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CLASS B WINNER BACK TO DEFEND HIS TITLE

Kevin Laird of Alexandra is back to fight it out in what will be one of the most hard fought classes in the Catlins Coast Rally on Saturday 8 August.

Laird and co-driver Jane Blair won Class B for 2-wheel-drive cars from 1301 to 1600cc last season amidst tough competition from Graham McRae of Gore and Philip Terry of Invercargill, plus Craig Cormack of Gore until he was forced to retire from the event. Laird and Blair return in the same Toyota Levin AE92 to defend their title this year. Laird, formerly of Gore and a multiple Eastern Southland Car Club Champion, is under no illusions as to the magnitude of the task. "Class B is always close," he says, "but we will give it a good go if the car holds together." Since moving to Alexandra to operate his own business, Alexandra Auto Electrical, Laird has not been as active in motorsport as he used to be. "I have done a lot of little club events up here but the last rally I did was Rankleburn last year. I would have liked to have done the Rally Of Otago this year but it wasn't to be so I hope to do it next year."

However there is little doubt that Laird will be on the pace despite the lack of rally miles and expect to see him among the frontrunners at Catlins. With his business venture in Alexandra he is also giving back to the sport in which he has gained much success, his business supporting Class B in this year's event.

The rally begins at Owaka Motors at 9am on Saturday 8 August and traverses nine Special Stages before the finish at the Riverside Reserve in Balclutha at 3.41pm. The event is Round 4 of the Clearwater Painting Mainland Rally Championship and Round 2 of the Laird Motorsport Southern Rally Series.

Lindsay Beer, on behalf of Eastern Southland Car Club 021 351 499



PHOTOGRAPH - Kevin Laird and Jane Blair in their Toyota Levin AE92 fully committed on their way to Class B victory in last year's Catlins Coast Rally - Please credit Euan Cameron