

PROPOSED FAR NORTH DISTRICT PLAN
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS
PANEL

PREAMBLE REPORT

March 2026

This **Preamble Report** contains an explanation of how the recommendations have been presented in **Recommendation Reports 1 to 17**. It does not contain any recommendations per se.

The **Preamble Report** is to be read in conjunction with all **Recommendation Reports 1 to 17**.

The Independent Hearings Panel for the purposes of hearing submissions and further submissions on the Proposed Far North District Plan comprised Independent Commissioners - Robert Scott (Chair), Bill Smith (Deputy Chair), Alan Watson, Siani Walker, Peter Kensington, and Elected Councillors - Felicity Foy, Kelly Stratford, Hilda Halkyard-Harawira and Steve McNally. All commissioners hold current certification under the Making Good Decisions programme.

Hearings Panels comprising a minimum of two members were formed for the purpose of hearing submissions and further submissions on individual topics. The membership of each Hearings Panel is set out in each of **Recommendation Reports 1 to 17**.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Term
AIRPZ	Airport Special Purpose Zone
ASW	Activities on the Surface of Water Chapter
CAR	Carrington Estate Special Purpose Zone
CE	Coastal Environment Chapter
CIA	Cultural Impact Assessment
CMA	Coastal Marine Area
Corrections	Department of Corrections
CORZ	Corrections Special Purpose Zone
DOC	Department of Conservation
EW	Earthworks Chapter
FDS	Future Development Strategy
FNDC/Council	Far North District Council
FNHL	Far North Holdings Limited
GFA	Gross Floor Area
GMO	Genetically modified organism
GRZ	General Residential Zone
HA	Heritage Area Overlay Chapter
HBA	Housing and Business Development Capacity Assessment
Hearing Report	The report prepared by FNDC pursuant to s42A of the RMA
HH	Historic Heritage Chapter
HIZ	Heavy Industry Zone
HOSZ	Hospital Special Purpose Zone
HPFZ	Horticulture Processing Facilities Zone
HNC	High Natural Character
HS	Hazardous Substances Chapter
I	Infrastructure Chapter
IB	Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity Chapter
KCZ	Kauri Cliffs Special Purpose Zone
KKWSP	Kerikeri Waipapa Spatial Plan
KiwiRail	KiwiRail Holdings Limited
KO	Kāinga Ora
KRT	Kororāreka Russell Township Zone
LIGHT	Light Chapter
LIZ	Light Industrial Zone
LINZ	Land Information New Zealand
LGA	Local Government Act 2002
MDRZ	Medium Density Residential Zone
ME	Mineral Extraction Chapter
MEZ	Mineral Extraction Zone
MfE	Ministry for the Environment
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs Mark
MIZ	Moturoa Island Special Purpose Zone
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MPZ	Māori Purpose Special Purpose Zone

MUZ	Mixed Use Zone
NATC	Natural Character Chapter
NES	National Environmental Standard
NES-AQ	National Environmental Standards for Air Quality Regulations 2004
NES-CF	National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry Amendment Regulations 2023
NES-CS	National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health Regulations 2011
NES-DW	National Environmental Standards for Sources of Human Drinking Water Regulations 2007
NES-ETA	National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission Activities Regulations 2009
NESPF	National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry 2017
NES-FW	National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Regulations 2020
NES-MA	National Environmental Standards for Marine Aquaculture Regulations 2020
NES-TF	National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities Regulations 2016
NFL	Natural Features and Landscapes Chapter
NH	Natural Hazards Chapter
NIEP	Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park Special Purpose Zone
NOISE	Noise Chapter
NOSZ	Natural Open Space Zone
NRPS	Northland Regional Policy Statement 2016
NPS	National Policy Statement
NPS-EG	National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011
NPS-ET	National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2021
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-I	National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025
NPS-UD	National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020
NT	Notable Trees Chapter
NZCPS	New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010
OBZ	Orongo Bay Special Purpose Zone
ODP	Operative District Plan 2009
ONF	Outstanding Natural Landscape
ONL	Outstanding Natural Feature
OSZ	Open Space Zone

PA	Public Access Chapter
PDP or Proposed Plan	Proposed Far North District Plan 2022
Preamble Report	Introductory report to all Hearings Panel recommendation reports
QR	Quail Ridge Special Purpose Zone
REG	Renewable Electricity Generation Chapter
Right of reply	Council officers right of reply report
RMA	Resource Management Act 1991
RPROZ	Rural Production Zone
RPS	Regional Policy Statement
RLZ	Rural Lifestyle Zone
RRZ	Rural Residential Zone
RSZ	Rural Settlement Zone
SASM	Sites and areas of significance to Māori
SARZ	Sport and active recreation
SIGN	Signs Chapter
SNA	Significant Natural Area
SPZ	Special Purpose Zone
SUB	Subdivision Chapter
SZ	Settlement Zone
TA	Temporary Activities Chapter
Te Tiriti	Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi
The Panel/Hearings Panel	The Independent Hearings Panel
TLP	The Landing Precinct
Top Energy	Top Energy Limited
TSL	Treaty Settlement Overlay Chapter
TCZ	Town Centre Zone
TRAN	Transport Chapter
Transpower	Transpower New Zealand
TW	Tangata Whenua
Waka Kotahi/NZTA	Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency
WEZ	Waitangi Estate Special Purpose Zone

PREAMBLE REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 Report Structure

This report has been prepared by the Independent Hearings Panel appointed to hear and make recommendations with respect to submissions on the Proposed Far North District Plan (**PDP**).

