 JULY 2024



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BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF JOHN HOWES

Introduction

1. My full name is John Howes, I am a Health, Safety and Environment Manager at New Vale Mine for Greenbriar Limited. I have been in this role for 6 years and have 16 years of experience in environmental management. Prior to my work with Greenbriar I worked for Solid Energy for 12 Years (previous owners of New Vale), for 10 of those years I was involved in environmental management for both the New Vale and Ohai Mines.
2. I hold the following qualifications:
 - (a) New Zealand Certificate of Science, Diploma of Medical Laboratory Technology;
 - (b) Diploma in Occupational Safety and Health,
 - (c) Post Graduate Diploma in Business Studies (Occupational Safety and Health).
3. In this evidence, I describe the mining operations that occur at New Vale including the extraction and coal processing and the Site rehabilitation. I also describe the role of New Vale Mine within the Gore District and the plan for the end of life for the Mine and the traffic movement associated with the site.

New Vale Mine

4. Greenbriar Limited owns and operates the New Vale Coal Mine (**Mine**) and associated crushing and screening plant at 640 Miller Road Waimumu (**Site**). Historically there were ten opencast and two

underground coal mines in the Croydon/Waimumu Coalfields. By 1990 only New Vale and Goodwin Coal Mines were still active in the Croydon/Waimumu Coal Field. The Mataura Coal Field had the only other active coal mine which supplied the Mataura Paper Mill. Opencast coal mining has been carried out in the area for over 120 years.

5. The New Vale Coal Mine was developed by Dick Bryant in the 1940's. Operations were primitive initially with overburden removed by shovel and wheelbarrow, the coal broken into lumps with picks, then hand loaded onto trucks. In the late 1980s the Highsted Family acquired the Goodwin Coal Mine from Southland Frozen Meats Company Ltd. Both mines were retained in the Highsted Family until 2006, when they were purchased by the state-owned enterprise, Solid Energy New Zealand Ltd. In 2017, the mine was sold to Dunedin based Greenbriar Limited, who sell coal to the local area. In 2019, Greenbriar Ltd, rehabilitated Goodwin Coal Mine and continues to win Coal at New Vale Coal Mine.
6. The site owned by Greenbriar is 354 ha total. Of that approximately 175 ha is part of the active mining operation (noting that this area changes constantly). The active mining area includes the open mine pit, engineered landforms (which contain the overburden), settling ponds, administration buildings, workshops and plant and service areas. In addition to the extraction and processing of coal the other activities associated the Mine include:
 - (a) Production of Superdirt, a compost comprising of lignite fines and meat works waste.
 - (b) Rehabilitation of mined areas.
 - (c) Construction and maintenance of water treatment infrastructure, such as settling ponds, drainage channels, wetlands.

- (d) Ancillary services including de-watering, drainage and water treatment via settling ponds.
 - (e) Ash disposal.
7. The balance of the Site is farmland. Land within the Site that is not in the immediate mining operational area is fenced and grazed. Areas historically mined are rehabilitated and returned to farmland progressively over time. The area surrounding the Site is predominantly rural comprising of rolling farmland.
8. Greenbriar holds the resource consents authorising existing mining operations at the site. Prior to those consents being in the place the mining was authorised by Coal Mining Licences. The mining operations require a suite of consents from the Environment Southland and Gore District Council. All the mining activities are undertaken in accordance with the Site Environmental Management Plan. This document details how the operations should be managed to ensure compliance with consent conditions.

Extraction process

9. New Vale does not undertake any blasting. All excavation is undertaken by hydraulic excavators. The existing extraction process at New Vale consists of 5 steps:
- (a) Topsoil removed by hydraulic excavator and D8 bulldozer and stockpiled.
 - (b) Subsoil removed by hydraulic excavator and D8 bulldozer and stockpiled.
 - (c) Overburden removed by hydraulic excavator(s) and used as backfill within the pit or in Engineered Land Forms.

- (d) Overburden carted by articulated dump trucks.
 - (e) Coal removed by 87 tone excavator and carted on 2 x Caterpillar 773 rigid dump trucks.
10. The mining process requires the removal of overburden (including interburden) and topsoil which is situated over the coal / lignite seams to allow access to the seam. The topsoil and overburden that is removed is stockpiled for future use or carted and spread in rehabilitation areas. The remaining overburden, usually comprised of sandstone, mudstone, sand and waste coal, is re-used as back fill in previously mined areas.

