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24 March 2023

Proposed Private Plan Change 20 Commissioner Panel
Waipā District Council

Attn: Hearing Administrator
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Dear Mr Withy (Chair),

Waikato Regional Council Supplementary Hearing Evidence – Proposed Private Plan Change 20 – Airport Northern Precinct Extension to the Operative Waipā District Plan

This letter follows my appearance for the Waikato Regional Council (WRC) at the hearing for Proposed Private Plan Change 20 – Airport Northern Precinct Extension (PPC20) on 17 March 2023. It responds to the Panel’s request for further information on the Waikato Bat Alliance (‘the Alliance’).

I have liaised with WRC staff involved in the Alliance and set out information to assist the Panel below.

The Waikato Bat Alliance is a multi-organisation partnership which includes staff representatives from WRC, Waipā District Council, Hamilton City Council, Waikato District Council and the Department of Conservation (DOC), as well as representatives from Waikato-Tainui, Te Haa o te Whenua o Kirikiriroa and Ngā Iwi Tōpū o Waipā.

Please find attached a copy of the Waikato Regional Bat Strategy (‘the Strategy’), which was prepared on behalf of the Alliance. The Strategy provides background on the pekapeka-tou-roa/long-tailed bat within the sub-region of Waipā and Waikato districts and Hamilton City, sets out the threats and challenges facing long-tailed bats, and discusses opportunities for solution-finding. There are no Terms of Reference for the Alliance, however, the Strategy sets out the role of the Alliance and principles for its work.

The purpose of the Strategy is:

To provide a framework for mana whenua, councils and Department of Conservation to collaborate on bat habitat protection and restoration measures in the Waikato region, share resources and information, align policies and planning, meet new national policy and legislation requirements for bats, and resolve dilemmas and conflict outside legal and planning challenges.

The vision of the Strategy is:

The taaonga pekapeka-tou-roa, long-tailed bat is flourishing and treasured in a growing and developing Waikato region.

Finally, the Strategy states the role of the Alliance is:

To coordinate the collaboration of its members (all with a mandate to protect bat habitat or the bats themselves) and engage productively with stakeholders maximising opportunities to achieve its vision.

Waipā District Council and Hamilton City Council have formally endorsed the Strategy. Other members of the Alliance are still working through the process of endorsing the Strategy.

The Alliance meets every quarter. The meetings have generally been hosted and run by WRC staff, although an independent contractor has recently been engaged to undertake coordination/administrative responsibilities. Generally, the purpose of the Alliance meetings thus far has been to:

- Develop the Strategy and shared vision.
- Determine priority actions.
- Discuss recent happenings in the policy/planning and research spaces relating to pekapeka-tou-roa in the sub-region, such as Plan Change 5 to the Hamilton City District Plan and PPC20.

The priority action discussed in the most recent Alliance meetings is for the Alliance to create a spatial map which shows known and potential bat habitats and corridors in the sub-region. This is still at a very early discussion stage, but the intention is that the map could assist in future plan change and development proposal processes and in protecting and creating functional bat habitat across landscapes.

Two key principles the Alliance agrees to work under, as set out in the Strategy, are:

- Collaboration
- Landscape in perspective.

The Alliance considers that bats require landscape-scale management and therefore collaboration between local authorities (as well as DOC and mana whenua) to create aligned and effective plans, policies and methods for bat habitat protection and restoration across the sub-region. In the case of PPC20, the Bat Habitat Area is a method proposed within PPC20 to protect bat habitat and maintain connectivity to habitats in the wider landscape, given the proposed urbanisation/industrialisation of the site. The likely effectiveness of this area (i.e., the likelihood that bats will continue to use it following development of the site), therefore requires thorough consideration.

It is up to councils (in the case of PPC20, Waipā District Council) to 'give teeth' to the Alliance and the Strategy through planning processes within their local authority area, as these processes ultimately determine future land uses affecting the habitat of the pekapeka-tou-roa. As noted above, Waipā District Council's Strategic Planning and Policy Committee has endorsed the Strategy.

I note that there is a high level of disagreement between the bat ecology experts of the plan change applicants and DOC (an Alliance member) as to whether the proposed protection measures for bats and bat habitat within PPC20 will be sufficient.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of this letter please contact me directly on (07) 859 0929 or by email Katrina.Andrews@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely,



Katrina Andrews
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HE TAIAO MAUIORA HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
HE ŌHANGA PAKARI STRONG ECONOMY
HE HAPORI HIHIRI VIBRANT COMMUNITIES