



PIKE RIVER COAL

25 March 2009

VENTILATION SHAFT RESTORATION UNDERWAY

Restoration of Pike River Coal's ventilation shaft, blocked by a rock fall in the lower 30 metre zone, is underway.

An experienced Australian 'Alimak' contractor has started work on driving a new shaft (called an 'Alimak raise'), to divert around the rock fall by intersecting the main shaft at about 50 metres above its base.

The Alimak process uses the drill-and-blast method to progressively construct a 2.5 metre shaft, with rockbolts and mesh used to support the new shaft walls as it is advanced upwards each day. This will prevent the sort of rock fall which occurred in the main shaft.

In preparation for the Alimak raise, a section of the existing tunnel floor has been excavated to 6 metres in height and more than 45 grouted cablebolts, 8 metres in length, have been installed in the roof to support the area of the new rise and to create the 'nest' for the Alimak equipment to park when explosives are deployed.

The Alimak equipment, already air freighted from Australia, is due for delivery to site by 27 March. Following installation of the equipment in the mine, the raise drill and blast will commence by mid-April and is due to be completed by end of May.

A nine man team will work in shifts around the clock to construct this new 'linking shaft'. The Alimak raise will be extended each day by using a working platform on a rail to carry tunnelling staff higher after each blast.

Meanwhile, drilling of a 'slimline' ventilation hole from the surface to pit bottom has commenced. This hole will then be reamed to 600mm diameter and fully cased with steel pipe to provide enough additional fresh air to allow one of the coal cutting machines, a continuous miner, to start producing coal during April.

Upon completion of the Alimak raise and the slimline hole, ventilation to the mine will be re-established and the three coal cutting machines and in-seam drilling unit will be operating.

Further information:

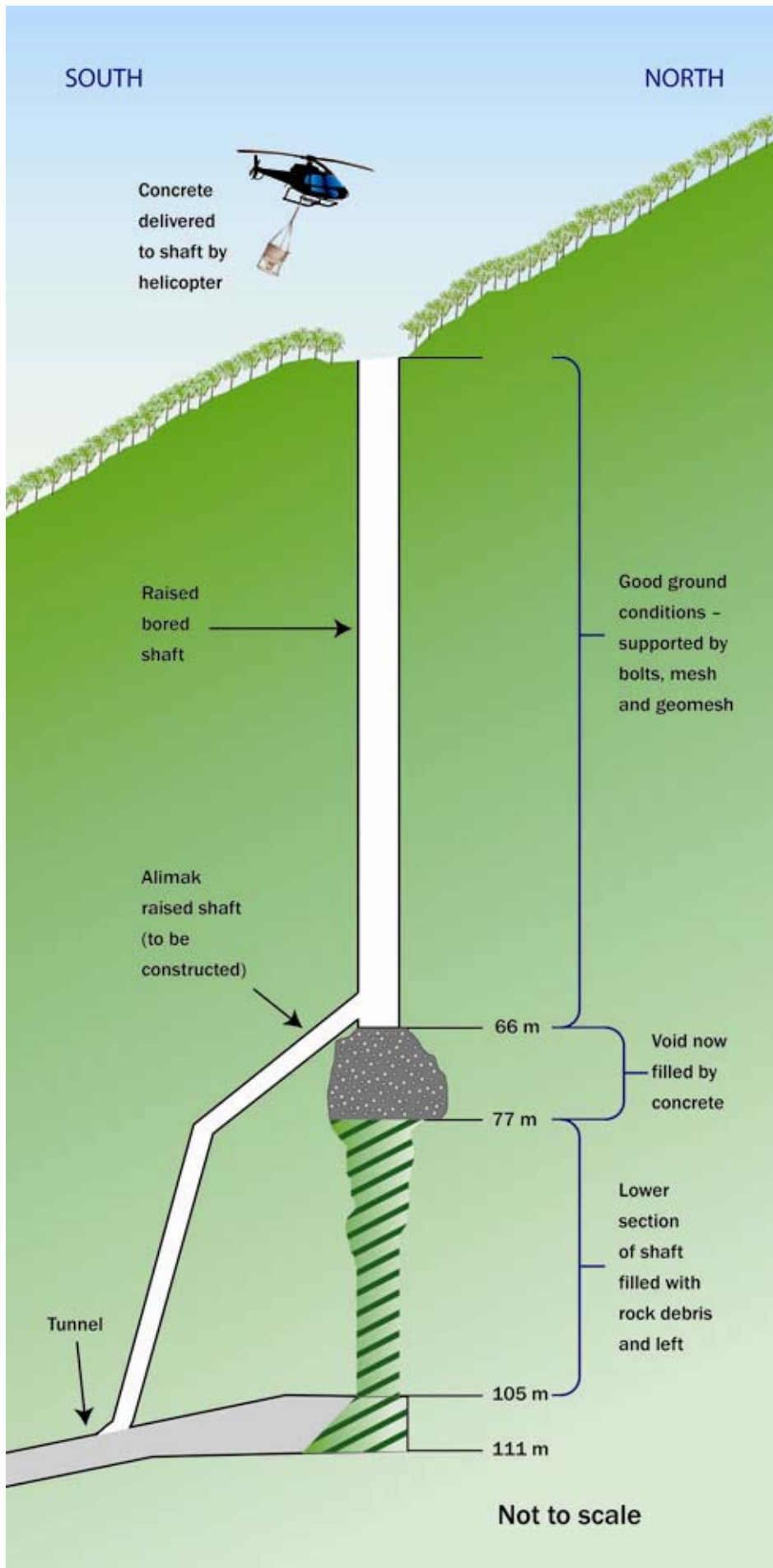
Gordon Ward +64 4 494 0190
Chief Executive and Managing Director

Peter Whittall +64 3 769 8400
General Manager, Mines

Pike River Coal owns the rights to a premium hard coking coal resource located 50 kilometres north-east of Greymouth, New Zealand.

Pike River shares are quoted on the NZSX and the ASX under the code "PRC"

Following page: Ventilation shaft schematic



Ventilation Shaft Schematic