This report is an overarching report that provides context and is relevant to all recommendation reports. It should be read in conjunction with each subsequent recommendation report.

This report does not include any recommendations of the Panel. Instead, it sets out the following:

- a) records background and procedural matters of relevance to our recommendations in the subsequent recommendation reports;
- b) describes the statutory framework for our consideration of the PDP provisions and matters raised in submissions and in our reporting thereon;
- c) provides a guide to the format and approach adopted for each of the subsequent recommendation reports; and
- d) records some preliminary comments from us about key issues we have identified that span across the PDP as a whole.

The material in this report is largely factual and provides context that each of the subsequent recommendation reports draw upon. Our aim in centralising these contextual matters within this introductory report is to avoid duplication of the same common material in the subsequent recommendation reports. To that same end, readers of the subsequent recommendation reports on each topic should have regard to this report.

1.2 Procedural Matters

This report has been prepared by the Independent Hearings Panel appointed to hear and make recommendations with respect to submissions on the PDP.

1.2.1 Matters Considered in this Section

This section of the report addresses various matters of process and procedure leading up to the completion of the hearings. Specifically, the matters we 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;
- d) procedural matters arising during the course of the hearings.

1.2.2 The Panel's Role and the Purpose of Reports

In accordance with s34A(1) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (**RMA**) we were appointed by Council as an Independent Hearings Panel of Commissioners comprising five independent members and four elected Council members:

Independent Members

- Robert Scott (Hearings Panel Chairperson).
- Bill Smith (Hearings Panel Deputy Chairperson).
- Alan Watson.
- Peter Kensington.
- Siani Walker (Commissioner with tikanga Māori expertise).

Elected Council Members

- Kelly Stratford
- Felicity Foy
- Hilda Halkyard-Harawira
- Steve McNally.

We confirm that all Hearings Panel members have completed the Making Good Decisions programme run by the Ministry for the Environment and have been certified as independent commissioners.

Our role as a Hearings Panel is to hear all submissions and further submissions and prepare recommendation reports to the Council on the submissions and further submissions. The Hearings Panel assumed the responsibility for the hearings process from May 2024.

The purpose of this report and the subsequent reports relating to each hearing topic is to satisfy the Council's various decision-making obligations and associated reporting requirements under the RMA.

1.2.3 The Development of the PDP

Notification

The Far North District Council (**the Council**) notified the Proposed Far North District Plan on 27 July 2022 with submissions closing on 21 October 2022. During the original submission period the Council received 580 submissions containing just over 8,600 submission points.

A summary of decisions requested (submissions) was notified on 7 August 2023 and closed on 4 September 2023. A total of 549 further submissions were received. In addition, two addendums to the summary of decisions requested were notified on 13 March 2024 and 26 November 2024.

The 13 March 2024 addendum to the summary of decisions requested contained corrections to five existing submissions points and added 11 submissions points that had been omitted. Further submission on this addendum closed on the 28 March 2024.

The 26 November 2024 addendum to the summary of decisions requested corrected the summary for two submission points.

Late Submissions

The Panel issued [Minute 2](#) to address a number of late submissions and further submissions and sets out the statutory process followed under sections 37 and 37A with regard to these submissions.

Proposed Plan Variation 1

On 14 October 2024 the Council notified Proposed Plan Variation 1 (Minor Corrections and Other Matters) to the Proposed Far North District Plan.

Proposed Plan Variation 1 seeks to make minor amendments, to correct minor errors, amend provisions that are having unintended consequences, remove ambiguity and improve the clarity and workability of provisions. Proposed Plan Variation 1 also includes amendments to the zoning of some properties, and the Coastal Flood Hazard areas. Specifically, the following amendments are proposed:

- Coastal Hazard Layer - Insert Coastal Flood Hazard layers in the areas that were missed on the notified PDP maps.
- Corrections to zoning of properties in the following zones: Open Space Zone, Hospital Zone, Rural Production Zone, Airport Zone, Kororareka Russell Township Zone.
- Numerous wording corrections and updates.

The submission period for Proposed Plan Variation 1 closed on 12 November with a further submission period closing on 10 December 2024. There were 17 submissions but some were determined to be out of scope as confirmed in Panel Minute 20. No further submissions on those original submissions were received.

The Hearings Panel has the delegation to make recommendations on Proposed Plan Variation 1 and the submissions received.

The submissions received on Proposed Plan Variation 1 were heard with the relevant reporting topic alongside the Proposed District Plan hearings, and our recommendations are included in our recommendation reports as ~~striketrough~~ or underline as with other recommended changes in response to submissions.

Clause 16 Amendments

In addition, the Council has notified corrections to a number of minor errors to the PDP pursuant to Clause 16(2) of Schedule 1 of the RMA. The corrections were notified on the following dates:

- Clause 16 changes January 2024
- Clause 16 changes June 2024

- Clause 16 changes August 2024
- Clause 16 changes March 2025
- Clause 16 changes June 2025
- Clause 16 changes August 2025
- Clause 16 changes October 2025
- Clause 16 changes December 2025
- Clause 16 changes January 2026.

All of these changes have been incorporated in the Hearings Panel Recommendation Reports as accepted changes (i.e. these are shown as ‘clean’ text and not as ~~strikethrough~~ or underline changes).

