

Hearing 15B: New Special Purpose Zone topic

Matakā Residents Association Incorporated

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF EVAN CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

Introduction and Background

1. I present this evidence on behalf the Mataka Residents Association Incorporated (**Matakā**) in relation to Matakā Station.
2. I set out in my evidence my qualifications and experience and my background with Matakā Station. I managed the design, consenting, construction and sale Matakā Station and the development from 1999 to 2005 and since then I have been a member of the board of Matakā Residents' Association from nearly all of the time since. As a result, I am very familiar with the details of the property and dynamics and issues relating to the project.
3. When I first looked at Matakā in 1999, the way to do coastal development at that time was to get a contract on beachfront land and maximise lots on the beach; and if you could buy coastal land including a beach, you extracted profit by developing the most amount of lots as possible as near to the beach. Development and conservation were seen as opposing forces.
4. The three dominant characteristics of Matakā Station are that it is:
 - (a) rugged, beautiful and has extraordinary views;
 - (b) large; and
 - (c) dominated by its natural character with hundreds of hectares (c.350ha) of native trees and plants preserved, long coastlines largely untouched, hundreds of hectares (c.700ha) of open farmland space and a nearly unique population of kiwi.
5. Matakā Station also has a natural inbuilt advantage in tackling conservation fighting against weeds and predators and protecting kiwi. It is at the end of a peninsula.
6. The combination of unusual and special features of Matakā described above became the driving force behind our campaigns for the regulatory structure we obtained and our approach to marketing Matakā Station. We concluded that purchasers would be drawn to Matakā by its beauty, size and natural character - the native bush areas, rolling farmland, extensive roads, farming, history, beaches, views and the kiwi. We knew that in turn those buyers would support the conservation

activities we planned on Matakā and that support in turn would create the environment which is special. And over time, that proved to be true.

7. I understood intuitively when we purchased Matakā Station that conservation does not just happen, but rather has to be paid for, fought for, and defended. However, that point has been continually reinforced by our experience in developing and caring of the land over last 25 years. The scheme created by the original consents created a delicate network of obligations and rights which has underpinned and funded the conservation, environment, heritage, public access and development objectives originally agreed with the Council in 2000. Protecting or repairing the farmland and conservation areas from pests, weeds and extreme weather has proved to be a continuous and expensive task. That network is delicate, complex and interdependent.
8. As Matakā Limited developed and consented the plan for Matakā station, it became more and more clear that:
 - (a) Matakā Station, the plan, and the array of environment, public and private interests needed (and still need) to be managed and protected as one entity;
 - (b) the plan had to be built specifically on the land and conditions of Matakā, which is large enough and a significant public footprint to justify a single overall plan; and
 - (c) the consents and conditions issued by Council, the use of covenants and consent notices in titles to properties, and the use of the Matakā Residents' Association Inc as a single management entity has provided stability and commitment over time.

Conservation

9. A conservation plan for Stage One was drawn from the contours and catchments within the property and from the plan to link catchments and existing planted areas. The proposal to conserve of inland conservation areas proposed contained specific planting and protection strategies. The additional 157ha of new pohutukawa planting and grazing pasture in the coastline was designed as conservation and visual amenities. Matakā Limited also proposed an ongoing predator control program.
10. The results of the conservation plan proposed by us and accepted by Council is significant for kiwis. Attachment One to my statement of evidence contains the 2017 report from the leading kiwi experts from Kiwis for Kiwi (now Save the Kiwi)

constituted the first formal survey of the kiwi population at Matakā Station. They advised that the survey suggested that at that point Matakā supported remarkable number of kiwi. A further study visit in 2021 by Kiwi for Kiwis utilising some of the same experts (including the CEO of DOC) but without a formal survey and relying on call counts (the traditional count method) suggested that the kiwi population had increased – perhaps to a significant degree.

Landscape and Visual Outcomes

11. The visual component of Matakā Station's impact on the Bay of Islands is driven on its scale, beauty and natural state and character. The Stage One subdivision consent application included an extensive and detailed visual assessment of Matakā Station and the development proposed, prepared by D J Scott Associates, together with individual site assessment. The report and the application proposed measures to protect and enhance visual qualities of Matakā. The Stage Two subdivision application contained very detailed visual and landscape plans and draft conditions for each lot. Those lots were more visible than the Stage One lots and the conditions were tight and detailed. The lots were consented in 2004 and incorporated the proposals we had proposed.

