

Memorandum

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Project Name: Auld Creek Fast Track Application - Social Impact - Referral Support Costs
Project Number: E251270

Dear Simon,

1 Introduction & overview

1.1 Purpose of the document

Reefton Resources Pty (known as 'Rua Gold') is a minerals exploration and mining company listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange. Rua Gold has mining exploration control over the Reefton Goldfield on the West Coast in the Buller District on the South Island.

Rua Gold is focussed upon developing a new multigenerational gold-antimony mining operation in this historical mining area of over 120,000 hectares of tenements. The first mine development planned is the Auld Creek Mine, and is envisaged as the initial development in a multigenerational mining opportunity in, and for, the area.

EMM Consulting (EMM) was requested to provide Rua Gold a high-level social assessment to identify any potentially significant social effects - both impacts (negative effects) and benefits (positive effects)- likely to arise from the proposed Auld Creek Mine Project (the project).

This technical memorandum has been prepared to support the *Fast Track Approvals Act 2024* (FTAA) Referral Application for the Rua Gold Auld Creek Project. Under section 13(4)(h) referral applications are required to describe anticipated and known adverse effects on the environment and the significance of those effects.

The FTAA referral is targeted for late March 2026. Pending approval of this application the submission the substantive application is scheduled toward the end of 2026, should the referral application be successful.

1.2 Project description

Rua Gold is seeking authorisation for the integrated development of the Auld Creek ore deposit, together with associated infrastructure and mining activities. The Auld Creek gold-antimony deposit is located beneath Victoria Forest Park approximately 3km south of Reefton township.

A detailed project description is available in Rua Gold's Project Description document. A summary description of pertinent elements informing the assessment is provided below.

Figure 1.1 provides a map of the Project Site - comprising the Mine Site (effectively the orebody and access to into it) and the Surface Infrastructure Site (above ground processing, storage and site access points).



Source: Project Description – Rua Gold Auld Creek Project

Figure 1.1 Project location

The Project is proposed to employ safe, modern underground mining methods to extract economic ore from the deposit. These methods have been selected based on the characteristics of the known deposit and geotechnical considerations, and to minimise the surface footprint of the mining disturbance as far as practicable.

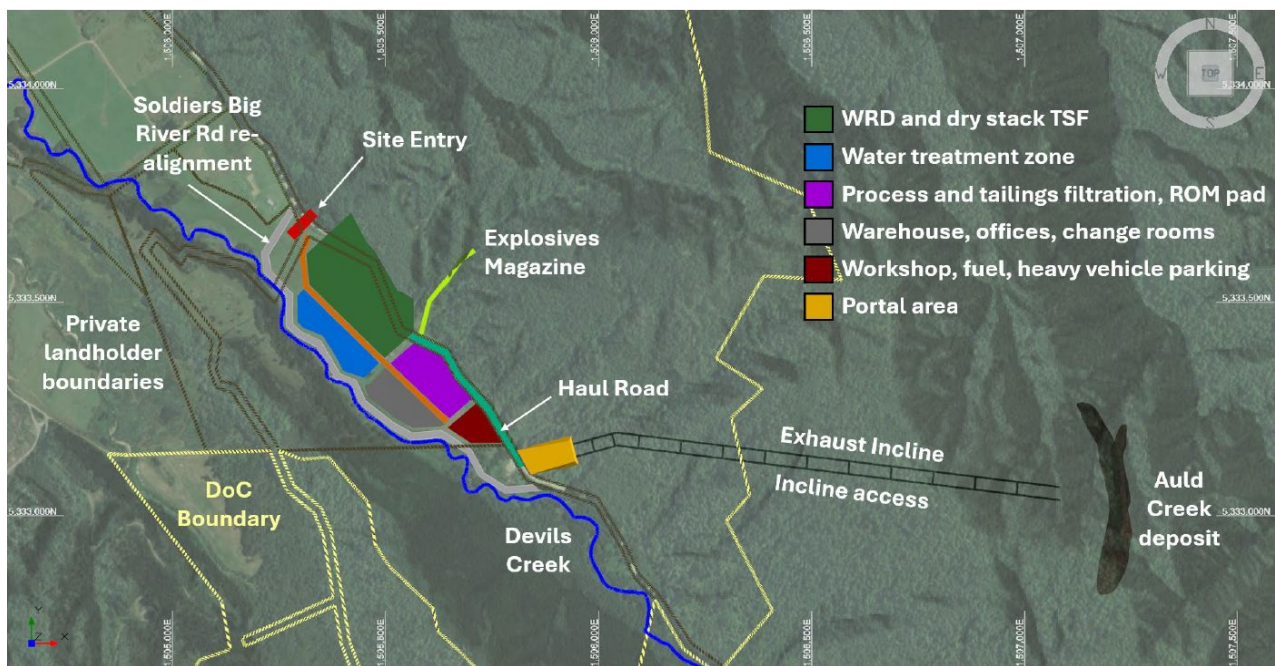
The mining operation is proposed in two phases. Phase one includes the development of a portal and adit on Crown land, administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC), to access and mine the top of the orebody, where the majority of the high-grade mineral is located. Phase two includes access to and mining of the remaining deposit via a 1.2 km underground twin decline tunnel accessed from Ngai Tahu Forestry land.

