

Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils

Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan

Report of the Hearings Panel

Index Report

Introduction, Procedural Matters, Statutory Context, Report Format and General Observations

8 October 2025

This report contains an explanation of how our decisions have been presented in **Decision Reports 1 to 12**. It does not contain any decisions *per se*.

The Hearings Panel for the purposes of hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan comprised:

- Commissioner David McMahon (Chair);
- Commissioner and Carterton District Councillor Robyn Cherry-Campbell (Deputy Chair);
- Commissioner and appointed representative for Masterton District Council Frazer Mailman;
- Commissioner and appointed representative for South Wairarapa District Council Brian Jephson;
- Commissioner and appointed representative for Rangitāne o Wairarapa Jo Hayes;
- Commissioner and appointed representative for Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa Kereana Sims;
- Commissioner and Masterton District Councillor Craig Bowyer;
- Commissioner and Carterton District Councillor Brian Deller; and
- Commissioner and South Wairarapa District Councillor Alistair Plimmer.

All Commissioners participated in the hearing of submissions and further submissions on the Proposed District Plan's Strategic Direction and General Matters (Hearing Stream 1). Between five and nine Commissioners sat on separate Hearing Panels for all other individual hearing topics, with either the Chair or Deputy Chair also sitting on each of those Panels. The membership of each Hearings Panel is set out on the title page of each of **Decision Reports 1 to 12**.

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Index of abbreviations

Throughout our Decision Reports 1 – 12, we have adopted several acronyms and abbreviations for the sake of brevity. The table below provides a list of these terms.

All decision reports should reference this index for consistency, with abbreviations being defined and used from the outset.

Abbreviation	Means...
"the Act" / "the RMA"	Resource Management Act 1991
"CDC"	Carterton District Council
"the Councils"	Masterton District Council, Carterton District Council and South Wairarapa District Council
"DoC"	Department of Conservation
"FENZ"	Fire and Emergency New Zealand
"GWRC"	Greater Wellington Regional Council
"the (Hearings) Panel"	The Hearings Panel
"JWS"	Joint Witness Statement
"MDC"	Masterton District Council
"MDRS"	Medium Density Residential Standards
"NES"	National Environmental Standard
"NESETA"	National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission Activities 2009
"NESTF"	National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities
"NPS"	National Policy Statement
"NPS-ET"	National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008
"NPS-FM"	National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020
"NPS-HPL"	National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022
"NPS-IB"	National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023
"NPS-REG"	National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011
"NPS-UD"	National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020
"NRP"	Natural Resources Plan for Greater Wellington 2023
"NZCPS"	New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010
"NZTA"	New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi
"PDP"	Proposed Wairarapa Combined District Plan
"the Regional Council"	Greater Wellington Regional Council
"the RPS"	The Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region 2013
"s[#]"	Section Number of the RMA, for example s6 means section 6
"s32 report(s)"	The report(s) prepared on behalf of the Councils pursuant to s32 of RMA in relation to the Proposed District Plan
"s32AA report(s)"	The report(s) prepared on behalf of the Councils pursuant to s32AA of RMA in relation to the Proposed District Plan
"s42A report(s)"	The report(s) prepared on behalf of the Councils pursuant to s42A, RMA in relation to the Proposed District Plan
"SNP"	Significant Natural Areas
"SWDC"	South Wairarapa District Council

1 Introduction

Report Outline and Approach

- 1.1 This Index Report has been prepared by the Hearings Panel appointed to hear and make decisions with respect to submissions on the PDP. It is a generic report that is common and relevant to all decision reports (**Reports 1 to 12**). It should be read in conjunction with each subsequent decision report.
- 1.2 This report does not include any decisions of the Panel. Rather it:
 - a. records several background and procedural matters of relevance to our decisions;
 - b. describes the statutory framework for our consideration of the PDP provisions in relation to matters raised in submissions¹ and our reporting thereon;
 - c. provides a guide to the format and approach adopted for each of the subsequent decision reports; and
 - d. records some general comments about key issues we have identified that span across the PDP as a whole.
- 1.3 The material in this report is largely factual and provides context that each of the subsequent decision reports draws upon. Our aim in centralising these contextual matters within this introductory report is to avoid duplication of the same common material in each of the subsequent decision reports. To that same end, readers of the subsequent decision reports on each topic should have regard to this report.

¹ Unless stated otherwise the term "submissions" refers to both primary submissions and further submissions.

2 Procedural matters

Matters considered in this section

- 2.1 This section of the report addresses various matters of process and procedure leading up to the completion of the hearings. Specifically, the matters we, as a Panel, address here are a description of:
- a. our role and the purpose of our reports;
 - b. the evolution of the PDP inclusive of the submission process;
 - c. the hearing streams and the specific PDP topics or chapters they addressed; and
 - d. procedural matters arising during the course of the hearings.
- 2.2 Much of the information relating to submissions and further submissions is contained in the relevant s42A Reports prepared by Reporting Officers on behalf of the Councils. Accordingly, we only provide a brief summary here of the submission process and rely on the s42A Reports, where the details of individual submissions and further submissions are concerned.

The Panel's role and the purpose of reports

- 2.3 We were appointed as Hearings Panel members by the Councils at various dates between June 2020 and February 2024. Our delegation included all necessary powers under the RMA² to hear the submissions made on the PDP and to make decisions for the Councils on the provisions of the PDP on all matters raised in those submissions to the PDP³.
- 2.4 The purpose of this report and the subsequent reports relating to each hearing stream is to satisfy the Councils' various decision-making obligations and associated reporting requirements under the RMA.

Evolution of the PDP

- 2.5 The PDP is a District Plan prepared under the RMA for the purposes of replacing the existing Operative District Plan. The Operative District Plan was the first and only such plan in New Zealand to apply to three local government jurisdictions and was adopted by the respective Councils in 2011.
- 2.6 The Councils are required by law to review their District Plan every 10 years⁴. The Councils elected to continue with the same combined approach in developing a replacement for the Operative District Plan.
- 2.7 Consequently, in 2020, the Councils initiated a comprehensive review of the Operative Wairarapa Combined District Plan. That review and the development of the replacement of the PDP has been shepherded by a Joint Committee made up of representatives from all three Councils and Rangitāne o Wairarapa and Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa⁵.

