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New life for old mine

HELEN KEMPTON

AFTER 30 years and a couple of doomed bids, King Island's mothballed scheelite mine is set to fire back to life, a move community leaders believe could herald a prosperous new era.

The mine is owned by Group 6 Metals, formerly King Island Scheelite, and will be officially opened on Thursday.

Chairman Johann Jacobs said the mine had attracted investment of more than \$90m – including a \$10m loan from the Tasmanian government and \$2m in power upgrades through Hydro Tasmania – and was ready to return to production.

Scheelite is used to produce tungsten which acquired commercial value when it began to be used in alloy steels and electric-light filaments.

"The project will deliver significant financial royalties, economic activity and social dividends to King Island and Tasmania," Mr Jacobs said.

"The reopened Dolphin Mine, near the town of Grassy, will provide significant expansion of regional jobs with an additional 75 families to be located on King Island."

Mayor Julie Arnold said King Island was "on the cusp of big things".

"We are booming along," she said.

Tourists are sticking to

their bookings, one of the island's two major golf courses has been sold and is due to expand its accommodation offering, and now the

mothballed mine at Grassy is being officially reopened.

"The mining company is on island and the permanent jobs that will come when Dolphin Mine is back in full production – expected to be the first quarter of 2023 – will really fire things up," she said.

"They have made a commitment to employ locals and not have a fly-in, fly-out workforce. Thursday is a big day for Grassy and the whole island."

The Dolphin Tungsten Mine operated between 1917 and 1992, when it was closed because of extremely low tungsten prices, rather than a lack of reserves.

At that time, about half of the known resource was yet to be mined. The development plan envisages an eight-year open-cut mine followed by a six-year underground mine producing a concentrate for supply into the ammonium paratungstate market.

Mining Minister Roger Jaensch said King Islanders were already benefiting from the early stages of the project.

The project is expected to inject more than \$5m into the King Island economy through salaries, and Tasmania is set to receive more than \$30m in royalties and taxes over the life of the project.



New machinery for the mine.