Coal processing

11. All coal extracted at New Vale is processed at a plant on Site. Coal is processed through a crushing and screening plant which has a capacity of ~ 400 tonne/hour. A truck weighbridge and administration area are located 150m northeast of the processing plant. Adjacent the coal processing plant is a load out area and weighbridge. This is where most of the coal is loaded, weighed and transported offsite. This area of the site is currently zoned Industrial which reflects the nature of this part of the site.

Site rehabilitation

12. As mining is a cyclical process, with only parts of the site being actively mined at any one time. The rehabilitation process begins after the last seam is mined. Site rehabilitation involves backfilling, cultivation and over sowing. Rehabilitation aims to re-contour the land to match the local landscape character and return the land to pastoral farmland.
13. The topsoil does take a little while to return to full productivity because the stockpiling creates some soil degradation. Once the rehabilitated

land has been contoured, we undertake soil tests and apply fertiliser to improve soil health and quality. Currently the farm is predominantly grazed by cattle. To manage the recently rehabilitated land only young cattle (R1, R2) are grazed in rehabilitated pastures for the first two years. Following that time, it returns to the grazing rotation in full.

14. New Vale is committed to leaving the Site with a higher ecological and biodiversity value than what existed when mining started. New Vale has worked to restore highly degraded and historic wetlands located within the Western side of the site so this will link into mine rehabilitation in future years. Fencing of tributaries and mixed native planting has been undertaken. Further ecological enhancement works are planned as part of the rehabilitation work that is still to be undertaken.

New Vale's role in the Gore District

15. The Mine only extracts coal where there is regional demand. The product is transported to customers in wider Southland and South Otago areas. Customers are typically large rural processing facilities such as dairy factories, and meat works.
16. The coal extracted is not used for export or stockpiling.
17. The Mine employs approximately 30-40 staff and operates either 5 or 6 days a week, depending on the season. The operating hours are usually 0600-1830 Monday to Friday and 0600 to 1400 on Saturdays. In winter the hours are reduced to 0700 – 1630 Monday to Friday.

End of life

18. New Vale understands that most customers are working on decarbonisation and moving away from a reliance on coal to provide their energy needs. This is being driven by the demands of their

customers and the Government's emissions reduction framework.

Evidence of this transition is evident in the Mine's extraction volumes trending down. Historically approximately 290,000 tonnes of coal have been extracted annually. Approximately 270,000 tonnes was extracted in 2022-2023.

19. Greenbriar has engaged with a number of its customers about their demands. It is apparent that while most are on a transition pathway, that process will take some time. Most planning to be complete between 2030 and 2040. The resources within the mine site (including the extension area are currently projected to last until approximately 2038.
20. As a result planning is underway in relation to the end of life for the Mine. This is all dependant on Government policy decisions and the pace at which New Vale customers move away from coal as a source of fuel. New Vale seeks to provide coal to businesses in the transitional period. Coal resources within the existing mining footprint are close to being exhausted, with some further resource identified in the extension area.
21. Given the projected demand New Vale are seeking to extend the mining area which will extend the mine life by roughly 8-10years.
22. Once the Mine has reached the end of life, the Site will be rehabilitated and largely revert to pastoral farming, with ecological and wetland enhancement and restoration works completed. I have attached at Appendix 1 the current rehabilitation plan that we are working to.

