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I'm a UK-based wine journalist, book author and communicator with a global reach, and a frequent visitor to New Zealand. Since my first visit in 2008, with the exception of the pandemic years, I have returned frequently, with many trips to Central Otago. I was most recently there in February 2025.

It is hard to understate the importance of Central Otago for New Zealand's wine reputation overseas. While Marlborough is by far the dominant region in terms of production, it is Central Otago that attracts the attention of wine geeks and the trade, and which is the premier destination in the country for wine tourism.

Central Otago put New Zealand on the map for Pinot Noir. It's Pinot Noir from globally famous wine producers that gets collectors worldwide excited, and which gives the fine wine dimension of New Zealand recognition.

Queenstown is internationally famous and attracts high caliber tourists, who are then also exposed to the wine sector.

But when it comes to wine, reputation and image are all important. The beauty of Central Otago is fundamental to its image as a wine region. When wine tourists visit Central, they visit vineyards. There's something very special about this place.

It's because of this that those of us outside New Zealand are horrified by the plans for the proposed open cast and underground gold mining project in the region. This has significant potential to damage the image of Central Otago, and with it, impact the growth and development of this young wine region that is on track to become one of the globe's premier locations for Pinot Noir – a grape that makes some of the most ethereal wines possible, but which only does this in a few limited locations worldwide.

It's for this reason that I join with many others in expressing strong objections to this idea.

Dr Jamie Goode