The Project comprises the following activities:

- Further mineral resource investigation and exploration progression at Auld Creek.
- Construction, operation and maintenance of an access portal at the top of the orebody located on DOC land.
- Construction, operation and maintenance of the Auld Creek Underground Mine.

- Establishing a new surface facilities area housing the surface infrastructure necessary to facilitate the development and operation of an underground mine located across privately owned farmland and Ngāi Tahu Forestry land on Soldiers-Big River Road.
- The establishment and operation of a temporary waste rock stack and associated haul road on Ngai Tahu Forestry land.
- The construction and upgrade of ancillary infrastructure including new network utility connections, public and private road upgrades, and service connections.
- Rehabilitation of the site surface – this is expected to be forestry and agriculture but will be agreed with regulators and Iwi.

An indicative layout of the Surface Infrastructure Site is shown in Figure 1.2.



Source: Project Description – Rua Gold Auld Creek Project

Figure 1.2 Site layout

Project timings are:

- 2025-2026 - feasibility and environmental assessment:
- 2027 – 2028 - construction and development
- 2028-2035 – operations (production from late 2028, lasting 6-8 years, depending on resource availability and access -operational staffing levels will be up to 200 persons)
- 2035 onward - rehabilitation: (estimated at 2-5 years, will continue until rehabilitation criteria is met).

The project has undertaken a range of investigations, optioneering exercises and stakeholder engagement to develop a working project design. This is not finalised and is open to amendment as it is firmed up based on further technical studies, impact assessment and stakeholder input/feedback ahead of submission of the substantive application.

1.3 Methodology

The EMM study team undertook a scoping site visit (alongside the project-appointed economic impact assessor) to meet with key internal and external stakeholders and to observe the local community and surrounding area. This enabled the study team to gain a direct understanding of the local social context and any potential social benefits or impacts of significance likely to arise from the project.

The site visit included:

- a kick-off meeting with Rua Gold to obtain an up-to-date overview of the project, engagement approaches with the community and known sentiment
- visit to the nearby settlement of Reefton, the Surface Infrastructure Site (key road junctions/access points, as well as several local business premises
- engagement with key community/business members, and relevant Council planning officer, in Reefton to ascertain their opinions and support for the project
- informal conversations with local community members and identification of likely important social infrastructure and values for the community of Reefton.

A review was undertaken of the project description and any socially related plans or policies (e.g. the Stakeholder Engagement Plan) being implemented by the project. Recent engagement materials and the stakeholder engagement records were also reviewed with to further understanding community relations and public sentiment. Additional meetings were held with members of the project development team to further understand and detail the range of social impact mitigation and management measures already developed.