Vehicle Movements

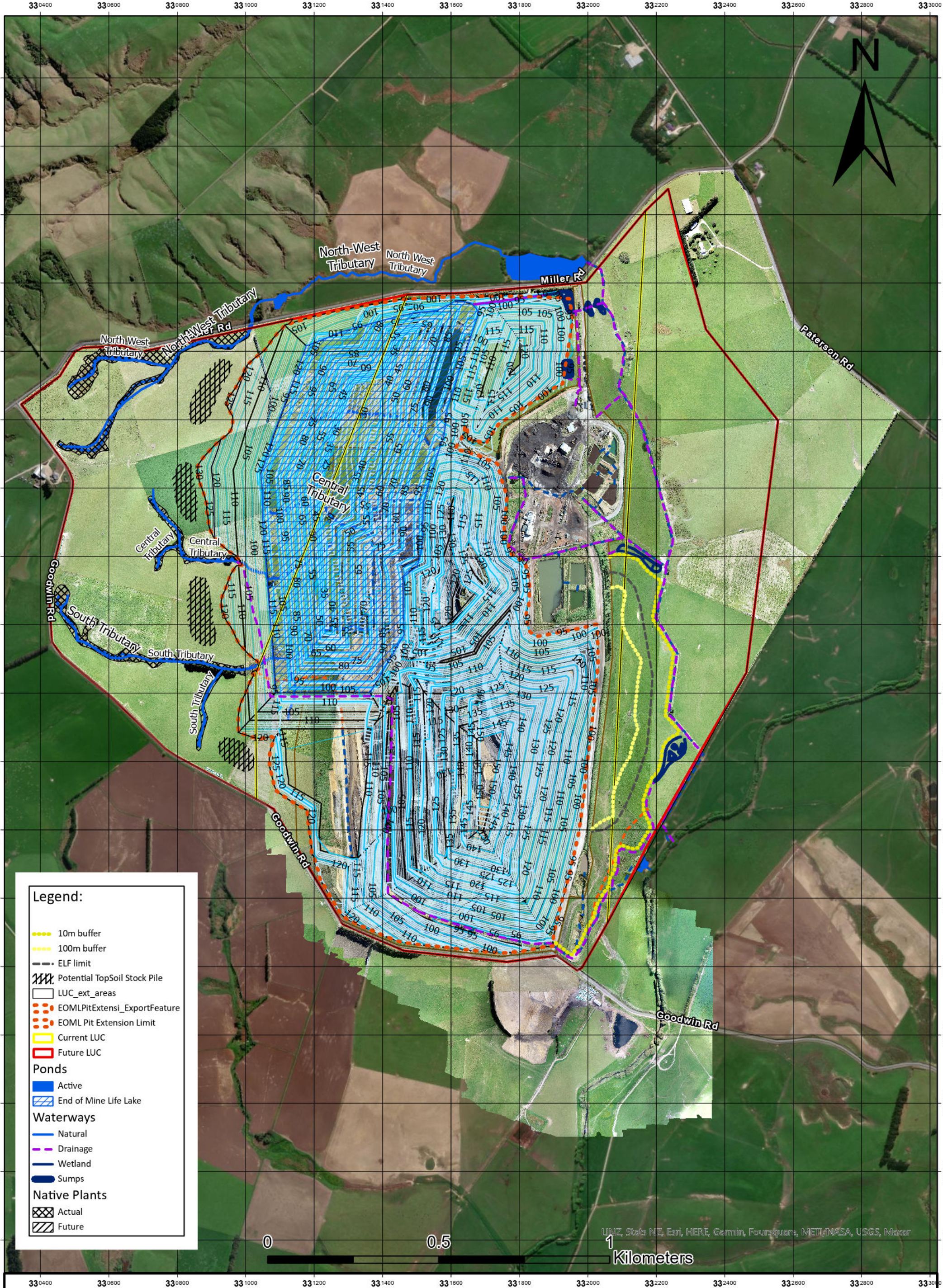
23. New Vale Mine has different types of vehicle movements from site daily. Peak season we may have as many as 30 heavy road truck movements. Of those, approximately 65% are New Vale owned road

truck movements and the remainder are customer trucks or haulage companies engaged by our customers. We continue to provide public sales to customers preapproved by the Mine. This is only for speciality products not available through merchants. The maximum light vehicle movements for these would be two per day during winter. There can be many days with no public sales vehicle movements during winter.

Dated 8 July 2024

John Howes

APPENDIX 1 – NEW VALE REHABILITATION PLAN



Legend:

- 10m buffer
- 100m buffer
- ELF limit
- Potential TopSoil Stock Pile
- LUC_ext_areas
- EOMLPitExtensi_ExportFeature
- EOMLPit Extension Limit
- Current LUC
- Future LUC
- Ponds
 - Active
 - End of Mine Life Lake
- Waterways
 - Natural
 - Drainage
 - Wetland
 - Sumps
- Native Plants
 - Actual
 - Future



New Vale Mine E.O.M. Management Plan

Document owner: adam.kaluzny@newvale.co.nz

Scale: 1:10,000
Version:
Projection: Bluff 1949
Date: 21-06-2023