² Under s34A(1), RMA

³ Cl 10, Sch 1, RMA

⁴ Under s74, RMA

⁵ From this point on, and where relevant, we refer to the 'Joint Committee' as the entity overseeing the preparation of the PDP on behalf of the Councils.

- 2.8 A draft version of the new plan was released on 25 October 2022 for public feedback from that date to 6 December 2022. The Joint Committee then oversaw the revision of the plan to address feedback received, before it was publicly notified, as a 'Proposed District Plan', on 11 October 2023.
- 2.9 Certain rules in the PDP had legal effect on notification of the plan, including provisions relating to ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity, historic heritage, sites and areas of significance to Māori, energy, signs, notable trees and rural subdivision.
- 2.10 Two hundred and forty-two submissions were received by the closing date of 19 December 2023. A Summary of Decisions Requested by submitters, containing 3,759 submission points, was notified on 22 March 2024. The period for making further submissions ran from that date through to 23 April 2024. Eighty-six further submissions were received by the end of that period.
- 2.11 Further submissions were also sought in May 2024 on submission points contained in an Errata relating to the Summary of Decisions Requested. This submission period closed on 29 May 2024. No further submissions on the Errata were received.

The hearing streams

- 2.12 Hearings on submissions and further submissions to the PDP were held between 6 August 2024 and 26 May 2025. Hearing streams were organised by topic or specific PDP chapter and conducted mainly in the Hurunui o Rangi Room, Carterton Events Centre in Carterton.
- 2.13 Online attendance was provided for those that could not attend in person and a livestream of the hearing was also made available.
- 2.14 **Table 1** below provides a summary of the various hearing streams, and the dates each was conducted.

Hearing Stream	Topic	Dates
1	Strategic Direction and General Matters	6 and 8 August 2024
2	Urban and Open Space Zones	26 and 27 August 2024
3	Rural Zones	14 and 15 October 2024
4	Māori Purpose Zone	11 November 2024
5	Overlays Part 1: Historic Heritage, Notable Trees, and Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori	9 December 2024
6	Overlays Part 2: Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity, Natural Features and Landscapes, Coastal Environment, Natural Character and Public Access	16 and 17 December 2024
7	District Wide Matters Part 1: Energy and Network Utilities	17 February 2025
8	District Wide Matters Part 2: Transport, Subdivision and Financial Contributions	24 February 2025
9	District Wide Matters Part 3: Contaminated Land, Hazardous Substances and Natural Hazards	31 March 2025
10	General District Wide Matters: Activities on the Surface of Water, Light, Noise, Signs and Temporary Activities	7 April 2025
11	Designations (MDC, CDC and SWDC as Requiring Authorities)	19 May 2025
12	Designations (Requiring Authorities excluding MDC, CDC and SWDC)	19 May 2025

Hearing Stream	Topic	Dates
13	Rezoning	12 and 13 May 2025
14	Integration hearing: Definitions (not already covered), any remaining matters and integration matters	26 May 2025

Table 1: Summary of Hearing Streams

- 2.15 As we set out in further detail below, individual decision reports have been prepared covering one or more topics or specific PDP chapter addressed at one or more hearing streams. The hearings were organised to facilitate an efficient hearing process, whereas our decision reports are focused squarely on topics and this has enabled us to combine like topics into a limited number of decision reports. In Section 4 of this report, we provide an outline of each decision report by topic (refer **Table 3**). The Designations hearings are subject to their own decision and recommendations report(s), under Clause 9 of the First Schedule of the RMA⁶, explained in further detail in Section 4 below.
- 2.16 Each decision report contains an '**Appendix 1**', which comprise schedules of attendances for the hearing on the respective topic. We refer to those parties throughout the decision reports where relevant. Evidence tabled during the course of the hearings is also referred to in the relevant decision report, where it is particularly germane to our subsequent decisions.
- 2.17 All hearing minutes, s42A Reports, summary statements, reply statements, evidence (whether presented or tabled), hearing presentations, legal submissions, and other hearing materials can be accessed via the relevant webpage: <https://www.wairaraplan.co.nz/hearings>
- 2.18 All hearings were recorded and can also be accessed via that webpage.

Procedural Matters Arising

- 2.19 As part of the management of the hearing process, the Hearings Panel issued a series of procedural minutes, as set out in **Table 2**. Each minute served a different purpose, but in broad terms, they:
- set out procedures to be followed by the parties in preparing their evidence and in readiness for their attendance at the hearings;
 - sought advice from various parties on legal and/or other substantive matters relevant to a given hearing topic;
 - commissioned further assessment to assist our deliberations and reporting, and provided procedures for parties to receive and respond to those assessments;
 - made provision for expert conferencing on various matters to narrow and articulate matters in contention, and to assist our deliberations and reporting; and
 - resolved various administrative matters arising over the course of proceedings, including (for example) the granting of waivers and time extensions for receiving information.

