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[Home](#) > Minerals Forum cancellation prompts WCRC venue offer

Minerals Forum cancellation prompts WCRC venue offer

Simon Hartley - Mon, 12 Oct 2020



[1]

The cancellation of this week's annual New Zealand Minerals Forum in Hamilton due to security issues has prompted the West Coast Regional Council and its districts' mayors to offer to host future Minerals Forums and mining conferences.

Environmental activists were rallying online to disrupt the Minerals Forum – as they physically did a year ago in Dunedin – and organisers Freeman could not guarantee the safe passage of delegates to and from the venue.

Westland District Council mayor Bruce Smith say regional mayors, chairs and iwi are disappointed the 2020 Minerals Forum has been cancelled and the districts' leaders would welcome future events.

"We'd welcome the opportunity to host future forums or conferences on the West Coast," Smith says.

Future-focused

"It [the cancellation] is especially disappointing considering how future-focused the 2020 schedule was, including speakers from iwi, science, innovation and other industry leaders," Smith says.

Topics on the agenda for the Minerals Forum included solar panels, battery storage, carbon capture, advanced minerals-to-materials research and responding to environmental and climate change related issues, he says.

"The forum is an opportunity for a wide range of people to get together and look at the issues of the future, share ideas and engage on issues."

Reefton mini-forum last month

Last month Minerals West Coast held a successful two-day mini-forum in Reefton, attended by almost 100 delegates from across the South Island. It included speakers from Bathurst Resources, MinEx, the NZ Institute of Minerals to Materials, Verum Group's kiwi breeding programme and laboratory specialists SGS New Zealand.

"This was well received by the community and attendees and allowed for the free flow of ideas focused on the future," Smith says.

"The West Coast welcomes responsible ethical mining and the opportunity to host other focused forums like this in the future."

Straterra urges mining investment

Straterra's Wellington office was breached by activists last week, who threw buckets of coal around the office, while calling for the Minerals Forum to be abandoned.

Straterra is co-organiser of the Minerals Forum, along with Freeman. Its chief executive, Chris Baker, says the cancellation of the Minerals Forum is a disappointment, but will have little impact on the

legitimate and highly encouraging investment and development of resource activity in New Zealand.

“Now more than ever we need to encourage investment,” Baker says.

He predicts that, post Covid-19, demand for resources will increase, both in New Zealand and globally.

“Governments are investing in infrastructure, new lower emissions technologies are being, and must be developed and standards of living are increasing.

“This is the goal and the future, not the alarmism promulgated by these protesters.”

Gold prices are near all-time highs and New Zealand has world class gold resources and potential, while demand for iron and coking coal from the global steel sector is strong.

“This is good for our sector and good for New Zealand,” Baker says.

- [NZ Minerals Forum](#) [2]
- [Freeman Media](#) [3]
- [West Coast Regional Council](#) [4]
- [Westland District Council](#) [5]

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Links

[1] <https://www.insideresources.co.nz/news-story/nz-minerals-forum/57901/minerals-forum-cancellation-prompts-wcrc-venue-offer>

[2] <https://www.insideresources.co.nz/topic/nz-minerals-forum>

[3] <https://www.insideresources.co.nz/org/freeman-media>

[4] <https://www.insideresources.co.nz/org/west-coast-regional-council>

[5] <https://www.insideresources.co.nz/org/westland-district-council>