1.2.4 Handling of Sensitive Information

The Panel recognises that some evidence in support of submissions contained sensitive information. This is particularly relevant to submissions from various iwi groups with regard to the location and detail regarding sites of significance to Māori. We are also cognisant that some material presented in evidence may be commercially or personally sensitive.

The Panel addressed these issues on a case-by-case basis and was conscious of the need for sensitivity where these issues were raised. Where relevant the Panel used section 42 of the RMA to protect sensitive information. This provision allows the Panel to make an order that information presented at the whole or part of any hearing is prohibited or otherwise restricted from publication or communication.

We had occasion to make such an order with regard to culturally sensitive evidence relating to sites of significance to Māori. In that circumstance the evidence was verbally presented at the hearing but not recorded and that evidence has been kept confidential as a “silent” file by the Council. See **Recommendation Report 12** for further information on this matter.

We had occasion to manage sensitive information pertaining to the circumstances of a submitter seeking a deferment of their evidence and we kept elements of their legal memorandum to us confidential for this reason.

We also had occasion to pause the recording of evidence during Hearing 17 to receive culturally sensitive information.

1.2.5 Hearings and Hearings Structure

Hearings covering all aspects of the PDP commenced in May 2024 and continued until November 2025.

20 hearing topics were organised to facilitate an efficient hearing process.

Table 1 below sets out the various hearings and related topics and the dates each hearing was held. The hearing schedule generally followed the structure of the PDP.

Further details on the hearings programme are also provided throughout this Preamble Report and within the associated directions and minutes.

Table 1 – Summary of PDP Hearings and Topics

Hearing	Reporting Topics	Hearing Dates
Hearing 1 Introduction, General Provisions	Part 1 Strategic Direction Tangata Whenua	27 – 29 May 2024
Hearing 2 Special Purpose Zones	Airport zone Hospital zone Quail Ridge zone	18 June 2024
Hearing 3 Special Purpose Zones	Orongo Bay zone Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park zone Moturoa Island zone	18 June 2024
Hearing 4 Natural Environment Values & Coastal Environment	Natural Character Natural Features and Landscapes Coastal Environment Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity	5 -8 August 2024
Hearing 5 Public Access, Water	Activities on the Surface of Water Public Access	13 August 2024
Hearings 6 and 7 General District-Wide Matters and Genetically Modified Organisms	Earthworks Light Noise Signs Temporary Activities Genetically Modified Organisms	21-24 October 2024
Hearing 8 Residential, Engineering Standards and Mineral Extraction	Open Space zones Engineering Standards Mineral Extraction	19-21 November 2024
Hearing 9 Rural, Horticulture & Horticulture Processing	Rural Wide Issues Rural Production zone Rural Lifestyle zone Rural Residential zone Settlement zone Horticulture Processing Facilities zone Horticulture zone	2 – 5 December 2024
Hearing 10 Māori Purpose Zone* & Treaty Settlement Land Overlay	Māori Purpose zone* Treaty Settlement Land Overlay	26 March 2025
Hearing 11 Energy, Infrastructure, Transport & Designations	Renewable Energy Infrastructure Transport Designations	28 - 30 April 2025

Hearing 12 Historic and Cultural Values	Heritage Area Overlay and Historic Heritage Kororāreka Russell Township zone Notable Trees Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori	27 - 28 May 2025
Hearing 13 Hazards and Risks	Natural Hazards Hazardous Substances	24 June 2025
Hearing 14 Urban Zones	General Residential zone Mixed Use zone Light Industrial zone Heavy Industrial zone	23 – 24 July 2025
Hearing 15A Rezoning General, Kauri Cliffs & Carrington Estate	Rezoning General Requests - Open Space Existing Special Purpose zones Kauri Cliffs and Carrington Estate Special Purpose zone	25 August 2025
Hearing 15B Rezoning Requests for new Special Purpose Zones	Rezoning Requests for new Special Purpose Zones	1 - 2 September 2025
Hearing 15C Rezoning General - Urban and Rural (includes rural requests within Kerikeri-Waipapa Spatial Plan study area)	Rezoning Requests - Urban Rezoning Requests - Rural (includes rural requests within Kerikeri-Waipapa Spatial Plan study area)	29 September – 2 October 2025
Hearing 15D Urban Rezoning Requests for land within Kerikeri-Waipapa Spatial Plan Study Area	Urban Rezoning Requests for land within Kerikeri-Waipapa Spatial Plan Study Area	6-8 October 2025
Hearing 16 Subdivision	Subdivision	28 - 29 October 2025
Hearing 17 General / Miscellaneous / Sweep Up & Tangata Whenua Matters topics	General / Miscellaneous / Sweep Up (including Interpretation, Mapping, Plan Variation 1 and other matters), & Tangata Whenua Matters (including Māori Purpose zone, Treaty Settlement Land Overlay, Areas of Interest Mapping and Tapuaetahi) Paradise Found Development Ltd Rezoning Wiroa Station - Victoria Yorke and Andre Galvin	5 - 6 November 2025

* The Māori Purpose zone rezoning submissions were heard in Hearing 17

All hearings were video recorded and these recordings are available on the relevant hearing page on Council's website and on YouTube. A link to the Council PDP hearings page is here:

<https://www.fndc.govt.nz/Your-council/district-plan/proposed-district-plan/Hearing-1>

The Council's final reply was received on 15 December 2025.

1.2.6 Hearings Panel Recommendations

The Hearings Panel was required to prepare and present recommendations on submissions to the Council by Tuesday 31 March 2026.

The Council will then make a final resolution/decisions on the Hearings Panel recommendations and will notify all submitters of the final Council decisions.

