

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL**

**UNDER** the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)  
**IN THE MATTER** of the Far North Proposed District Plan - Hearing 15D:  
Rezoning Kerikeri-Waipapa

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF STEPHEN LAWRENCE BROWNLIE ON  
BEHALF OF KIWI FRESH ORANGE COMPANY LIMITED**

**CORPORATE**

**16 June 2025**

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**WYNN WILLIAMS**

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 My full name is Stephen Lawrence Brownlie.
- 2 I am the Director of Kiwi Fresh Orange Company Limited (**KFO**).
- 3 The purpose of my evidence is to provide background to KFO, its submission on the Proposed Far North District Plan (**PDP or Proposed Plan**) and its proposal, which has been captured as a development scenario of the Spatial Plan.

## ABOUT KFO

- 4 KFO is a family-owned company, owned by the Stephen Brownlie Family Trust. Through KFO and its various related companies, we grow oranges, process, sell, and distribute juices and smoothies throughout New Zealand and international markets under the Homegrown brand. We are the largest growers of oranges in New Zealand and are New Zealand's largest chilled juice company.
- 5 Further background information can be found in my statement of evidence for Hearing 1.

## THE SITE

- 6 KFO and its related companies acquired the Site sequentially. Brownlie Brothers Limited (also owned by the Trust), bought half of the land in 2011.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the opportunity arose to buy the balance of the Site, and we took it.<sup>2</sup> We thought the first purchased Site had potential as an orange orchard and, if horticulture was not viable in the long term, for land development. By the time we purchased the second site we had ruled out growing citrus and purchased the second half solely for land development purposes. We saw the economy of scale and other significant benefits of combining the 2 properties.
- 7 KFO looked into starting an orange orchard on the first Site but found it would not be viable. The soil was not as good for growing oranges as expected, a large investment in drainage would be required, sourcing irrigation would be expensive and unreliable, flood mitigation was also expensive and a high risk. On top of this it became apparent that the

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix B, area 'B'.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix B, areas 'C', 'D' and 'E'.

productivity of the land would be low and management costs high making it an uneconomic proposition. Considering this, the Site has been used for pasture, dry stock farming and growing some maize.

- 8 When we purchased the first site there was already a small future subdivision plan in place and we could certainly see that if it wasn't good for citrus, there was great potential to develop something very special here. It is located in between Kerikeri and Waipapa, has large areas of flat land, and great natural features (especially the rainbow falls area) that could integrate with the development. When we purchased the second site it was very clear that there was real benefit in the Site for urban development. We also had interest from the Golf Club to expand onto the land and other golf course/ housing developers were looking at it. We were also aware that the FNDC investment arm were interested.

### **KFO'S APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT**

- 9 KFO has expended a lot of time and resources to make sure we are putting forward a technically robust submission. This has included:
- (a) Engaging experts to prepare the structure plan and reports supporting KFO's submission.
  - (b) Consulting with the community.
  - (c) Participating in Hearing 1.
  - (d) Continuing to participate in hearing processes for this plan change and on the Spatial Plan.

### **INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SPATIAL PLAN**

- 10 KFO has been part of the development of the Spatial Plan for Kerikeri-Waipapa since early in the process as part of the wider stakeholder group.
- 11 The Site was included as an option for the Spatial Plan (called 'Scenario F') in response to strong public support for the inclusion of the Site as an option. I was quite surprised to learn that the Site was not one of the original options given KFO's submission and participation in Hearing 1. We could not understand what the Council staff did not even consider it an option despite considerable expert input, community support and the ability to implement that option through the Proposed Plan.
- 12 In fact, I have been surprised by the way that the Spatial Plan has progressed partway through the Proposed Plan process. I understand

that spatial planning usually happens first, then rezoning. The fact that the Council is doing a spatial plan process after KFO and others have put all this time, money and effort submitting on the plan is frustrating.

- 13 As noted above, the Site was consulted on as Scenario F of the draft Spatial Plan. When the Growth Scenario Evaluation Report was released, we were disappointed to see that the Council was advancing a hybrid scenario that was not assessed in as much detail as our submission on the PDP.
- 14 At the time that this evidence was prepared, the Council has not made its decision on the Spatial Plan. However, wherever that document ends up, KFO is committed to advancing its rezoning proposal and through the PDP.

#### **COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT**

- 15 For the reasons addressed in detail by KFO's independent expert witnesses, KFO considers that there are real benefits to be obtained with the rezoning of the Site. I see connecting Kerikeri and Waipapa, improving access to Rainbow Falls and other greenspaces, and providing the housing that Kerikeri and Waipapa needs as a real no-brainer.
- 16 We have said to the Council before and continue to be committed to paying our way in terms of infrastructure. We recognise that there will be costs to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure and will meet our share.
- 17 I understand that the Council has raised some issues with practical issues, like when infrastructure built by KFO will vest and so on. We remain willing and eager to work with the Council to resolve these issues, either through this process or as the development progresses.

#### **CONCLUSION**

- 18 KFO asks that the Hearings Panel accepts its submission and rezones the Site for urban development.

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**Stephen Brownlie**

**16 June 2025**