⁶ Cl 9, Sch 1, RMA

Minute #	Summary	Date
1	Summary of process to date, outline of next steps, possible pre-hearing conference, introducing the Panel members and hearings administrator.	14 May 2024
2	Membership and role of the Hearings Panel, principles of hearing process, management of potential conflicts of interest, Council involvement in the hearings, pre-circulation of submitter expert evidence, format of expert evidence, expert conferencing, submitter representations and non-expert evidence, tabled evidence / representations, additional evidence, hearing schedule, format of hearings, procedure 'on the day', summary of relevant dates for submitters, steps after conclusion of each hearing, site visits, key contacts.	1 July 2024
3	Directions associated with Hearing Stream 1 topics relating to renewable energy and freshwater and three waters, and conferencing deliverables and timing.	15 August 2024
4	Procedures for Hearing Streams 3 and 4 relating to the provision of evidence and legal submissions.	3 September 2024
5	Directions associated with Hearing Stream 2 topics relating to rail corridor setbacks, provision for emergency service facilities, firefighting water supply standards, the waste management area standard, residential design guides, density of residential activities in the Town Centre Zone, managing reverse sensitivities in the Future Urban Zone, managing residential activities in the General Industrial Zone and conferencing deliverables and timing.	4 September 2024
6	Directions associated with Hearing Stream 3 topics relating to subdivision of viticulture within the Martinborough Soils Overlay, quarrying activities and associated land uses, conferencing deliverables and timing, questions for the Reporting Officer and timeframe for right of reply.	21 October 2024
7	Procedures for Hearing Streams 5 and 6.	22 October 2024
8	Further directions associated with Hearing Stream 2 providing context of the FENZ presentation and JWS, and the Panel's residual concerns and directions for addressing those concerns.	1 November 2024
9	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 2 – Urban and Open Space Zone concerning the activity status of non-compliant subdivision in the Low Density Residential Precinct (LDRP); and Status of provisions associated with Plan Change 1 to the Operative Regional Policy Statement (RPS).	4 December 2024
10	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 3 – Rural Zones concerning s42A recommended amendments to the subdivision provisions resulting from both the submission from Greater Wellington Regional Council and the Joint Witness Conferencing with the Wairarapa Winegrowers' Association Inc.	5 December 2024
11	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 4 – Māori Purpose Zone concerning a request to Peter William Gibbs and Regan Potangaroa provide us with evidence confirming they are acting on behalf of the owners of these properties.	10 December 2024
12	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 2	12 December 2024

Minute #	Summary	Date
	–Urban and Open Space Zones and Hearing Stream 3 – Rural Zones seeking clarification in relation to recommendations made by the s42A Reporting Officers on the manner in which relocatable buildings are provided for in the PDP.	
13	Correction and Further Directions Associated with Minute 10 and Hearing Stream 3 – Rural Zones. The Minute provided a corrected Table 1 and set out the additional clarifications requested.	13 December 2024
14	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 1 – Strategic Direction and General Matters concerning policy support for the resilience of Māori landowners, the implications of decisions on Proposed Change 1 to the RPS and the consent status accorded emergency service facilities.	17 December 2024
15	Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 2 – Urban and Open Space Zones concerning water supply standards for firefighting purposes.	23 January 2025
16	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 3 – Rural Zones relating to a request for a s32AA evaluation and a point of clarification.	24 January 2025
17	Procedures for Hearing Stream 7 – District Wide Matters Part 1: Energy, and Network Utilities and Hearing Stream 8 – District Wide Matters Part 2: Transport, Subdivision, and Financial Contributions	28 January 2025
18	Further Directions for Hearing Stream 7 – District Wide Matters Part 1: Energy, and Network Utilities relaying Panel questions and requesting expert conferencing on specific matters.	19 February 2025
19	Further Directions for Hearing Stream 6 – Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity regarding the giving of effect to clause 3.16 of the NPS-IB.	19 February 2025
20	Procedure Matter relating to the release of the Decision Reports arising from Hearing Stream 5 – Historic Heritage confirming that all decision reports will be released together and responding to a specific request that the decision on the listing of a heritage item be released ahead of decisions on the PDP.	20 February 2025
21	Procedures for Hearing Stream 9 and Hearing Stream 10 – sets out how and when evidence and legal submissions need to be lodged for ninth and tenth hearing topics.	10 March 2025
22	Procedures for Hearing Stream 11 and Hearing Stream 12 – sets out how and when evidence and legal submissions need to be lodged for eleventh and twelfth hearing topics.	17 March 2025
23	Procedures for Hearing Stream 13 Rezoning – sets out how and when evidence and legal submissions need to be lodged for the thirteenth hearing topic.	28 March 2025
24	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 9 – the Panel seeking the facilitation of Expert Conferencing between Council Officers and Brookside Developments and asking specific questions for Reporting Officers to consider in their Reply Statements.	5 April 2025
25	Procedures for Hearing Stream 14 - General Matters and Integration – sets out how and when evidence and legal submissions need to be lodged for the fourteenth	11 April 2025

Minute #	Summary	Date
	hearing topic.	
26	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 10 – the Panel seeking: further information from KiwiRail, the facilitation of Expert Conferencing between the Reporting Officer and Brookside Developments, and questions for the Reporting Officers to consider in their Reply Statements.	11 April 2025
27	Further Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 7 Energy & Network Utilities – sets out the Panel’s request for further assistance and a corresponding timetable for a JWS.	30 April 2025
28	Directions Associated with Hearing Stream 6 and 7 – invitation to comments from parties with an interest to submissions in the National Grid policy and request for directions relating to Policy ECO-PX.	2 May 2025
29	Further Directions associated with Hearing Stream 13: Rezoning – requesting further evidence from some parties, expert conferencing between the s42A author, planning expert and Dewes Brothers Ltd and questions for the Reporting Officers to consider in their Reply Statements.	19 May 2025
30	A response, further direction and outline of next steps to a matter raised in Hearing Stream 5: Sites of Significance to Maori, in relation to a submission from Kawakawa 12D Ahu Whenua Trust on ‘Punaruku – a traditional fresh water source’.	19 May 2025
31	Further directions associated with Hearing Streams 11 and 12: Designations – further information to be provided by SWDC on Pains Farm, by MDC on the Riversdale WWTP Designation, authorisation from Martinborough Community Board and specific questions for s42a authors.	21 May 2025
32	Further direction relating to Hearing Stream 9: Natural Hazards – Flood mapping at Brookside Development Featherston Limited Site.	17 June 2025
33	Further direction relating to Hearing Stream 13 Rezoning: Riversdale Terraces, East Leigh Limited.	24 June 2025

Table 2: Summary of Minutes issued

Statutory context

Matters considered under this section

- 2.20 Here we provide an outline of the relevant statutory considerations for our reporting.
- 2.21 The matters outlined below will not be repeated in subsequent reports, but nonetheless have been the reference point for each of our evaluations in the topic-based decision reports.