The Hearings Panel has decided to prepare recommendation reports which correspond to each hearing held. This results in a total of 20 hearing reports over Hearing Topics 1 to 17, noting as above, that some hearing topics had sub-topic hearings i.e Hearing Topic 15 was separated into Hearings 15A, B, C and D, and there is a hearing report for each of these sub-topic hearings.

However, in some cases we have combined hearing topic recommendation reports where issues are closely aligned. This has occurred for Recommendation Reports 2 and 3 with regard to existing Special Purpose Zones; and for Hearing 6 and 7 with regard to General District-Wide Matters: Earthworks, Light, Noise, Signs, Temporary Activities and Genetically Modified Organisms.

For each Recommendation Report we have included as Appendix 1 a schedule of hearing attendances for each of the hearings. We refer to those attendees throughout each recommendation report, where relevant. In a number of cases evidence was tabled and we also refer to the tabled evidence where relevant to our recommendations.

We have also included as an Appendix our recommended changes to the PDP provisions. These include the Proposed Plan Variation 1 recommendations, and the Council's Clause 16 amendments.

Further Appendices contain our recommended changes to the PDP maps; and our recommendations on whether submission points should be accepted or rejected, in whole or in part.

We have not included any parts of the notified PDP in our Appendices where there were no changes to them.

1.2.7 Summary of Procedural Minutes as an Appendix

As part of the management of the hearing process, the Panel has issued a series of procedural minutes, as set out in Table 2. Each minute served a different purpose, but in broad terms, they:

- a) Set out procedures to be followed by the parties in preparing their evidence and in readiness for their attendance at the hearings.
- b) Made findings on the acceptance of late submissions and late further submissions.

- c) Sought advice from Council and submitters on legal and/or other substantive matters relevant to a given hearing topic.
- d) Issued directions on revisions to the schedule and amendments to the evidence exchange timetable.
- e) Directions for expert conferencing with regard to specific topics.
- f) Directions for all reasonable requests including criteria to be addressed, evidence exchange and conferencing with Council officers.
- g) Directions regarding the hearing and publication of sensitive cultural evidence.
- h) Resolved various administrative matters arising over the course of proceedings, including (for example) the granting of waivers and time extensions for receiving evidence or other information.

The Panel also issued Interim Guidance on its likely findings for a number of matters on the basis that it had implications for the hearing of other topics.

Table 2 – Summary of procedural minutes

Minute	Subject	Issue Date
1	Procedures for Hearing of Submissions	16 December 2023
2	Late Submissions	9 February 2024
3	Confirmation of Hearing Schedule	11 April 2024
4	Update to Engineering Standards	3 May 2024
5	Response to the Memorandum of Counsel from Waitangi Limited	14 June 2024
6	Revised Hearing Schedule	16 July 2024
7	Request for Council to provide Information relating to Kerikeri/Waipapa being an Urban Environment under the NPS:UD	16 July 2024
8	Revised Hearing Schedule	9 September 2024
9	Delays in responding to Minute 7	7 October 2024
10	Procedure on Late Submission	10 October 2024
11	Expert Conferencing for Hearing 1 – Contaminated Land Chapter	14 October 2024
12	Response to request to defer Hearing 9 and 15A from Ms Campbell-Frear	17 October 2024
13	Infrastructure pre-hearing meetings	30 October 2024
14	Draft Minute 14 Rezoning criteria and process Final Minute 14 Rezoning criteria and process	31 October 2024 2 December 2024
15	Update to Hearing 9 – Rural, Horticulture & Horticulture Processing	5 November 2024
16	Decision on Late Submission	7 November 2024
17	Update to Hearing 8 – Mineral Extraction	13 November 2024
18	Response to the Memorandum of Counsel from Cavalli Properties Limited	25 November 2024
19	Response to the Memorandum of Counsel on the Carrington Estate Zone and Updated Hearing Schedule	13 December 2024
20	Procedural Matters for Plan Variation 1	30 January 2025

21	Update to Hearing 8 – Mineral Extraction and questions to Council Planner	24 February 2025
22	Soil Expert Conferencing on the Horticulture Precinct	16 April 2025
23*	Interim Guidance of the Independent Hearings Panel – Horticulture Zone	12 May 2025
24	Sensitive Information Hearing 12	26 May 2025
25	Provision of evidence exchange timetable for Hearings 15C and 15D	3 June 2025
26	Request to delay Hearings from Te Whanaunui o Ngāti Kura	10 June 2025
27	Māori Purpose Zone topic update to hearing schedule	28 July 2025
28	Request for a partial stay of Hearing 15A from Haititaimarangai Marae Kaitiaki Trust	30 July 2025
29	Provision of evidence exchange timetable for Hearing 15C	28 August 2025
30*	Interim Guidance of the Independent Hearings Panel – Heritage Area Overlays	28 August 2025
31	Amendment to the exchange timetable for reporting on Hearing 15D	5 September 2025
32	Response to Memorandum of Counsel for Paradise Found Developments Limited	5 September 2025
33	Expert Conferencing with Waitangi Estate Limited relating to Hearing 15B	10 September 2025
34	Expert Conferencing for Far North Holdings Limited relating to Hearing 15B	11 September 2025
35	Response to request to be heard at Hearing 17 from Rolf Mueller-Glodde on behalf of submitters Vision Kerikeri, Our Kerikeri Trust, Carbon Neutral Trust, Kapiro Conservation Trust	20 October 2025
36	Response to request on behalf of Oromahoe Landowners to be heard at Hearing 16 and comments on possible procedural fairness at the hearing	22 October 2025
37	Response to Memorandum of Counsel from Kiwi Fresh Orange Company Ltd relating to Hearing 15D	31 October 2025
38	Tapuaetahi submission next steps and timeframe	10 November 2025
39	Request from kiwi fresh orange company limited for expert conferencing	19 November 2025
40	New national policy statements and national environmental standards – request for advice	January 2026
41	New national policy statements and national environmental standards – Recommended response	January 2026
42	New national policy statements and national environmental standards – direction	January 2026

