

PROPOSED FAR NORTH DISTRICT PLAN

MINUTE 13 OF THE INDEPENDENT HEARINGS PANEL

Infrastructure pre-hearing meetings

INTRODUCTION

1. At Hearing 4 on the Far North Proposed District Plan (PDP), the Hearings Panel indicated that there would be benefit expert conferencing or pre-hearing discussions with infrastructure providers on the Infrastructure Chapter, including its relationship with other PDP chapters. The key purpose of these discussions would be to narrow down the issues prior to the hearing, work through technical plan drafting issues, and assist with a more streamlined hearing process.

At the close of Hearing 4, there was some discussion regarding what parties should be involved, the formality of the discussions, natural justice considerations, and the provision of technical information to support the relief sought in submissions. The Hearings Panel directed Council to informally engage with key infrastructure providers in the first instance, and report back on a suggested process for more formal pre-hearing discussions.

This minute includes Council's response to this request and confirms the recommended approach to pre-hearing meetings that was discussed and agreed in an initial pre-hearing meeting outlined below.

2. On Thursday 17 October 2025, a meeting was held between Council (James Witham and Jerome Wyeth) and the following submitters (the *Parties*):
 - Sharon Dines and Rebecca Eng representing Transpower.
 - David Badham representing Top Energy.
 - Chris Horne, Graeme McCarrison, Andrew Kantor representing the Telco Companies.

The Parties agreed that there is benefit in formal pre-hearing meetings on the PDP Infrastructure Chapter (whether it be in the form of a meeting, expert conferencing or mediation) to identify and discuss areas of agreement and/or disagreement, work through technical drafting issues, and narrow down key issues prior to the hearing.

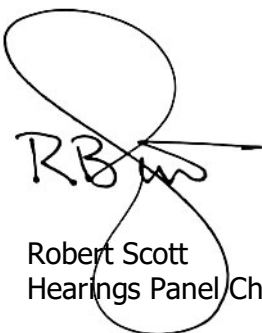
3. One of the key matters discussed was who should be involved (or invited to participate) in pre-hearing meetings – i.e., just the Parties listed above, other infrastructure providers, all submitters, and also whether this should be limited to planning experts or also involve lay submitters. There were mixed views on the benefits of including other submitters. Given the meetings are intended to be focused on specific planning issues, the provision of expert evidence and technical provision drafting, it was noted that inviting lay submitters and a wider group of participants presents some risks in that the meetings are less productive.

However, the Parties agreed that an invitation to formal pre-hearing meetings should be extended to experts representing other submitters, noting that submitters such as KiwiRail, NZTA, Forest and Bird and DOC all have original submissions and further submissions on the Infrastructure Chapter.

4. The Hearing Panel acknowledges that the Parties above have agreed to the following process for pre-hearing meetings, which we support. Accordingly, we direct the following:
 - a) The Reporting Officer for Infrastructure Chapter is to circulate a list of key issues in submissions and request further technical information where it would be beneficial to support submission points, and to inform pre-hearing meetings and section 42A reporting.
 - b) The Parties are to respond to the list of issues and provide information, as requested under Step a) above.
 - c) The Reporting Officer is to provide an agenda and a position paper to inform pre-hearing meetings based on the Parties' responses.
 - d) Two pre-hearing meetings are to be held over two half days (approx.). A scribe will record discussions and circulate minutes for acceptance by attendees. The agreed minutes will then be submitted for the attention of the Hearing Panel and published on the Council website. The intended output is to produce an agreed list of matters that are agreed/outstanding and marked up amendments to the Infrastructure Chapter which will inform section 42A reporting. The sequencing of specific topics for discussion will be generally split into:
 - i. Overarching matters including objectives, policies and relationship between Infrastructure Chapter and other PDP chapters.
 - ii. Technical provisions and drafting issues.

We have considered the need for facilitation and based on the assumption that the pre-hearing meetings will be undertaken with a smaller group we direct that a facilitator is not necessary for a smaller group. Should those assumptions change we are prepared to revisit the need for a facilitator.

5. The intent is that steps 1-3 shall be undertaken throughout November 2024 with the pre-hearing meetings taking place in early December. We will leave it up to the parties to arrange a specific time.
6. If you have any questions regarding this Minute, please contact the Hearings Administrator Alicia-Kate (AK) Taihia - Submissions & Hearings Administrator District Plan: alicia-kate.taihia@fndc.govt.nz or (09)4015247.



Robert Scott
Hearings Panel Chairperson

30 October 2024