

BEFORE THE PROPOSED FAR NORTH DISTRICT PLAN HEARINGS PANEL

UNDER THE

Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER OF

of a hearing into submissions on the
Proposed Far North District Plan – Hearing
15B (Special Purpose Zones)

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHAEL IAN FARROW (LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT)

ENGAGED BY THE MOTUKIEKIE OWNERS (SUBMITTER 32)

Dated 12 May 2025



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Introduction

1. My name is Mike Farrow.
2. I am a landscape architect and the principal of Littoralis Landscape Architecture, operating out of Whangarei.
3. My engagement by the Motukiekie Owners (the “Lockwoods”) is in relation to Submission 032 to the Proposed Far North District Plan (the “Proposed Plan”), which questions the application of the Natural Open Space Zone to Motukiekie, one of the chain of islands that occupy the outer Bay of Islands.
4. The brief to my involvement has been to undertake a review of a Development Concept that accompanied and informed Submission 032 and to undertake an assessment of the potential landscape, natural character and visual amenity effects of that proposal. A second strand of my engagement has been to consider the character of Motukiekie and compare that identity to other, privately owned portions of other islands within the Bay of Islands and to then provide commentary upon the zonings that apply to those various areas of private ownership.
5. As a further and subsequent task, I was asked to provide ecological commentary upon the three additional Building Areas that are identified under the updated Development Plan, and their immediate surroundings. This reporting has not been completed at the time of lodging this evidence but will be available to Council shortly thereafter.

Qualifications and Experience

6. My qualifications are a Diploma of Horticulture, Diploma of Landscape Technology, Bachelor of Science (earth sciences, including marine and terrestrial ecology) and a post graduate Diploma of Landscape Architecture. My BSc was undertaken at the University of Auckland, whilst the other qualifications were from Lincoln College/Lincoln University.
7. My experience as a landscape architect spans 35 years, with 27 years of the period having seen me based in Whangarei and focussing largely upon projects in Northland.

8. The spectrum of my work tends to be broad, ranging from structure planning and urban design, to development planning and design, open space design and management, ecological and coastal restoration, infrastructure integration and landscape planning and assessment. As a result of my Northland base, a large proportion of these undertakings are in relatively natural environments and commonly associated with the coast. I am therefore very accustomed to identifying and working within sensitive landscapes and areas that have heightened cultural values.
9. Of particular relevance to the matter of Motukiekie has been my role as the author of the 1995 *Far North District Landscape Assessment* (LA4), where I mapped and recorded the characteristics of outstanding and significant landscapes across the District and was then centrally involved in the drafting of provisions, reporting on submissions and contributing to hearings for what is now the Operative Far North District Plan.
10. More recently I prepared the landscape assessments of Far North and Kaipara Districts as part of the 2016 Northland Regional Mapping Project that informs the Regional Policy Statement for Northland and is the basis of the landscape mapping for the Proposed Far North District Plan. I was responsible overall for the landscape components of the Mapping Project and worked closely with team colleagues who addressed natural character and the extent of the coastal environment in that commission.
11. I have been called upon many times by Far North District Council or Northland Regional Council to provide review advice on proposed developments around the Bay of Islands over the past two decades. Amongst the subjects of those reviews was the construction of the house that now exists upon Motukiekie and, later, the nearby boardwalk and pontoon.
12. In 2021 I was engaged by the Lockwoods to work closely with an architect who was designing a caretaker cottage for the island and to prepare an assessment report to inform a resource consent application, which was subsequently granted.
13. My most recent involvement with Motukiekie has been in connection with the Lockwoods' submission to the Proposed Plan and their related Development Plan, commencing in 2023. I will outline what that role has entailed later in this statement.

14. I have also been a periodic user of the Bay of Islands as a recreational “boatie” during the past 40 years, so that informal use provides me with an insight into how people utilise and experience the Bay.