* Interim Guidance

1.3 Re-numbering the PDP following the Panel’s Recommendations

To avoid confusion, where provisions are referenced in the Panel recommendation reports, they use the reference number in the notified PDP and used throughout the hearing process (consistent with numbering of provisions in the relevant Appendix of each recommendation report), unless otherwise stated.

Where new provisions are recommended in the recommendation reports the provisions will require renumbering and re-ordering. This task will be completed when the Council prepares the Decisions Version of the Proposed District Plan (including consequential updates to cross referencing between provisions). Similarly, when a rule changes activity status, it will be relocated to the relevant section of the Plan chapter, with associated change to the provision reference number, when the Decisions Version of the Proposed District Plan is prepared.

2. Statutory Context

2.1.1 Summary of Statutory Requirements

The statutory requirements for the preparation and consideration of the contents of a District Plan are set out in s 31, 32, and 72-77D of the RMA. As the PDP was notified on 27 July 2022, it is this version of the RMA in force at that date that applies to our tasks as a hearings panel.

Key Changes to the RMA Since Notification

- The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2024 includes reforms to:
 - NPS-FM
 - NPS-IB
- RMA Fast Track Approvals Act 2024
- Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025.

National Direction

Where any national policy or environmental standard was notified prior to the hearing, these provisions have been incorporated in the hearing report and addressed at the hearing and in our evaluations and recommendations. The relevant national policy statements and National Environmental Standards that are in effect or have come into effect since notification are discussed below.

With regard to the ten national policy statements and environmental standards that came into effect on 15 January 2026 (i.e. after all hearings had been completed) we have determined (following legal advice) that the Council can only give effect to those documents through a Schedule 1 RMA variation or plan change process. However, where relevant we have had regard to these documents in our recommendation reports. See also Minutes 40-42 which address this matter.

3. Section 32 RMA

In accordance with our understanding of the most recent case law regarding preparation and evaluation of plans under section 32 of the RMA¹ we have adopted the following framework for our consideration and evaluation of the PDP.

General Requirements

- a) The District Plan should be designed to accord with and assist Council to carry out its functions so as to achieve the purpose of the RMA (s31, 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 (s74(1)(ea) and 75(3) RMA).
- d) The District Plan must be prepared in accordance with the National Planning Standard (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 s 30(1) RMA (s 75(3)(c) and 75(4)(b) RMA).
- f) When preparing its District Plan the Council 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 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 (s 74(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 must have regard to the actual or potential effect of activities on the environment, including, in particular, any adverse effect (s76(1) and (3) RMA).

¹ Colonial Vineyard Ltd v Marlborough District Council

Section 32 RMA

- 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 Proposed District Plan (s32(1)(c) RMA).
- B. Each proposed objective in a District Plan (change) is to be evaluated by the extent to which it is the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the RMA (s 32(1)(a)).
- C. The policies and other provisions are to be examined to ascertain whether they are the most appropriate to achieve the objectives by (s32(1)(b) and (2) RMA):
- 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).

Part 2 of RMA

The Purpose and Principles are set out in Part 2 of the RMA.

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 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.*

In achieving the RMA's purpose, section 6 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.*

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.*

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.

3.1 Council Functions

The functions of the Council in relation to plan making are set out under s31 of the RMA and are as follows:

- *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 (section 31(1)(a)).*
- *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 (section 31(1)(aa)).*
- *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 (section 31(1)(b)).*
- *The methods used to carry out any functions under subsection (1) may include the control of subdivision (section 31(2)).*

The purpose of the PDP is to facilitate and assist the Council to carry out the above functions in order to achieve the purposes of the Act.

3.2 National Policy Statements

As set out in each of hearing reports for each hearing topic, the PDP was prepared to give effect to the National Policy Statements that were in effect at the time of notification (27 July 2022). As District Plans must be “prepared in accordance with” and to “give effect to” a National Policy Statement, the implications of the relevant National Policy Statements on the PDP must be considered. Whereas the PDP must be assessed against relevant RMA provisions at the time of notification, the provisions of any national policy statement must be considered at the time decision making.

The national policy statements that were in effects when the PDP was notified are:

- a) NPS for Freshwater Management 2020;
- b) NPS on Urban Development Capacity 2020;
- c) NPS for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011;
- d) New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010; and
- e) NPS on Electricity Transmission 2008.

Since notification of the PDP and prior to the completion of hearings there have been two additional national policy statements that have come into effect:

- National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023 (consolidated with December 2025 amendments);
- National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) (August 2024);

Following the completion of all hearings (and Council right of reply responses) the following national planning instruments came into effect on 15 January 2026:

New and Amended National Planning Instruments Since the Completion of Hearings:

- Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units) Regulations 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025.

Amended National Planning Instruments Since the Completion of Hearings:

- National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land Amendment 2025;
- New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement Amendment 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity Amendment 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management Amendment 2025;
- Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Amendment Regulations 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation Amendment 2025;
- National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Amendment 2025.

