

## Spring Creek underground coal mine resumes production

28 January 2008 - Spring Creek underground coal mine near Greymouth, a joint venture between Solid Energy and Cargill, has resumed coal production following a 14 month \$25 million redevelopment to access 3.1 million tonnes of semi-soft coking coal.

The hydraulic monitor has been commissioned and is now operating. The monitor is a high-pressure water cannon used to extract coal from the face and sluice it down to the underground pump station where it is sized and brought out of the mine either in a slurry pipeline or on conveyor belts.

Simon Doig, Solid Energy's general manager, South Island operations, says the monitor start-up at Spring Creek is an important milestone for Solid Energy, Cargill and their Spring Creek Mining Company joint venture. Solid Energy has 51% of the joint venture and is the mine operator.

"This mine has a strong future, with up to 20 years of production and the coal is attracting strong interest from steelmakers," he said.

To accelerate the mine's further development and ensure production targets are met a recruitment campaign for experienced underground mineworkers and trades-people is underway in the UK.

The development project at Spring Creek has involved creating 4 km of new underground roadways and equipment bays, a major upgrade of the coal washery at Rocky Creek and other underground and surface equipment.

The washery upgrade allows the mine's entire output – expected to be in excess of 65,000 tonnes a month – to be processed and for a greater proportion of the output to be low ash, making it more attractive to higher-end markets such as steel-making.

To ensure the pace of roadway development is maintained, a new roadheader and automated bolting rigs are on order.