Compliance with Code of Conduct

15. Whilst not directly applicable to this hearing, my evidence has been prepared in compliance with the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. The evidence that I am presenting is within my sphere of expertise and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

Summary of Submission

16. The details of the submissions made on behalf of the Lockwoods are set out fully in evidence of Mr Hook of Envivo and, of course, in the submission and further submission themselves, so I will not duplicate that detail here. Similarly, Mr Hook’s evidence contains close reference and scrutiny to various provisions that apply or could apply, so my evidence also defers to his expertise in those matters.
17. In essence the Lockwoods’ submissions opposed the Natural Open Space zoning intended for Motukiekie by the Proposed Plan and propose a zoning that is instead more aligned to that assigned by the Proposed Plan to Moturoa, either as an expansion of that existing special purpose zone or a new special purpose zone applying only to Motukiekie.
18. A central part of the submission is to follow the example set by the Moturoa Island Zone by identifying a number of defined building areas on Motukiekie for additional dwellings under a Development Plan.
19. My evidence will cover the following matters:
 - Recent involvement and assessment report
 - Zoning status
 - Landscape, Natural Character, Visual Amenity and Ecological Effects
 - Summary and conclusions

Recent involvement and assessment report

20. As mentioned in the Experience section that precedes, I was engaged by the Lockwoods in 2023 through a brief that has seen me:
 - critically review the 4 additional Building Areas that had been originally identified by an initial Development Plan (as per the Lockwoods further submission to the Proposed Plan) of September 2023 and to provide advice on refinement as may be necessary;
 - update the Development Plan as may be required to reflect any resulting refinements; and
 - prepare a *Broad Assessment of Landscape, Natural Character and Visual Effects* (April 2024) (“my assessment”), that includes commentary upon the appropriateness of the zoning intended for Motukiekie under the Proposed Plan in terms of use and character.
 - Prepare Building Guidelines for future buildings on Motukiekie.
21. A copy of my assessment and its related attachments are attached to this statement of evidence. It is intended that this document be treated as a central component of my evidence.
22. In undertaking my assessment, I completed a detailed walkover of the accessible parts of Motukiekie, particularly in those areas initially proposed as Building Areas under the Development Plan as it stood at that time. I also viewed the island from surrounding waters, as the photographs in Attachment Two of my assessment testify. This focussed scrutiny of Motukiekie was a useful refresher to my earlier visits to the island and my wider background of work and recreation in that part of the Bay of Islands.
23. As a result of this fieldwork, I recommended to the Lockwoods that the previously proposed Building Areas 4 and 5 (in the Development Plan of September 2023) be amalgamated to a single Building Area lying between those two initially indicated locations, where the terrain was more conducive to low impact construction and

enhanced screening to inward views is present, thereby avoiding potential adverse effects upon natural character values, landscape values, and visual amenity. The Lockwoods accepted that recommendation and the new Development Plan has been adjusted to only provide for 3 additional Building Areas accordingly, as seen in the attachments to my assessment.

Zoning status

24. As Mr Hook outlines in his evidence, Submission 32 proposed two alternatives, one being a new special purpose zone for Motukiekie that is consistent with the Moturoa Island Zone (with identified building platforms), and the other to expand the Moturoa Island Zone to include Motukiekie (with identified building platforms).
25. The further submission expanded on the second of those alternatives and provided potential provisions specific to Motukiekie, a body of rules for development based on those applied to Moturoa, a development plan with 4 additional building areas, now rationalised to 3 additional building areas as outlined earlier. Those building areas would be additional to the existing building area containing the residence on the island and a consented caretaker cottage nearby.
26. When briefed at the time of my engagement (following the lodgement of the further submission in September 2023 mentioned above) I was asked by the Lockwoods to consider the character of the Motukiekie and to compare that identity with other privately owned/managed land on the islands of the Bay, noting the zoning of those areas under the Proposed Plan.
27. As I commenced responding to that part of my brief through a landscape/natural character lens, I noted that Motukiekie benefits from a long-standing conservation initiative that might be construed as aligning it to being a Natural Open Space that solely shares values with publicly owned islands within the Bay.
28. Drawing in the other dimensions of Motukiekie, with its substantial house, adjacent foreshore developments, well developed service tracks, helipad, maintenance buildings and water tanks, sets it apart from the DoC-administered islands. In terms of detailed landscape and natural characteristics, I consider that Motukiekie is more closely allied to

the ends of Motuarohia / Roberton Island, Otehei Bay, and Moturua, where the character is influenced by private ownership and development and is quite distinct from the public Natural Open Space, noting that Motuarohia and Moturua have also received similar private restoration and management efforts to those that have been devoted to Motukiekie.