Summary of statutory requirements

The RMA

- 2.22 The statutory requirements for the preparation and consideration of the contents of a District Plan are set out in ss31, 32, and 72-77D of the RMA. As the PDP was notified on 11 October 2023, it is the version of the RMA in force at that date that applies to our tasks.
- 2.23 In *Colonial Vineyard Ltd v Marlborough District Council*⁷, the Environment Court updated the framework of matters to be evaluated when preparing a plan, albeit by reference to the version of the RMA that applied prior to 3 December 2013. The RMA has been amended a number of times since that date, the most relevant for our purposes being the substantial rewriting of s32 and the introduction of s32AA and the National Planning Standards 2019. Other minor amendments to words and phrases have also been made.
- 2.24 In these circumstances we prefer to set out the statutory requirements that we consider apply specifically to the preparation and consideration of the PDP, drawing on *Colonial Vineyards*, where it is appropriate to do so, but supplementing as necessary where amendments have been made.

General requirements

- a. The District Plan should be designed to accord with and assist Council(s) to carry out its functions so as to achieve the purpose of the RMA (ss31, 72 and 74(1) RMA).
- b. When preparing its District Plan, an evaluation report in accordance with s32 RMA must be prepared (s74(1)(d) RMA) and be given particular regard to (s74(1)(e) RMA).
- c. The District Plan must be prepared in accordance with and give effect to national policy statements and the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (ss74(1)(ea) and 75(3) RMA).
- d. The District Plan must be prepared in accordance with National Planning Standards (s74(1)(ea) RMA).
- e. The District Plan must give effect to any operative regional policy statement and not be inconsistent with a regional plan for any matter specified in s30(1) RMA (ss75(3)(c) and 75(4)(b) RMA).
- f. When preparing its District Plan the Council(s) must also:
 - have regard to any relevant management plans and strategies under other Acts, and to any relevant entry in the Historic Places Register and to various fisheries

⁷ ENV-2012-CHC-108, [2014] NZEnvC 55

regulations (s74(2)(2)(b) RMA) to the extent that their content has a bearing on resource management issues of the district; and to consistency with plans and proposed plans of adjacent territorial authorities (s74(2)(c) RMA);

- take into account any relevant planning document recognised by an iwi authority (s74(2A) RMA); and
 - not have regard to trade competition or the effects of trade competition (s74(3) RMA).
- g. A District Plan must state its objectives for the district, the policies to implement the objectives and the rules (if any) to implement the policies (s75(1) RMA) and may state other matters (s75(2) RMA).
- h. In making a rule for the purpose of carrying out its functions and achieving the objectives and policies of the District Plan, the Council(s) must have regard to the actual or potential effect of activities on the environment, including, in particular, any adverse effect (ss76(1) and (3) RMA).

Section 32 and 32AA evaluations

- a. The s32 evaluation report must contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the environmental, economic, social, and cultural effects anticipated from the implementation of the PDP (s32(1)(c) RMA).
- b. Each proposed objective in a District Plan is to be evaluated by the extent to which it is the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the RMA (s32(1)(a)) RMA).
- c. The policies and other provisions are to be examined to ascertain whether they are the most appropriate to achieve the objectives by (ss32(1)(b) and (2) RMA)⁸:
- identifying other reasonably practicable options for achieving the objectives and assessing their efficiency and effectiveness in doing so; and
 - identifying and assessing, and if practicable, quantifying, the benefits and costs of the environmental, economic, social, and cultural effects that are anticipated from the implementation of the provisions; and
 - assessing the risk of acting or not acting if there is uncertain or insufficient information about the subject matter of the provisions.
- d. A further evaluation in accordance with s32 RMA of any changes proposed to be made to the objectives and other provisions of the District Plan since the first evaluation report was prepared must be prepared at a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the changes (s32AA(1) RMA).

2.25 We expand upon some aspects of these below and in particular in the section entitled 'our overall approach in making decisions' at Section 4 of this Index Report.

Part 2 of the RMA

2.26 The Act's purpose and principles are set out in Part 2 of the Act. Section 5 explains that the Act's purpose is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical

⁸ See *Gock v Auckland Council* [2019] NZHC 1603, at [30]

resources. In that context sustainable management means:

... managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—

- (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*
- (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and*
- (c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.*

2.27 In achieving the RMA's purpose, s6 directs all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act to recognise and provide for matters of national importance, being:

- (a) the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:*
- (b) the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:*
- (c) the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna:*
- (d) the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes, and rivers:*
- (e) the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga:*
- (f) the protection of historic heritage from inappropriate subdivision, use, and development:*
- (g) the protection of protected customary rights:*
- (h) the management of significant risks from natural hazards.*

2.28 Section 7 of the Act sets out matters that all persons must have particular regard to, and includes:

- (a) kaitiakitanga:*
 - (aa) the ethic of stewardship:*
- (b) the efficient use and development of natural and physical resources:*
 - (ba) the efficiency of the end use of energy:*
- (c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values:*
- (d) intrinsic values of ecosystems:*
- (e) [Repealed]*

- (f) *maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the environment:*
- (g) *any finite characteristics of natural and physical resources:*
- (h) *the protection of the habitat of trout and salmon:*
- (i) *the effects of climate change:*
- (j) *the benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy.*

2.29 Section 8 of the RMA requires all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act to take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The functions of the Councils and purpose of the Proposed Plan

2.30 The Councils have extensive functions under s31 of the RMA for the purpose of giving effect to the Act's sustainable management purpose, as follows:

- a. *The establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies and methods to achieve integrated management of the effects of the use, development, or protection of land and associated natural and physical resources of the district (s31(1)(a)).*
- b. *The establishment, implementation, and review of objectives, policies and methods to ensure that there is sufficient development capacity in respect of housing and business land to meet the expected demands of the district (s31(1)(aa)).*
- c. *The control of any actual or potential effects of the use, development, or protection of land, including for the purpose of - (i) the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards; and (iia) the prevention or mitigation of any adverse effects of the development, subdivision, or use of contaminated land: (iii) the maintenance of indigenous biodiversity: (d) the control of the emission of noise and mitigation of the effects of noise: (e) the control of any actual or potential effects of activities in relation to the surface of water in rivers and lakes: (f) any other functions specified in this Act (s31(1)(b)).*
- d. *The methods used to carry out any functions under subsection (1) may include the control of subdivision (s31(2)).*

2.31 The purpose of the PDP is to assist the Councils to carry out the above functions in order to achieve the purposes of the RMA.