Likely direct and indirect social effects were considered based on the documents reviewed, interviews and impacts identified in technical memorandums by other technical specialists. The key studies– economics, noise/air quality, traffic and landscape are listed in the References section of this Memorandum.

A preliminary assessment of impacts was undertaken drawing upon EMM's extensive social performance experience and judgement and informed by established social assessment methodologies. This assigned degrees of significance to any predicted social effects, based on currently available information.

Significance is expressed in terms of 'less than minor', 'minor', or 'more than minor', as agreed with Mitchell Daysh, to facilitate comparisons across disciplines. In this Memorandum 'minor' denotes a reversible or readily manageable impact limited to a small group or of limited impact on the wider community day to day, with less than minor and more than minor being relative to this.

This Memorandum is drafted to inform the Referral Application for the FTAA planning pathway. A full Social Impact Assessment (SIA) will be undertaken to comprehensively assess all potential social impacts and community benefits.

2 Headline social context

2.1 Local context

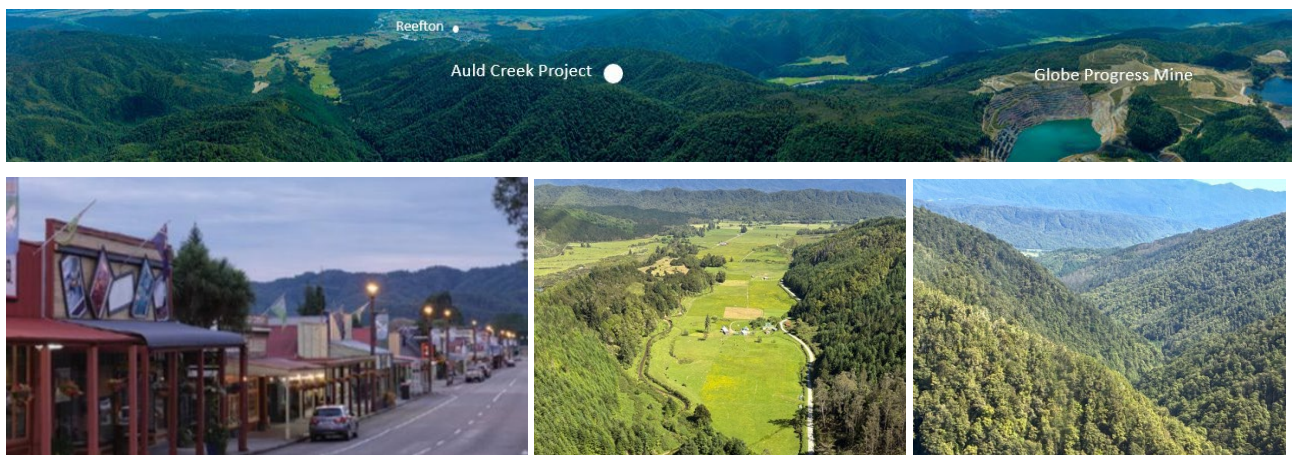
Both the Mine Site and Surface Infrastructure Site are located in sparsely populated settings approximately a five-minute drive from Reefton. Reefton is a historic mining town, established in the mid-1800s. It has an estimated population of 1,050, according to Statistics New Zealand (29 October 2025), with a population density of 399 people per km².

Reefton is the only inland town on the West Coast and is approximately 80km northeast of Greymouth, in the Inangahua River valley – the Lewis Pass being the main road to Christchurch, 66 km to the south-east. Reefton lies within the Buller District, a local government area covering roughly 8,000 km² and home to slightly over 10,000 residents. The district's administrative centre is Westport, approximately 85 km northwest of Reefton on the coast.

