

*Mihimihi*

*Kristie introduce her and her role for Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust, in particular:*

I have a role in liaising between Council and the wider community, and the iwi of Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai, in particular, in overseeing consultative processes and the partnership between the Council and iwi.

The general intention of our submission is not only to uphold our values as mana whenua but to provide insight into what aspects of the Plan since being Proposed have provided for better efficiency in natural resource management, in particular through the consenting process, and have ensured that good outcomes for applicants, submitters and Council as a regulator can be more easily be achieved.

Firstly, where practical we believe strongly that for the Plan to be effective, it should always indicate where appropriate, timeframes within which objectives will be delivered. We believe this is particularly important in order to indicate the degree of priority accorded to different aspects of the Plan.

However, we wanted to stress today that one of the most significant aspects of the Proposed Natural Resources Plan, is the inclusion of mahinga kai as a concept and value in the objectives. The inclusion of mahinga kai reflects the identification of mahinga kai as a national value in the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management 2014, but also reflects the high importance of mahinga kai as a taonga to tangata whenua in the region.

Identifying mahinga kai as a value to safeguard is critical to Greater Wellington Regional Council ensuring that it upholds its responsibility under Section 6(e) of the RMA to recognise and provide for the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites and other taonga. In our view, 'mahinga kai' is the most adequate concept that encapsulates the key to that relationship, that being that: the life of our people is always able to be supported by the natural environment, and this surely has to be a bottom-line of the life-supporting capacity that Council are required to protect under the RMA.

Te Āti Awa are currently leading research nationally that has addressed how the health of mahinga kai can be measured. Te Āti Awa Charitable Trust led a project to develop a freshwater mahinga-kai health index that since it's development in 2015 has been used as a tool for the purpose of providing mana whenua assessments of resource consent applications. The use of this tool has enabled applicants, Council and iwi alike, to assess the effects of applications to the relationship we hold with our taonga, such as rivers and streams in a way that's tangible and easy to understand. In our view, we have been able to move away from an approach to resource management where assessments of effects to Māori can be quite vague, to assessments that use more specific measurements which are better understood by all. From what we have seen, this has clear benefits to applicants, in that there is a degree of transparency as to how effects to mana whenua values are likely to be assessed.

Method Two of the plan, which concerns the development of a kaitiaki information strategy, is also a critical aspect of ensuring that Council can uphold it's responsibilities under Section 6(e). Building on the success of our mahinga-kai health index, Te Āti Awa are piloting a kaitiaki monitoring tool that can be adapted by other iwi to ensure that there is the same transparency and consistency, where appropriate, as to how to assess effects to mahinga-kai and Māori relationships with their taonga. Without having this method, there where will be no clear direction from Council as to how effects to

mahinga kai and Māori relationships to taonga should be assessed. This has been a significant issue for applicants, iwi and Council in the past.

We have since the development of the index, used it to assess significant resource consent applications and through doing so, we identified certain effects that the applicant was able to easily remedy, in order to gain our support for the consent.

Related to this, is the way in which mahinga kai and customary use, is treated in the Plan. As noted in our submission, the Plan tends to put ecosystem health and mahinga kai together, and contact recreation and Māori customary use together. This gives the perception that they are synonymous with each other. However, this simply is not the case. The concepts of ecosystem health, and mahinga kai are, whilst related, quite different. As we have demonstrated, the way in which they are measured are also quite different. Similarly with contact recreation and Māori customary use; there are specific measures for contact recreation which have little direct relationship to measuring Māori customary use. We are requesting that in the interest of clarity, they are separated. The related objectives and policy should obviously remain, but should simply be repeated for both mahinga kai and customary use separately.

We also wish to address the way in which Council's Tiriti o Waitangi obligations under the RMA and the Local Government Act are reflected. We don't believe that this is reflected explicitly enough. Under Section 3.3 of the Proposed Plan, that being 'Māori Relationships', Objective 15 states that 'Kaitiakitanga is recognised and mana whenua actively participate in planning and decision-making.'

There is a clear omission here of the concept of 'partnership', partnership being the fundamental principle of Te Tiriti. We believe it's appropriate to change the wording of this objective to make explicit that mana whenua actively participate in planning and decision-making as Treaty partners. This would be consistent with the Memorandum of Partnership between mana whenua and GWRC.

In relation to the recognition of kaitiakitanga, we note that there is not clarity in the plan about how kaitiakitanga will be recognised across the work that Council does. Whilst there is Policy 20, which relates to the exercise of kaitiakitanga, and method 2, regarding information, there is little guidance in the plan as to how kaitiakitanga will be exercised across the operation of Council. Te Āti Awa has indicated directly to Council in the past, that they find Te Hunga Whiriwhiri, the Māori department of Council, totally ill-equipped and lacking the expertise to adequately support this within Council, and instead what has worked well, is more direct work at the operational level between Council and mana whenua. This was in fact trialled with the drafting of the plan, where a 'kaitiaki group' was established and utilised to provide expert input into the plan to great success. It is for this reason that we have recommended that some sort of change to the policy, or perhaps addition of a method that formalises this group be created, and that this would be the ideal way to ensure that Objective 15 and Policy 20 are adequately implemented, rather than just being words in the plan.

Another key aspect of the Plan that has provided a more efficient approach to planning is the inclusion of Schedules B and C. These schedules have been very effective in signalling to applicants up front that there may be a need to approach iwi regarding any potential effects at the beginning of the planning process rather than at the end. In the past, all applications would be provided to iwi once completed and submitted, and when there were then potential significant effects to these sites, it was often much more difficult to address these when the planning for the proposed works was well developed or completed. This could often result in a more lengthy process to resolve this. What we are finding now, is that by having significant sites scheduled, planners know right at the beginning of the development of a proposal that there may be a need to consult with iwi regarding

potential effects. This has enabled planners to contact us early in the process and incorporate any relevant information regarding potential effects into the planning process, in order to avoid a final proposal that iwi may have issue with. This has really made the consent process a lot more efficient.

We want to put particular emphasis on the point that there should not be the perception that having these schedules creates restrictions for applicants; the way they have worked since the plan was proposed is as a trigger, in that applicants are better informed about potential effects and can easily see where these sites are located. In the time since the Plan was Proposed, we are yet to oppose one of the consents involving any of the scheduled sites, but instead have been able to rely on a more proactive approach from applicants.

Thank you for taking the time listen to our comments today.

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