National Policy Statements

2.32 When the PDP was notified on 11 October 2023, the following NPS were in force:

- a. NPS on Electricity Transmission 2008 (**NPS-ET**);
- b. New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 (**NZCPS**);
- c. NPS for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011 (**NPS-REG**);
- d. NPS for Freshwater Management 2020 (**NPS-FM**);
- e. NPS on Urban Development 2020 (**NPS-UD**);
- f. NPS for Highly Productive Land 2022 (**NPS-HPL**); and

g. NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023 (**NPS-IB**).

- 2.33 By virtue of s75(3) of the RMA⁹, the PDP was required to give effect to the provisions of these documents, where relevant. Having said that, we note that the NPS-IB was gazetted and came into force two months prior to the PDP being publicly notified. Therefore, the PDP as notified did not consider or give effect to the NPS-IB due to this timing. Further consideration of the giving of effect to the above mentioned higher order documents, inclusive of the NPS-IB, is undertaken in our subsequent Decision Reports where appropriate¹⁰. Where the NPS-IB is concerned, this is captured in **Decision Report 6**.
- 2.34 It is also worth noting that a Proposed Natural Hazard Decision-Making (NPS-NHD) was produced in 2023, which seeks to inform decision-makers on how to consider natural hazard risk in planning decisions relating to development under the RMA. The draft NPS was subject to public consultation at the end of 2023. The Ministry for the Environment is currently working on the proposed NPS-NHD to incorporate feedback from submissions and has indicated that further public consultation on the draft NPS-NHD will be undertaken in 2025.
- 2.35 For completeness, the current Government has also signaled a potential review of the NPS-FM and NPS-HPL. Nevertheless, these NPS remain 'on the books' for the purposes of our consideration of the PDP and submissions to it and it follows that the obligation in s75(3) to consider and give effect to all NPS in their current form continues to rest with us. This is a requirement that the Panel has kept foremost in its mind in each of the subsequent topic reports that comprise our decisions on submissions to the PDP.

The Regional Policy Statement and Natural Resources Plan

- 2.36 As with the requirement to give effect to each NPS, the RPS for the Wellington Region must also be given effect to by the PDP. The RPS was adopted by GWRC in February 2013 and became operative in April that year. The current version was updated in 2022 and again in 2023 to include reference to the housing bottom lines for the Wellington 'Tier 1' urban environment, as required by the NPS-UD.
- 2.37 The RPS is also subject to Proposed Change 1, the focus of which is to give effect to the NPS-FM and NPS-UD and address issues relating to climate change, indigenous biodiversity and high natural character. Some amendments to the RPS arising from Proposed Change 1 which are intended to give effect to the NPS-FM and as a 'freshwater planning instrument', are subject to a different process under Part 4, Schedule 1 RMA rather than proceeding through on a standard Part 1, Schedule 1, RMA track.
- 2.38 Hearings into submissions on Proposed Change 1 to the RPS were held between June 2023 and April 2024. Decisions on submissions were publicly notified by GWRC in October 2024 and the period for appeals on those decisions ended on 18 November 2024.
- 2.39 We note that freshwater objectives and policies introduced into the RPS by way of Proposed Change 1 and intended to give effect to the NPS-FM are beyond challenge as there are no avenues for appeal under the freshwater planning process. However, we are obliged to consider how much weight to give other provisions introduced by Proposed Change 1 and subject to the Part 1, Schedule 1 process in this context.

⁹ s75(3) of the RMA 1991

¹⁰ Noting that the NPS-IB was amended by the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 to adjust the timeframes relating to the giving of effect to the NPS. The implications of this are a matter addressed in **Decision Report 6**

- 2.40 In response to a request from the Panel¹¹, Reporting Officers, in collaboration with GWRC staff, provided us with an inventory of RPS Proposed Change 1 provisions that are subject to references (appeals) to the Environment Court¹². This inventory indicates to us that decisions on a broad range of topics relevant to the preparation of district plans have attracted appeals, include provisions relating to managing development in urban and rural areas, regionally significant infrastructure, transportation choices, natural hazards, ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions. Notwithstanding that the provisions are subject to appeal, they signal a significant shift in regional direction, are implementing national direction and must be given weight and genuine thought and attention.
- 2.41 As noted earlier, under s75(4) of the RMA, district plans must "*not be inconsistent*" with regional plans. Under s74(2)(a) of the RMA, district plans must "*have regard to*" proposed regional plans. The NRP was made operative by GWRC in July 2023. It contains rules affecting the use and development of natural resources that come under the jurisdiction of GWRC with respect to s30 of the RMA.
- 2.42 The NRP is subject to Plan Change 1. Mirroring amendments to the RPS, Plan Change 1 is intended to amend the NRP to give effect to the NPS-FM (in part). Plan Change 1 to the NRP falls into the category of proposed regional plans that the PDP must have regard to.
- 2.43 Hearings on that change scheduled from November 2024 through to October 2025. However, the hearing are currently paused effective from 26 June 2025. The remaining hearing processes for PC1 are on hold until 2026, with a report back to the Panels by the Council on a proposed way forward due within one month of the details of the amended National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management being finalised.
- 2.44 Notwithstanding the pause in hearings, we are required to consider how much weight should be attributed to Plan Change 1, noting that it is still progressing through the Schedule 1 process. As a general rule, the further through the process, the greater the amount of weight a proposed plan (or proposed plan change) can be accorded. Given that hearings are yet to be completed on these provisions we are only able to afford them limited weight.
- 2.45 Accordingly, we refer to pertinent provisions in the RPS (including those provisions introduced by Proposed Change 1 that are beyond challenge) relevant to each hearing topic in our subsequent decision reports.