Reefton is proud of its mining heritage and clearly displays this in various ways, including heritage information boards, the School of Mines museum and the large Reefton Visitor Centre display. It has undergone a range of boom-and-bust cycles driven by the mining economy during its past and . In recent years Reefton has begun experiencing a degree of economic resurgence, potentially tied to the investment and optimism associated with the mining industry e.g. Endura Mining's Snowy River gold and silver mine currently being established 30 minutes away, the Project/anticipation from Rua Gold's exploration works, and a post covid increase in domestic tourism/leisure spend.

Anecdotally, the study team is aware of demographic trends which point towards a departure of youth out of Reefton and limited in-migration for work or retirement.

There is a high availability of rental properties, though a large amount of the housing stock currently appears to be in a degree of disrepair.



Left to right: Reefton, Surface Infrastructure Site, Mine Site surrounds

Figure 2.1 Key project locations / context

The Mine Site is in a forested area on DOC land, on a hillside location accessed by foot (and/or a cycling track in the vicinity). The nearby Surface Infrastructure Site is primarily on Crown land (the site of a former agricultural education facility), as well as some private land parcels. There are three properties currently located upon the Surface Infrastructure Site -one of which may be an illegal dwelling.

The closest property to the Project Site boundary is 2484 Ikamatua Highway approximately 55 m from the proposed local access route via Quigleys Road.= Additionally, there is a property (196 Soldiers-Big River Road) approximately 700m to the north of the Surface Infrastructure Site.

It is considered there is only limited recreational use of the broad area around the Project Site by mountain bikers, trampers and hunters passing through.

2.2 Community engagement and sentiment

Rua Gold has undertaken a substantial amount of community engagement to date. The approach to early engagement has been driven by the project-specific Stakeholder Engagement Plan and undertaken by a mix of senior project staff and a focussed engagement lead.

Engagement activities undertaken and ongoing include:

- project updates on the Reefton Goldfields of the Rua Gold website ([Reefton Goldfield – Rua Gold](#))
- operation of a project-dedicated Reefton Rua Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/people/Rua-Gold-Reefton-Operations/61583501931236/>)
- open public forums held in Reefton
- production/distribution of a regular project newsletter
- face to face meetings
- advertisement and operation of public contact details (Tel: 09 886 9861 / Email: Info@ruagold.com) as well as named contacts
- physical presence of staff, through the Rua Gold facility on the outskirts of Reefton and visible presence around town and the Project Site, and the opening of a community drop-in point (office) on Reefton's main street.

Community engagement has primarily focussed locally upon residents/Reefton community as a whole as well as through targeted engagement with specific stakeholders of relevance such as Iwi representatives, local and regional government, local businesses, service providers/emergency services and leisure groups.

On the basis of available information community sentiment is reportedly positive. The Local Authority's principal concern at this time is understood to be ensuring the benefits from the project are as sustainable and enduring as possible.

3 Proactive mitigation and management measures

3.1 Design mitigations

The following design elements have already been included as part of the Project specifically to mitigate any potential social (and environmental) impacts from mining the orebody.

They have been designed drawing upon Rua Gold's aspirations to enhance social and environmental performance, optioneering outputs, early technical assessment and engagement with the local community and stakeholders.

- The Project will be delivered using only underground mining methods rather than utilising any open cut mining methods (used in previous projects in the area). This pro-active decision to limit impacts on the local area is at substantive financial cost to Rua Gold.
- The mine access route selected, with community input, is in an unpopulated location to further reduce the likelihood of impacts/ nearby receptors.
- To minimise any social or environmental impacts from the processing facility the location selected for Surface Infrastructure Site -with community input- is outside of a forested area, in a sparsely populated location with natural sound protection from the topography.

- To limit the need for acquiring local properties or communal resources the selected location for the processing plant is primarily Crown land, limiting the number of host landholders impacted. The site is a former educational establishment and understood to be of limited ecological or community value.
- To reduce noise, light and traffic impacts to residential receptors on the initial access to the Surface Infrastructure Site, a revised access route with safer access and fewer impacted residences (via Quigleys Road) has been selected.
- To prevent truncation of a local mountain biking trail, a revised section the route is being developed with the local cycling community and other relevant stakeholders.