By virtue of s75(3) of the RMA the PDP was required to give effect to the provisions of these documents, where relevant.

During the course of the hearings a number of changes were made to a number of these NPS instruments with some of these changes occurring after we heard evidence on topics and PDP chapters where these were of particular relevance. Where necessary we have sought further reporting from Council officers, legal advisors and submitters to address any changes that have occurred. We address a number of these specific changes in the relevant decision reports that follow.

3.2.1 National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity

The National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (**NPS-IB**) came into effect on 4 August 2023, after the PDP was notified for public submissions. The objective of the NPS-IB is to maintain indigenous biodiversity so there is at least no overall loss in indigenous biodiversity from the commencement date of the NPS-IB.

The Government has introduced amendments to the RMA to delay the NPS-IB requirements relating to SNA mapping through the Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Bill (the RMA Amendment Bill). Clause 21 in this amendment bill would essentially disapply the provisions in the NPS-IB relating to SNA mapping for a three-year period. It also proposes to disapply the requirement to give effect to the SNA provisions “as soon as reasonably practicable”. The requirement to implement the SNA provisions within five years after 4 August 2023 is amended to require implementation by 31 December 2030.

3.2.2 National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land

The National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (**NPS-HPL**) took effect on 17 October 2022. The NPS-HPL has a single objective: Highly productive land is protected for use in land-based primary production, both now and for future generations.

As discussed above, the changes to the NPS-HPL take came into effect in January 2026 have not been given effect to as the Panel has resolved that these can only occur through a Schedule 1 RMA variation or plan change process. However, where relevant we have had regard to these recent changes.

3.2.3 National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards and Infrastructure

As discussed above, the new national policy statements that came into effect in January 2026 have not been given effect to as the Hearings Panel has resolved that these can only occur through a Schedule 1 RMA variation or plan change process.

3.3 National Environmental Standards

National Environmental Standards (**NESs**) allow central government to promote the adoption of consistent standards at the regional and district levels.

National environmental standards are regulations which prescribe technical standards, methods or requirement for land use and subdivision, use of the coastal marine area and beds of lakes and rivers, water take and use, discharges, or noise. They can also prescribe technical standards, methods or requirements for monitoring.

A national environmental standard may set a minimum standard, allowing councils to impose stricter standards in their own plans, it may set a 'starting point' standard, allowing councils to impose more lenient standards, or it may be absolute, so that local rules cannot be more lenient or stricter than the standard.

National environmental standards may contain qualitative or quantitative standards, discharge standards, methods for classifying a resource, methods, processes or technologies to implement standards, non-technical methods and standards and exemptions from standards.

There are eleven National Environmental Standards (NESs) currently in force:

- a. National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry 2023
- b. National Environmental Standards for Air Quality 2004 (amended 2011)
- c. National Environmental Standard for Sources of Drinking Water 2007
- d. National Environmental Standards for Telecommunications Facilities 2016

- e. National Environmental Standards for Electricity Transmission Activities 2009 (amended 2026)
- f. National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health 2011
- g. National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (amended 2025)
- h. National Environmental Standard for Marine Aquaculture 2020
- i. National Environmental Standard for Storing Tyres Outdoors 2021
- j. National Environmental Standards for Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Industrial Process Heat 2023.
- k. National Environmental Standards for Detached Minor Residential Units 2025

Each of these documents provide 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 RMA enables provisions in a plan or a resource consent to prevail in relation to certain uses and where expressly enabled by a particular NES.

We address the substance of the NESs in the respective recommendation reports where relevant.

As discussed above the new and amended national environmental standards that came into effect in January 2026 have not been given effect to as the Hearings Panel has resolved that these can only occur through a Schedule 1 RMA variation or plan change process. However, where relevant we have had regard to these most recent changes.

3.4 Northland Regional Policy Statement

As with the NPSs, the Northland Regional Policy Statement (**RPS**) must be given effect to by the Proposed Plan. We note that in May 2016 the Northland Regional Council declared the Northland RPS to be Operative in part with the exception of 1 issue, policy and method:

- (a) Issue 2.6(g) and related parts of the explanation;
- (b) Policy 6.1.2 and explanation; and
- (c) Method 6.1.5 and explanation

Accordingly, we refer to specific provisions of the operative RPS as relevant to each hearing topic in subsequent recommendation reports.

3.5 Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2021.

In 2021 the Government amended the RMA to oblige councils to introduce medium density residential standards (**MDRS**) into their district plans, as a means to give effect to the NPS-UD. These amendments were made some time after the PDP was notified.

The PDP has been prepared under the presumption that the Far North District is not an “urban environment” as defined in the NPS-UD. There was significant debate on this

issue and we have more to say on this matter in our Recommendation Reports for Hearing 1 and Hearing 14. However, regardless of whether the Far North is a Tier 3 local authority or not, it is not subject to the MDRS provisions as they only relate to Tier 1 local authorities, which the Far North clearly is not, and we can safely conclude that the amendments to the RMA above do not apply to the PDP.

3.6 Other Statutory Considerations

The requirement under s74 of the RMA to give regard to matters when preparing a plan extends beyond those documents referred to above to include:

- a) national planning standards;
- b) management plans and strategies prepared under other Acts;
- c) relevant entries on the New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangī Kōrero;
- d) the plans or proposed plans of adjacent territorial authorities; and
- e) iwi management plans.