National Environmental Standards

- 2.46 There are nine NES currently in force:
- a. NES for Air Quality 2004;
 - b. NES for Sources of Human Drinking Water 2007;
 - c. NES for Electricity Transmission Activities 2009;
 - d. NES for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health 2011;
 - e. NES for Telecommunication Facilities 2016;

¹¹ Via Minute 9, dated 4 December 2024

¹² Supplementary Reply Statement – Response to Minute 9: Status of Provisions in Plan Change 1 to RPS, undated

- f. NES for Freshwater 2020;
 - g. NES for Marine Aquaculture 2020;
 - h. NES for Storing Tyres Outdoors 2021; and
 - i. NES for Commercial Forestry 2023.
- 2.47 Each of these documents provides for nationally consistent management of the respective topics to which the standards relate and include technical standards and other methods. These standards will usually override provisions in a district or regional plan; however, the Act enables provisions in a plan or a resource consent to prevail in relation to certain uses and where expressly enabled by a particular NES.
- 2.48 We address the substance of the various NES' in the decision reports where relevant.

Other statutory considerations

- 2.49 Under s74(1)(ea) of the RMA, territorial authorities must prepare and change their district plans *"in accordance with"* a national policy statement, a New Zealand coastal policy statement, and a national planning standard. Under s75(3), district plans must *"give effect to"* any national policy statement, a New Zealand coastal policy statement, a national planning standard and any regional policy statement. Under s74(2), territorial authorities must *"have regard to"* any proposed regional policy statement or proposed regional plan, management plans and strategies prepared under other Acts, relevant entries on the New Zealand Heritage List / Rāangi Kōrero, and the extent to which the plan needs to be consistent with the plans or proposed plans of adjacent territorial authorities. Finally, under s74(2A), they must *"take in account"* any relevant planning document recognised by an iwi authority and lodged with the territorial authority, to the extent that its content has a bearing on the resource management issues of the district.
- 2.50 We acknowledge that the Joint Committee has demonstrated its regard to these matters in its oversight on the preparation of the PDP. Further, each report prepared on behalf of the Councils under s42A of the RMA has specifically detailed relevant information relating to s74 matters, and the Panel has also had regard to the relevant matters to the extent relevant to our role.
- 2.51 The purpose of the first set of National Planning Standards that came into force in 2019 is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of New Zealand's planning system by providing a nationally consistent structure, format, definitions, noise and vibration metrics and electronic functionality and accessibility for district and other RMA plans.
- 2.52 We acknowledge that the Joint Committee oversaw a process of aligning the then draft PDP to ensure compliance with the National Planning Standards prior to notification¹³.
- 2.53 The overview s32 Evaluation Report contains a detailed description of national, regional and local management plans and strategies, other legislation, Treaty settlements and statutory acknowledgements relevant to the preparation of the PDP¹⁴. There are currently no iwi management plans in place for the Wairarapa.

¹³ Refer Section 3.2.1, Section 32 Evaluation Topic Report – Overview and Strategic Direction

¹⁴ Refer Sections 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 5.1 and 5.3, Section 32 Evaluation Topic Report – Overview and Strategic Direction
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***Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters)
Amendment Act 2021***

- 2.54 The previous Government amended the RMA to oblige certain councils to introduce Medium Density Residential Standards into their district plans, as a means to give effect to the NPS-UD.
- 2.55 Under the NPS-UD, Masterton meets the definition of an 'urban environment'¹⁵ and MDC consequently assumes the status of a 'Tier 3' local authority. No other settlements or local authorities in the Wairarapa are so defined. The relevant policies and requirements for Tier 3 councils are more limited than for Tiers 1 and 2. Tier 3 councils are not obliged to introduce Medium Density Residential Standards into their district plans. There is, however, still a strong national directive for intensification, and Tier 1, 2, and 3 councils must, at all times, provide at least sufficient development capacity to meet expected demand for housing and for business land over the short term, medium term, and long term.
- 2.56 To the extent that it is a relevant consideration to the PDP, the direction provided under the RMA (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act and the NPS-UD has been addressed in the individual Section 32 and s42A Reports and we make further comments on this in the subsequent decision reports, where appropriate.

Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024

- 2.57 The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 came into force in October 2024. The Act amends the Resource Management Act 1991, and several pieces of national direction, including the NPS-FM, NPS-IB and NES-F.
- 2.58 To the extent that there are relevant considerations with respect to the PDP, the changes made to national direction are addressed in the subsequent Decision Reports.

¹⁵ 'means any area of land (regardless of size, and irrespective of local authority or statistical boundaries) that: (a) is intended to be, predominantly urban in character; and (b) is, or is intended to be, part of a housing and labour market of at least 10,000 people'

3 Report format and approach

Guide to report format

- 3.1 As noted at the outset of this report, we have produced 11 Decision Reports on submissions to the PDP. **Table 3** below provides a full list of each Decision Report title and topics.

Hearing Streams	Report #	Topic
1	1	Strategic Direction and General Matters
2	2	Urban and Open Space Zones
3	3	Rural Zones
4	4	Māori Purpose Zone
5	5	Overlays Part 1: Historic Heritage, Notable Trees, Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori
6	6	Overlays Part 2: Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity, Natural Features and Landscapes, Coastal Environment, Natural Character and Public Access
7	7	(General) District Wide Matters: Energy, Network Utilities
8	8	(General) District Wide Matters: Transport, Subdivision, Financial Contributions
9	9	(General) District Wide Matters: Contaminated Land, Hazardous Substances, Natural Hazards
10	10	(General) District Wide Matters: Activities on the Surface of Water, Light, Noise, Signs and Temporary Activities
13	11	Rezoning
11	12	Designations (all other Requiring Authorities excluding MDC, CDC and SWDC)
12	12	Designations (MDC, CDC and SWDC)
14	N/A (see 4.2 below)	'Integration' matters

Table 3: Decision Report Index

- 3.2 For the record, there is no decision report for HS14 dealing with 'integration' matters. This is because the matters covered in that hearing stream have been integrated into the appropriate decision reports.
- 3.3 Each decision report is essentially self-contained; however, where there are matters that require integration across multiple topics/hearing streams, the relevant reports record this.
- 3.4 As noted in Table 3, **Decision Report 1** relates to the Strategic Direction section in Part 2 of the PDP. To be clear, the report also addresses submissions to Part 1 of the PDP (Introduction and General Provisions).