Further opportunities to mitigate any effects through design will continue to be considered ahead of submission of the substantive application, based on future study and engagement feedback.

3.2 Management measures

Initial technical studies and community insights have so far helped identify a small number of potential effects and to develop management strategies to help further reduce any (minor) impacts whilst maximising the benefit available from expected positive effects.

These management measures include:

- **Ongoing robust community engagement** – Rua Gold will continue to build on the engagement practices and community relationships already established, through structured and responsive engagement guided by its regularly updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan. One of the objectives of the comprehensive engagement approach will remain early identification and response to any Project effects. The project Plan will be updated at each major phase of project development to ensure it is efficient effective, and appropriate to the project stage.
- **Maintaining access** - Rua Gold has committed to maintaining access to Soldiers Road for hunters and trampers – as well as to building the revised section mountain bike path ahead of opening.
- **A community workforce** - staffing levels during operations will be up to 200 workers. The construction/development and operational workforces will be primarily accommodated within Reefton’s rental market; with a small proportion (10-15%) expected to work under drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) arrangements. Detailed design and delivery of the project’s accommodation approach will be in close co-ordination with local providers and businesses to ensure availability for Reefton’s tourist and recreational visitors will not be limited. Employees will also be required to follow a Code of Conduct designed to ensure positive behaviour in the community.
- **Support developing local infrastructure** - to help modernise aging stormwater and sewage infrastructure Rua Gold is currently working with Buller District Council to seek national funding for upgrading this key infrastructure. Potential upgrades to the local waste facility are also being considered as part of this.
- **Funding community initiatives** - once the project progresses Rua Gold is likely to continue to increase its investment within the community focussing on priority social needs.
- **Commitment to environmental and social good practice** – to be detailed through a suite of environmental and social management plan documents, informed by upcoming comprehensive impact assessments.

- **Self-sufficiency** – Rua Gold will work with local service providers / authorities and also provide key services such as medical facilities directly to its workers to ensure the revival in population in Reefton through the incoming residential workforce does not limit access to the existing services for current residents.

3.3 Further assessment

EMM will presently undertake a comprehensive Social Impact Assessment (SIA) for the Project to further identify and understand any potential social effects. The SIA will follow best practice methodologies such as those set out in the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA) SIA guidance and endorsed by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ). Data collection from local community and stakeholders is expected to include semi-structured interviews and further open engagement events. The SIA will ascribe detailed significance levels and management measures for any impacts identified.

The SIA and effects management strategies will include consideration of how the impacts of the Project may be cumulatively experienced and/or managed in conjunction with Endura Gold, currently under construction in the region, as well any other major development activities that may be planned in Reefton during the same period.

Social effect management measures are likely to include refining key management approaches and formalising them into detailed social management plan documentation, in particular with regard to:

- stakeholder engagement
- community investment
- local procurement and employment
- workforce accommodation.

The effect management approaches selected will be adaptive. They will be regularly reviewed for effectiveness against their intended performance, and to ensure appropriate for the latest context as the project progresses.

4 Social effects

Social effects from a project can occur directly or indirectly via environmental or other changes. It is noted that all of the memorandums supplied from the informing technical assessments identify their respective impacts as positive (economics), and minor (landscape) or less than minor (noise and air quality). It should also be noted that recent studies relating to aquatic ecology, archaeology and water quality suggest no significant environmental impacts that would cause subsequent social effects.

With limited environmental impacts and the Project Site being in a sparsely populated area beyond the main community boundaries of Reefton, social effects can be expected to be limited in nature. However an element of social effect can still be expected - in particular positive social benefits via economic benefits to the area.