We note that the PDP was prepared in accordance with the national planning standards. The purpose of national planning standards is to make council plans and policy statements easier to prepare, understand and comply with. They do this by improving the consistency of the format and content.

There are also a number of iwi management plans that are relevant to the Far North District. When the PDP was notified in July 2022, Council had 14 hapū/iwi management planning documents which had been formally lodged with Council, as listed in the PDP section 32 overview report. A number of iwi management plans have been updated since notification of the PDP and these have been taken into consideration in the hearing reports and our deliberations.

4. Report Format

4.1 Hearing Reports Received

Summary of reports

Hearing	Report Topic	Hearing Date
1	Strategic Direction Tangata Whenua Part 1 and general Matters	27-30 May 2024
2 & 3	Special Purpose Zones: Airport Zone Hospital Zone Quail Ridge Zone Moturoa Island Zone Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park Zone Oronga Bay Zone	18 May 2024
4	Natural Character Natural Features and Landscapes, Coastal Environment Ecosystems & Indigenous Biodiversity	5-8 August 2024

5	Activities on the Surface of Water Public Access	13 August 2024
6 & 7	District wide matters Earthworks Light Noise Signs Temporary Activities Genetically Modified Organisms	21-24 October 2024
8	Open Space, Engineering Standards & Mineral Extraction	19-21 November 2024
9	Rural (Rural Production, Rural Lifestyle, Rural Residential & Settlement Zones), Horticulture & Horticulture Processing	2-5 December 2024
10	Māori Purpose & Treaty Settlement	24-26 March 2024
11	Energy, Infrastructure & Transport	28-30 April 2024
12	Historic and Cultural Values	26-29 May 2025
13	Hazards and Risks	23-25 June 2025
14	Urban Zones	23-24 July 2025
15A	Rezoning General, Kauri Cliffs & Carrington Estate	25 August 2025
15B	Rezoning - New Special Purpose Zones	1-2 September 2025
15C	Rezoning General - Urban and Rural	29-30 September 2025
15D	Rezoning Kerikeri-Waipapa	6-8 October 2025
16	Subdivision	28-29 October 2025
17	General / Miscellaneous / Sweep Up	5-6 November 2025

Each recommendation report is essentially self-contained. However, where there are matters that require integration across multiple topics/hearing streams, the relevant reports record this.

4.2 Approach to Recommendation Reports

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 recommendations are summarised; and
 - iv. our report contains a level of detail commensurate with the scale and significance of the changes recommended.

With respect to our role as a Panel, s32AA additionally requires that our evaluation to be focused on changes to the proposed provisions arising since the notification of the PDP and its s32A reports.

The hearing reports prepared by Council staff 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 provisions of the PDP. The hearing reports comprehensively 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 and in the interests of consistency, we have structured our recommendation reports using that same format.

To avoid unnecessary repetition or duplication, we have adopted the approach of focusing our written analysis on those aspects of each hearing report where:

- a. We disagreed with the reasoning and/or recommendations in the hearing report;
- b. Material provided to us by submitters, either in the form of written or verbal evidence or representations, where this called into question the reasoning/recommendations in the hearing report; and/or
- c. The Council reporting officer, having considered the evidence or representations and evidence of submitters, and following questioning from the Panel, altered their initial recommendations to us, as set out in their right of reply.

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 recommendations in relation to it, that is because, having reviewed the submissions alongside the written and oral evidence and representations from submitters, and the commentary, recommendations and reasoning in the relevant hearing report and associated right of reply, we have accepted (and accordingly adopted) the hearing report authors' final recommendations to us. This means that our recommendation reports should be read in conjunction with each relevant Council hearing report and right of reply. The Council hearing reports and their rights of reply are part of the public record and are available on the Hearing page of the FNDC website.

In that regard, where we accept the recommendation in a hearing report or right of reply that provisions in the PDP should be amended, we accept and adopt the evaluation contained in the hearing report for the purposes of s32AA of the RMA, unless otherwise stated.

That said, where we do not accept the recommendations of the hearing report and consider that a provision in the PDP should be amended, our recommendations 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 recommendation reports. Rather the evaluation required by s32AA is contained within the discussion and reasoning leading to our conclusions and ultimate recommendations.

4.3 Other Amendments to the PDP

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. Generally, we have relied upon the ability to recommend 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. 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 fact, but merely improve understanding and thus application of the provisions.

These recommendations have come from evidence we have received from the Council officers, the evidence from a number of submitters and from our own observations and analysis.

4.4 Conduct of the Participants

We wish to acknowledge the efforts of all participants in assisting us in our role. The review of an entire district plan is a demanding process for all parties involved and we are grateful for the professionalism, patience and helpfulness we have received from all participants.

We endeavoured to make the hearings as informal as possible and to make those submitting evidence to us (in particular those who were not familiar with Council hearing processes) as comfortable and relaxed as possible.

The hearings were conducted in an excellent spirit and we were able to have an excellent dialogue with submitters and Council officers alike including a number of occasions where we received simultaneous exchanges between submitters and Council officers in response to our questions.

4.5 Scope of Amendments to the PDP

We have recommended a significant number of changes to the provisions of the PDP that differ from the provisions that were notified. Our power to do so is expressly contemplated by clause 10(2)(b) of the First Schedule of the RMA which confirms that our recommendations on the provisions of the PDP and matters raised in submissions may include matters relating to any consequential alterations necessary to the proposed plan arising from submissions, as well as any other matter relevant to the proposed plan arising from submissions. This phrasing does not limit our power to merely accepting or rejecting a submission, but to adapting the drafting of the Plan to deal with the realities of multiple and often conflicting submissions, including submissions prepared without professional help.