- 3.5 The Strategic Direction objectives that we have determined are similar to, but differ in a number of important respects from, the objectives that were notified in the PDP. This is the result of our having evaluated them in a comprehensive manner, often referred to in planning jargon as taking both a 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach to their formulation. That is, we have endeavoured to ensure that the objectives' role in assisting the Councils to address the key issues they have identified for the districts so as to achieve the purpose of the RMA is clearly stated, while ensuring that all of the non-strategic objectives, policies and other provisions proposed in Parts 2 to 4 of the PDP align with, implement or achieve these objectives in some way. In this way, our approach has been to ensure that the PDP operates as an integrated whole.
- 3.6 To further assist submitters' navigation of our decision reports, reference should be made to the summary table of decisions on each submission point that are attached (as '**Appendix 2**') to our **Decision Reports 1 to 11** for the respective topics. These tables provide our decisions on every submission point (and associated further submissions). Our decisions are a mixture of 'accept', 'reject' and 'accept in part'. The basis of these decisions in terms of evaluation and findings can be found in our findings on the issues identified and evaluated in each report. Consequently, although not every individual submission point is specifically discussed in the issues evaluation section of each report, the decision on every such point can be found in the table in **Appendix 2** of each decision report. Where our decision varies from a Reporting Officers' recommendation, then this will be discussed within the relevant decision report at the appropriate point.
- 3.7 The outcome of our decisions are the annotated chapters of the PDP showing the final amendments in 'track change' format to the provisions made since notification¹⁶. The amended provisions are attached as '**Appendix 3**' of our respective decision reports. Each report also contains an '**Appendix 4**' which is a clean copy of the provisions as they appear following the amendments shown in **Appendix 3** having been implemented.
- 3.8 In our decision reports we have not undertaken a wholesale renumbering of the PDP's provisions where we have decided to amend the provisions. The type of renumbering will generally fall within two categories:
- a. Where we have added a new provision such as a rule or policy we have added a "New" reference to distinguish it from the proceeding and subsequent policy or rule numbers.
 - b. Where we have reordered the sequence of provisions we have not sought to capture the renumbering (i.e. we retained its original numbering) so that readers of the reports can easily find it.
- 3.9 The renumbered provisions as they will appear in the decisions version of the PDP are shown in **Appendix 4** of each decision report.

¹⁶ Track changes are shown as a mixture of annotations including strikeouts for deletions and underlining for additional text. All such changes are shown in coloured text

Our overall approach in making decisions

- 3.10 Section 32 of the RMA requires:
- a. the provisions to be examined as to whether they are the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives; and
 - b. as part of that examination, that:
 - i. reasonable alternatives within the scope afforded by submissions on the provisions and corresponding evidence are considered;
 - ii. the efficiency and effectiveness of the provisions is assessed;
 - iii. the reasons for our decisions are summarised; and
 - iv. our reports contain a level of detail commensurate with the scale and significance of the changes made.
- 3.11 With respect to our role as a Panel, s32AA additionally requires that our evaluation is to be focused on changes to the proposed provisions arising since the notification of the PDP and the associated s32A reports.
- 3.12 The s42A Reports prepared by Reporting Officers provide a comprehensive summary of submissions made on the PDP in respect of each hearing topic and the issues they raised in respect of the PDP provisions proposed. The s42A Reports summarise the submission points and assess them under a series of headings that (following some introductory comments and background material) correspond to the key issues raised in submissions associated with the relevant chapter (or mapping content) of the PDP. To assist readers, we have structured our decision reports using that same format.
- 3.13 To avoid unnecessary repetition or duplication, we have adopted the approach of focusing our written analysis on those aspects of each s42A Report where:
- a. we disagreed with the reasoning and/or recommendations in the s42A Report;
 - b. material provided to us by submitters, either in the form of evidence or representations, called into question the reasoning/recommendations in the s42A Report; and/or
 - c. the Councils' Reporting Officer, having considered the evidence or representations of submitters, and following questioning from the Panel, altered their initial recommendations to us, as set out in their Reply Statements.
- 3.14 If we do not refer to an individual submission or group of submissions on a particular matter addressed during the relevant hearing, or discuss the reasons for our decisions on it, that is because, having reviewed the submissions alongside the evidence and representations from submitters, and the commentary, recommendations and reasoning in the relevant s42A Report and associated Reply Statements, we have accepted (and accordingly adopted) the s42A authors' final recommendations to us.
- 3.15 This means that our decision reports must be read in conjunction with each relevant s42A Report and Reply Statement. Those s42A Reports and Reply Statements are part of the public record and are available on the PDP website.

- 3.16 Our decision reports, accordingly, take the form of an 'exceptions' report. It follows also that where we accept the recommendation in a s42A Report or Reply Statement that provisions in the PDP should be amended, we accept and adopt the s32 or s32AA evaluations contained in the s42A Report for the purposes of s32AA of the RMA, unless otherwise stated. This may also include the s32 or s32AA assessments provided by submitters where Reporting Officers rely on those.
- 3.17 Where we do not accept the recommendations of the s42A Report and consider that a provision in the PDP should be changed, our decisions have been specifically considered in terms of the obligation arising under s32AA of the RMA to undertake a further evaluation of the amended provision. Our evaluation for this purpose is not contained in a separate evaluation document or tabulated evaluation within our reports. Rather the evaluation required by s32/s32AA is contained within the discussion and reasoning leading to our conclusions, set out in the decision reports.

Amendments to the PDP

- 3.18 We have also made a variety of other changes to the PDP to improve its clarity, consistency and useability, as well as to correct syntactical, grammatical or spelling errors.
- 3.19 Generally, we have relied upon the ability to decide minor amendments or corrections under clause 16(2) of the RMA's First Schedule, having first satisfied ourselves that the respective amendments are sufficiently inconsequential. Clause 16(2) enables local authorities to make amendments to proposed plans, with recourse to the Schedule 1 process, to alter any information, where such an alteration is of minor effect or may correct any minor errors.
- 3.20 In some cases, we have relied upon the accepted ability to make minor or non-substantive amendments to wording that do not alter meaning or fact¹⁷, but merely improve understanding and thus application of the provisions.
- 3.21 All substantive amendments we have decided on are within the scope afforded by submissions in our assessment.