29. It is noteworthy that the currently developed part of Moturua, the private parts of Motuarohia and Otehei Bay on Urupukapuka Island all have a Rural Production zoning applied under the Proposed Plan and that a Special Purpose Zone applies to Moturoa which has more substantial and extensive private ownership. By comparison, Motukiekie wholly in private ownership of the Lockwoods.
30. On the basis of the landscape character and natural character of Motukiekie, it is my opinion that a Special Purpose zoning that carries a consistent structure to that which applies to Moturoa is most appropriate, since its provisions could be tailored to the unique combination of Motukiekie's particular characteristics, the private ownership status of the island and ensuring that continuing management and conservation efforts and limited future development of Motukiekie result in its qualities continuing to improve through ongoing pest and weed control and planting of natives.
31. Mr Hook has prepared refined provisions for a proposed Motukiekie Island Special Purpose Zone (MKIZ) and those are provided as **Attachment 3** to his evidence. The rules of the that zone would provide for a range of conservation-based activities and helicopter transport as being permitted but for construction of dwellings on the proposed Building Areas of the Development Plan to have a discretionary activity status.
32. In my opinion, these provisions form an appropriate basis for managing the heightened landscape and natural character values of Motukiekie, particularly since they include the suite of Special Information Requirements contained in proposed MIKZ-S3 and provide a linkage to the Principles and Guidelines that were appended to my assessment. This tiering of status, process and detail creates a robust and predictable sequence that provides confidence that the level of potential effects found by my assessment would be the reality.

Landscape, Natural Character, Visual Amenity and Ecological Effects

33. My assessment reporting described Motukiekie in terms of its biophysical elements and development that has occurred, along with some analysis of its setting within the Bay of Islands. It also acknowledged the Outstanding Natural Landscape status of the island under both the Operative and Proposed Plan and recorded the characteristics of the wider Bay of Islands unit that it sits within. The High Natural Character overlay that applies to Motukiekie was also outlined.
34. The defined 30 x 50m building areas are noted in my assessment as being deliberately situated on or near the primary ridge of Motukiekie, where an access track exists or is in close proximity. Ordinarily, buildings situated upon ridgelines bring heightened adverse landscape, visual amenity and natural character effects since they create a sense of dominance and break the skyline of these defining landforms. The Coastal Environment provisions of the Proposed Plan recognise that potential risk.
35. However, in the case of Motukiekie, the primary ridgeline – and certainly those parts of that landform associated with the proposed Building Areas – features well established, predominantly native vegetation, that has a height of at least 8m. The extents of the defined Building Areas exclude almost all of the most substantial mature native trees that were present prior to the Lockwoods' purchase of Motukiekie, with existing vegetation beyond current clearings but still within the defined Building Areas typically consisting of minor restoration plantings or naturally occurring kanuka or manuka.
36. Large, established native trees are found beyond the perimeters of proposed Building Areas 3 and 4 and form part of the framework to those Areas. Building Area 2 includes some established pohutukawa within it (along with a number of Norfolk Island pines) and those pohutukawa would need to be identified and conserved in any future development of that Building Area under the Building Design Guidelines that are proposed.
37. It is the continuity and scale of this well-established vegetation that surrounds each of the identified Building Areas that would entirely encapsulate a 5m high building that responds to the limit defined by CES1 and the Guidelines.