These effects include:

- **Improved economic prosperity** – the Project will generate employment and supply opportunities as well as increased circulation of cash in the local economy. This can be expected to support the development of additional leisure and recreational facilities, as well as the increased ability for a larger number of the community to enjoy them.
- **Increased community vitality** - an average of approximately 200 employees are expected to operate the mine once established (following a short-term construction peak of 150), with the majority to be

residential. These workers moving to Reefton can be expected to bring children, skills and volunteer hours, bringing increased vitality to schools, volunteer services and sports clubs.

- **Individual wellbeing benefits**- on an individual level increased income can lead to improved mental health/well-being through the ability to meet financial obligations, undertake desired purchases and experiences. Employment can also bring wellbeing benefits through job satisfaction, skills development a sense of identity and purpose, as well as the social elements of the workplace.
- **Strengthened social identity** -Reefton is proudly a historic mining town, without an operating mine nearby in recent years. The project can be expected to further strengthen this sense of identity and place for residents, especially if the residential workforce and ongoing community engagement delivering a sense of community involvement and ownership of the project.

Some residual impacts (i.e. negative effects) of a less than minor nature may also occur. These are typical for change or development at any level. The below are included for robustness and will be further investigated and management measures finalised during the SIA process ahead of the substantive application.

- **Uneven benefit distribution** - if benefits from the project are not felt to be distributed this could cause a reduction in goodwill amongst anyone who feels 'left behind' (e.g. do not get a job in support of the Project). This may be possible in more vulnerable members of community such as the unemployed and existing lower socio-economic households.
- **Relocation / Loss of property** – a small number of residents will be required to relocate for the processing plant to be located at the desired site. If managed sensitively, this provides opportunity to those residents to agree a beneficial negotiated sale.
- **Localised amenity and wellbeing impacts** - individuals experience environmental impacts differently; whilst impacts are predicted to be less than minor and within all regulatory limits, any change in noise, light or vehicle presence may cause concern to one or more individuals. Stakeholder engagement and ongoing design works will seek to identify any potentially particularly sensitive receptors and manage this accordingly

5 Conclusion

Based on the information available to the study team at the time of writing:

- the project appears to be welcomed by the local community and key stakeholders, who see it as an opportunity to revitalise the community and economy of Reefton.
- The predominant social effect of the project is likely to be broad community benefits through improved standards of living, community cohesion, retention of youth, and presence of services bought about via an increase in employment / cash in the economy and an injection of residential workers living in Reefton
- Any negative social effects are at this stage expected to have either low or localised impact and to be reversible and/or manageable. A detailed Social Impact Assessment will be undertaken to further detail any impacts and management measures, with continued community input.

It is my professional opinion that, based on the information and study to date, the positive social effects of the project make it appropriate for consideration under the Fast Track Approvals Act process. We envisage the social effect of the project will be positive overall, with any negative effects being of minor or less than minor significance and readily manageable.

6 Supporting documentation

- Rua Gold internal and public information including:
 - Rua Gold, Project Description - Auld Creek Mine Project, 2026
 - Rua Gold, Auld Creek Mine Stakeholder Engagement Spreadsheet, Active
 - Rua Gold, Sponsorship & Donations Register, Active
 - Rua Gold, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, 2025
 - Rua Gold corporate website, 2026: <https://ruagold.com/> / <https://ruagold.com/reefton-nov/>
 - Rua Gold Reefton Operations Facebook page, 2026: <https://www.facebook.com/people/Rua-Gold-Reefton-Operations/61583501931236/>
- Auld Creek mine technical studies and memorandums for FTAA Referral, including:
 - Eaclub & Eaclub, Economic Evidence--Rua Gold Auld Creek Gold--Antimony Project, 2026
 - Stantec New Zealand, Auld Creek Project Site Access Options Assessment, 2026
 - Tonkin & Taylor, Preliminary acoustics and air quality assessment: Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 Referral Application for Rua Gold - Auld Creek Project (Western Option), 2026
 - Wayfinder, Proposed Reefton Gold Mine - Preliminary Assessment of Landscape Effects, 2026

Thank you for contracting EMM to deliver these works. We look forward to working with you through the future steps of the approval process.

Yours sincerely

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