Scope of amendments to the PDP

- 3.22 In some instances, we have made changes to the provisions of the PDP that differ from the provisions that were notified. These go beyond the minor amendments or corrections provided for under clause 16(2) of the RMA's First Schedule referred to in the previous section. Our power to make more substantive changes is expressly contemplated by clause 10(2)(b) of the First Schedule of the RMA which confirms that our decisions on the PDP provisions and matters raised in submissions may include matters relating to any consequential alterations necessary to the PDP arising from submissions, as well as any other matter relevant to the PDP arising from submissions.
- 3.23 This does not limit our power to merely accepting or rejecting a submission, but to adapting the drafting of the PDP provisions to deal with the realities of multiple, and often conflicting and cross-cutting, submissions across all or some of the PDP including submissions prepared without professional help¹⁸.
- 3.24 Our ability to amend the PDP is not unlimited, however, as any amendment must be within

¹⁷ Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council [2014] NZEnvC 070 at [13]

¹⁸ Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council [2014] NZEnvC 070, affirming Countdown Properties (Northlands) Limited v Dunedin City Council (1993) 2 NZRMA 497

scope, or otherwise permissible. In this regard, it is well established that a substantive modification to a proposed plan must be raised by and within the ambit of what was reasonably and fairly raised in submissions¹⁹. This evaluation must be approached in a realistic workable fashion rather than from the perspective of legal nicety²⁰. Any amendment *"will usually be a question of degree to be judged by the terms of the proposed plan change and the content of the submissions"*²¹.

- 3.25 The limitations on the scope to modify a plan change after it has been notified are also designed to ensure that, procedurally, there is an opportunity for the matter to be addressed in a further s32 evaluation, and that there has been an opportunity for those potentially affected by the change to participate²².
- 3.26 The clarity of the summary of submissions required by clause 7 of the First Schedule plays an important role in this regard. We have kept these principles in mind when considering and confirming any changes to the PDP.
- 3.27 If amendments we have decided on are not able to be identified as a specific form of relief in a submission it is because we have been satisfied that, when read as whole, the submission effectively raised the issue in substance²³, the proposed amendment to the PDP in response did not go beyond what was fairly and reasonably raised in the submissions²⁴, and no person would be prejudiced (in a procedural sense) by the amendment proposed.
- 3.28 Where we have been concerned that amendments sought by persons at the hearing of their submission went beyond the scope of their submission, or were otherwise impermissible, we have noted that in the respective decision reports.

¹⁹ Vernon v Thames-Coromandel District Council [2017] NZEnvC 2, at [11], summarising Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council [2014] NZEnvC 070

²⁰ Vernon v Thames-Coromandel District Council, at [11], summarising Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council and citing Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc v Southland District Council [1997] NZRMA 408 (HC)

²¹ Vernon v Thames-Coromandel District Council, at [11], summarising Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council and citing Countdown Properties (Northlands) Ltd v Dunedin City Council (1994) 1B ELRNZ 150; [1994] NZRMA 145 (HC), at pages 171-172 and 166. This has been adopted in a number of cases including by the High Court in Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Inc v Southland District Council [1997] NZRMA 408 (HC) and General Distributors Ltd v Waipa District Council (2008) 15 ELRNZ 59 (HC)

²² Vernon v Thames-Coromandel District Council, at [11], summarising Environmental Defence Society v Otorohanga District Council, citing Clearwater Resort Ltd v Christchurch City Council HC Christchurch AP34/02, 14 March 2003

²³ See Johnston v Bay of Plenty RC EnvC A106/03

²⁴ e.g., Atkinson v Wellington RC EnvC W013/99

4 Concluding comments by the Panel

Parties' assistance to us

- 4.1 We wish to acknowledge the efforts of all parties in assisting us in our role. Plan review processes are demanding for all parties involved and we are grateful for the professionalism, patience and helpfulness we have received.
- 4.2 The hearings were conducted professionally and as set out in our Hearings Procedures in **Minute 2**, in some instances where this was appropriate, we encouraged and facilitated further dialogue and narrowing of issues between the s42A authors and their expert colleagues, and planners and other experts representing submitters. This was either in the form of expert conferencing or further clarification discussions convened by the s42A authors. In each case the outcomes of this further discussion and dialogue were recorded for us to consider in either the relevant s42A Report or Reply Statement.
- 4.3 We also sought legal submissions from counsel representing various parties' regarding a number of matters and record our appreciation of that advice.

Concluding comments and observations of the Panel

- 4.4 The release of these decision reports marks a long and comprehensive process by several entities, which the Panel wish to acknowledge.
- 4.5 The Panel acknowledges that engagement on the PDP has been extensive and ongoing. We note and have viewed the full history of the engagement with all key stakeholders which is well documented in the background and engagement reports which formed part of the section 32 evaluations for each of the PDP topics.
- 4.6 We were interested and encouraged to hear that at the very start of the process the Councils, through the Joint Committee, established a register for those interested in the PDP, which was drawn on in process up to and including notification. We understood that this captured a significant 'representative percentage' of those interested in the PDP. We also took comfort that there was regular engagement with iwi partners including the iwi authorities within relevant districts.
- 4.7 We commend the Councils on that process which included an 'open door' policy and reached out to numerous key groups and stakeholders through open days, sector meetings, working groups and many individual meetings or phone calls.
- 4.8 The effort expended on ground work and early engagement is we believe reflected in the relatively uncontested nature of much of the content of the PDP as represented by the comparatively low volume of submissions in opposition.
- 4.9 The end result is a comprehensive PDP that addresses the current national and regional policy framework and more recent challenges facing the districts since the Operative District Plan was adopted. The Councils have achieved this valuable 'runs on the board' while other local authorities have chosen to push pause on plan reviews in light of the previous (and now abandoned) resource management law reforms. Producing such a plan while navigating this complex and fluctuating policy environment represents a commendable achievement.