38. The substantial, three storied residence that exists on the island (and partially seen in Figure 6 of Mr Hook's evidence) forms a useful benchmark for comparison. Despite its considerable scale and the less contiguous vegetation that surrounds it (when compared to that associated with the proposed Building Areas), the existing residence barely registers its presence with those who enjoy the nearby waters. Photographs on the cover of my assessment and in the attachments to that report illustrate this situation. The nearby shoreline modifications, boardwalk /pontoon and clustering of exotic Norfolk Island pines are a far more emphatic signal of occupation than the house itself.
39. It is with that example quietly in mind that my assessment analysis led to a conclusion that the potential adverse effects of future buildings situated within the defined Building Areas of the updated Development Plan would be almost entirely benign and less than minor. These findings were conditional upon such future buildings complying with the parameters that are set out in the Guidelines appended to my assessment and the knowledge that any building would receive the scrutiny of a required resource consent application as a discretionary activity, including the Special Information requirements contained in proposed MIKZ-S3 in Attachment 2 to Mr Hook's evidence.
40. In addition to preparing my assessment, I am about to undertake an assessment of the 3 additional Building Areas and their immediate settings from an ecological perspective. A copy of that reporting will be provided to Council after the lodgement of this statement.
41. In advance of that detailed investigation, my initial site inspection of 2023 suggested that:
- Building Areas 2 and 3 coincide largely with existing clearings.
 - Large pohutukawa and other long-standing native trees are outside Building Areas, with the exception of Building Area 2, where a small number of pohutukawa provide a feature that any future building would need to be designed around.
 - There are no apparent specific lizard habitats or conditions suiting uncommon native species such as orchids.
 - Building Area 4 is in an area characterised by a predominance of relatively immature kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) in the order of 8m in height, making it unremarkable in relation to the overall ecology of the island.

42. The extremely limited effects associated with realising the Development Plan under a new MKIZ are considered to be inoffensive to the intent of other, general provisions of the Proposed Plan. In particular, those relating to Outstanding Natural Landscapes (specifically NFL-O2 and P2), Natural Character (including NFL-P2), Coastal Environment (including CE-02, a. and d.) would not be compromised. The proposal would also satisfy Objective 3.14 of the Regional Policy Statement for Northland, and Objectives 7.3 and 8.4 of the Regional Coastal Plan for Northland

Summary and Conclusion

43. Motukiekie is an integral component of the Bay of Islands and has a powerful connection to the surrounding seascape, with heightened levels of landscape and natural character value and sensitivity as a result. Those values are recognised by Motukiekie's status as an outstanding natural landscape and being also defined as having high natural character values.
44. In its current form, the island reflects the later stages of a transition from pastoral grazing to one dominated by a more complete, diverse, indigenous ecology. The significant effort and resources that have been contributed to that process by the conservation efforts of the Lockwood family are noteworthy in the island's evolution to its current state.
45. The Natural Open Space zoning of Motukiekie under the Proposed Plan is inconsistent with the nature and use of the island as a privately owned title, with the type of Special Purpose zoning applying to nearby Moturoa being more appropriate.
46. The Motukiekie Island Special Zone that is being proposed by the Lockwoods is more accurately tailored to the character of the island and the aspects that relate to its private ownership and therefore is more appropriate than the Natural Open Space Zone.
47. The proposed Development Plan that would allow for three additional future building areas reflects a concerted effort to avoid any wider adverse effects whilst providing the potential to apply for consent to insert relatively modest buildings into this sensitive setting to cater for the growing family's needs. The specific definition of Building Areas

provides certainty upon where structures could be created and the way that surrounding, containing vegetation would have to be conserved.

48. The requirement for any of the future buildings to pass through a discretionary consent application process that is informed by proposed Special Information Requirements provides assurance that due scrutiny will be applied to ensuring that any effects are as contained as this assessment predicts. The proposed Building Guidelines would inform the designer of the relevant considerations to ensure that any future buildings have a low impact on landscape values and minimal visual effects. I am further assured by the knowledge that any future building will be subject to a separate Discretionary Activity consent application and notification assessment.
49. In recognition of the extremely contained nature of the identified Building Areas and proposed parameters that would apply to development within those Areas, any landscape, natural character and visual amenity effects have been assessed by me to be almost entirely benign and less than minor. Similarly, potential adverse ecological effects arising from such development are anticipated to also be less than minor. The actual level of that effect will be more accurately known following completion of an assessment that will occur after the lodgement date of this evidence.
50. Undertaking the proposed Development Plan under a new MKIZ would not be in conflict with the intent of other, general provisions of the Proposed Plan. Similarly, the proposed MIKIZ is consistent with intent to protect the natural character of the coastal environment and the associated landscape values under the relevant objectives of the NZCPS, Regional Policy Statement for Northland and the Regional Coastal Plan for Northland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Farrow', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Mike Farrow

Landscape architect
Dated: 12th May 2025