

TDC urged to oppose mine

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Opponents of Siren Gold's proposed mine at Sam's Creek have urged Tasman District Council (TDC) to join the fight against the controversial project.

At a full council meeting in Richmond last Thursday Julie Downard, a member of opposition group Sam's Creek Collective, outlined the potential catastrophic consequences of the gold mining operation.

During her allotted 10-minute slot in Public Forum, Julie focused on the thousands of tonnes of highly toxic and persistent arsenic waste which would need to be safely contained in a tailings facility in order to prevent contamination of the Takaka Valley, its groundwater, and Golden Bay's coastal environment.

There remained, she said, a great deal of uncertainty about Siren Gold's plans, pointing out the company had yet to establish the financial viability of a mining venture, and were unable to state whether they would sell the rights to a third party, or whether the mine would be an open pit or an underground operation.

Illustrating her presentation with a series of projected images, Julie provided examples of serious long-term arsenic and heavy metal contamination resulting from mining operations – both in New Zealand and around the world. "Even with the best controls, tailings facilities don't last forever. Arsenic, on the other hand, does."

In many cases, Julie said, governments have had to step in to cover multi-million dollar remediation costs after the mining companies responsible went bankrupt. She highlighted the consequences of such a scenario developing with a Sam's Creek mine operator. "If they start, and go bust, who pays for the clean up? Who provides a replacement water supply? How will it be when people can't swim or fish in the Bay?"

She closed her address by stressing the dangers of processing the mine application under the coalition's Fast-track Approvals Bill, and made a plea for the council to speak out and oppose the mine. "Please tell the government to stop gambling with our water."

Later in the meeting, councillor Mark Greening suggested that council "gather their thoughts" and make a submission against the mine application. "I think that's something we should do."

Mayor Tim King, however, explained that, while TDC had submitted on the Fast-track Approvals Bill, making a submission...

Continued on page 2



Julie Downard speaks on behalf of Sam's Creek Collective at the Tasman District Council meeting last Thursday. Photo: Jo Richards.

Continued from page 1

... on a specific project was complicated due to the council's dual role as both consenting authority and representatives of the community. "Staking out a position either in support or opposition to those activities comes with its own challenges."

Responding to an inquiry from *The GB Weekly*, Siren Gold's chief executive and managing director Victor Rajasooriar welcomed SCC's interest in the proposed mine but questioned the accuracy of its statements. "I think it's great

that there is a group as such, but I really think that a factual and scientific approach should be taken to all matters, rather than scare tactics."

He reiterated his company's desire for transparency and collaboration as the project progresses. "We are willing to work with the local community and take them on the journey together. If ever a mine comes into reality, then I would hope that the community is an ambassador for the project."