That said, we have taken care that any amendments recommended by us remained in scope, or otherwise permissible. If recommended changes 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 substance, the proposed amendment to the PDP in response did not go beyond what was fairly and reasonably raised in the submissions, and no person would be prejudiced (in a procedural sense) by the amendment proposed.

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 hearing reports.

4.6 Recognition of Tangata Whenua

We acknowledge that the Far North District is socially and culturally unique and Māori make up more than 50% of the district's population with 17% of the land within Māori land tenure.

As a Panel we have given careful consideration to the means for recognising and providing for tangata whenua values, aspirations and matters in the PDP, inclusive of, but not limited to, our consideration of the direction provided by iwi management plans.

In this wairua (or spirit) we would like to record here our recognition and appreciation of the mahi that a number of parties have made throughout the development of the Plan and latterly during the course of the hearings process. In particular, we acknowledge:

- a) The Council's active support for tangata whenua involvement in plan making and the preparation of the PDP;
- b) The cultural evidence presented by mana whenua, emphasising the importance of the PDP as a means of cultural recognition and in future planning and decision making;
- c) The value, role and genuine influence of the expert iwi submitters and experts in raising and promoting meaningful changes to better reflect Part 2 and Te Tiriti matters, not least their commendable diligence and consistency and their organisation of expert cultural evidence brought to us;
- d) The respectful participation of other parties in supporting and looking towards implementing the tangata whenua strategic objectives; and
- e) Finally, the positive, collective role of Council officers and iwi representatives in reaching agreement in principle relating to Sites of Significant to Māori and other matters with a view to potential future plan changes.

5. Acknowledgements

The hearing of submissions has been a process that started with Hearing 1 in late May 2024 and the final hearing was concluded on 6 November 2025. The process involved the preparation of hearing reports from Council officers four weeks before the hearings, the preparation of submitter evidence two weeks before the hearings, the presentation of rebuttal and supplementary evidence and a Council right of reply following the hearings. For many submitters their appearance at the district plan hearing was the first appearance at the Council hearing.

5.1 Submitters

Firstly, we wish to acknowledge and thank the submitters for their attendance at the hearings, some of which appeared before us several times. Submitters are often the only parties not being paid to attend the hearing and we also acknowledge that in many cases

submitters needed to arrange leave from work, childcare or simply give up their personal time to participate in the hearing process.

The Hearings Panel recognises that we are fortunate to live in a country where public participation in the plan making process is enabled and encouraged and we were delighted with the level of participation from submitters, including detailed and passionate evidence on many topics. In most cases the lay evidence presented by non-expert submitters was of a high quality and we appreciated the opportunity to engage with the submitters to better understand their evidence through our questions.

We wish to specifically acknowledge Vision Kerikeri, Our Kerikeri Trust, Carbon Neutral Trust and Kapiro Conservation Trust. These organisations are made up of interested citizens all of which appeared on a voluntary basis. These organisations attended most of the hearings and presented detailed written and verbal evidence on most topics in the PDP. We wish to thank them for their participation and consistent commitment to making the PDP provisions better.

5.2 Council Officers

We wish to acknowledge the significant input of the Council officers, skilfully coordinated through their Team Leader District Plan – Mr Witham. This team was made up of in house and consultant planners and a range of specialist advisors. The Panel thanks the Council team for consistently producing hearing reports and rights of reply (and supporting information and specialist assessments) that were of a very high quality, very detailed and on time.

We especially recognise the willingness of reporting planners to consider the submissions and evidence received and recommend relief (or relief in part) throughout the hearing process. This included the hearing reports, during the hearings in response to evidence and our questions, and in the Council right of reply. The approach taken was often acknowledged by submitters at the hearing or in the tabled written statements from those submitters who chose not to attend.

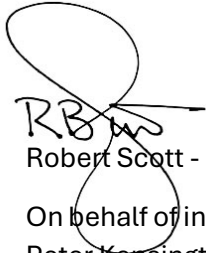
The Panel appreciates the positive and solution-focussed attitude taken by the Council officers and this was a significant component to successful and good-natured approach adopted at all hearings.

5.3 Hearing Administrators

The panel acknowledges the considerable effort made by its hearing administrator – Alica-Kate Taihia (otherwise known as “AK”). Prior to these hearings AK had not been to a Council hearing yet from Day 1 of Hearing 1 her professionalism, good humour and organisation skills were evident and she was a vital component to the successful running of every hearing including the use of multiple venues throughout the district, the coordination of video-conferencing for various presenters and video recordings of all hearings. AK also provided an important conduit between the Panel and the Council on a range of hearing related administrative matters. AK was also very ably supported by Janine Worrall who assisted with running many of the larger hearings.

5.4 Elected Officials

We also acknowledge support of Mayor Moko Tepania and elected councillors throughout the process. The Panel appreciates the faith put in us to run the hearings independently and we are confident that we will deliver a final set of provisions that will ensure the Far North District Plan is a robust, enabling and effective planning instrument in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RB Scott', with a large, stylized flourish above the letters.

Robert Scott - Chairperson

On behalf of independent commissioners: Bill Smith (Deputy Chairperson), Alan Watson, Peter Kensington and Siani Walker

And Council appointed commissioners: Felicity Foy, Hilda Halkyard-Harawera, Kelly Stratford and Steve McNally.