Iwi, History, Archaeology and Access

12. Matakā's relationship with Ngāti Torehina (over the last 25 years through Mr Hugh Rihari and his whanau) is embedded in the DNA of Matakā Station and its residents. It is a taonga – a gift held as precious by us. Matakā Limited concluded an agreement with iwi for access to Matakā Station on an ongoing basis. We further agreed with iwi and Council an access to the Rangihoua Māori Reserve and the Marsden Cross Historic Reserve through Matakā Station.
13. The creation of Oihi Road and the access to Marsden Cross and Rangihoua pa had the effect of taking away the very private character of approximately 50-60ha of Matakā Station on both sides of Oihi Road and transferring 20ha above Marsden Cross to iwi and the church. This removed those areas from development for house sites. This move created the foundation of the subsequent creation of the Rangihoua Heritage Park now occupying the part of Matakā Station above Marsden Cross – and now an important site for Ngāti Torehina, iwi more generally, the churches, and tourists. The Rangihoua Heritage Park creates an important link in the historic and cultural trail in the Far North developed by the Government, Council and private stakeholders. The cost of this action was only possible due to the returns generated by the development of Matakā Station.

14. The consent conditions protecting iwi sites and our arrangement with iwi have become a central part of the identity of Matakā Station and the Association. The protections of iwi sites and access to Matakā Station and Marsden Cross and Rangihoua pa are embedded in the rules of the Association and in the land covenants of Matakā titles. Owners at Matakā recognise and value that aspect of their community and it is valuable to Matakā and the public.

Farm Development

15. The two main operations within Matakā Station undertaken to maintain the property and achieve the conservation and public benefits are the farm business and the work of the farm and conservation teams. Those activities are funded by the development of houses and the ongoing contributions by owners (currently \$35,000 per annum per lot for 30 lots). The farm currently operates over 700 ha and 350 ha of conservation land maintaining the land controlling and eradicating invasive weeds and protecting against and repairing frequent storm damage. The farm team and the conservation staff and contractors maintain both the conservation land (and the adjacent land where most of the weeds arise especially on the coastal edge).
16. In addition funding for conservation works enabled by subdivision at Matakā Station the Matakā Station scheme also provides operational and governance structures to implement these works. In that regard, the farm and conservation operations are developed and ultimately controlled by a management and governance structure comprising owners, contributing an unusual level and breadth of international business and professional experience.

The Planning Framework and the Matakā Station Precinct

17. The operational, governance and funding structure discussed above has been built over the last 20 years and has proved to be robust and effective in managing both operations and the investment of owners and the substantial capital they have at stake.
18. A total of nine owner's houses and one additional staff house have been built at Matakā Station; and three owner houses are in development. Matakā has built a Beach Lodge at Matakā Beach and eight boatsheds and maintains various outdoor facilities and approximately 20kms of walking trails. The last two sales of bare land lots were concluded at \$4,000,000 and \$4,500,000. The cost of construction of coastal large houses are now very high – on top of the land cost.

19. The beauty and natural character of Matakā Station, with the limited and exclusive nature of development have produced very high rates payments as rates are directly driven by capital values and Funding for expensive and extensive conservation work.
20. The fact that the Association exists, and enforces the rules and land covenants and consent conditions, has allowed purchasers and owners to invest with confidence. The Design Guidelines discussed in the statement of evidence of Mr Goodwin and the consents conditions relating to placement and design of dwellings have also allowed owners to invest and to support the conservation and other benefits being delivered.
21. Those private components of the Matakā arrangements have demonstrated over a long period that they are more than capable of supporting and implementing the overall concept plan and vision for Matakā Station. The relationship between Matakā Limited (and its successors) and Council has created the current planning framework and has built a base for the mutually supporting pillars of development, conservation, archaeology and mātauranga Māori.
22. From my perspective it is heartening to be able to give evidence in a plan review process where I can say that the planning framework and other management mechanisms put in place at Matakā Station have worked as envisaged over 20 years ago such that I can now say that Matakā has a proven track record in delivering high value coastal rural residential (limited) subdivision.
23. Fundamental to the environmental and financial success of the Matakā Station is the confidence and certainty that the scheme gives owners that they will be able to develop dwellings, access and caretakers' cottages on identified house sites.
24. In that regard, certainty through planning provisions is critical to the ongoing success of Matakā, and the ongoing conservation and land management efforts I have described. Certainty is important for Matakā Station owners, including expectations to build on the properties they purchased, the linkage of that and maintaining land values to ensuring that owners with sufficient capital continue to own, risk of not having certainty to build on house sites to the conservation outcomes.
25. As a long term key participant, the thing I worried most about in the PDP process when notified was the risk that the PDP as notified would result in the loss of common purpose between Matakā and Council.

Concluding Comments

26. I am very encouraged by what has been achieved in the process so far and by the positive recommendations set out in the Officer's Report that the Matakā Station Precinct be adopted. That in my view appropriately recognises the special values of the place and the interrelationship between the protection and enhancement of these and the need for certainty. The Precinct proposed by Matakā and supported by officers will restore the balance which is required to avoid losing the benefits we have all created.
27. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Panel.