

### Turakina River Mouth Diversion Project.

As you know the Rangitikei District Council applied to the Manawatu Wanganui Regional Council for a water right in order to start the process of cutting an opening through the sandspit at the Turakina River Mouth to the Tasman Sea at Koitiata. The Council has been advised that **two objections** have been received; one from the Department of Conservation on the basis that the proposed diversion appears it might adverse the impact on the wildlife, fisheries, botanical and natural values associated with the Turakina River estuary and that the proposed diversion would have a limited duration and long term detriment to the environment which might outweigh any short term benefits to the applicant. An objection has been received from Tehunanga o Ngatiapa on the basis that insufficient detail had been furnished on the effects of the diversion on traditional habitats of the area. After discussion with you and with Mr Cameron of Armstrong Barton, who is giving the Council **legal advice** on the matter, the Council has decided to put the application **on hold** for the meantime. This gives the Council a chance to undertake some more research into the facts of the situation, assess the cost benefits of the proposal put forward by the Koitiata residents, and enable the Rangitikei District Council to decide on the need to implement the project.

Mr Cameron has prepared his advice in the light of media attention the case has already received, the concerns of the residents, the issues raised by the Department of Conservation and concerns articulated by local Iwi. He confirms that the Harbours Act apply to the proposed works and therefore the Minister of Conservation's consent will be required before these works can proceed. He confirms also that a Water Right Application to the Regional Council is required (which we have already made, but put on hold) and that a **Town Planning** Application to the Rangitikei District Council is required. Maori concerns will be of relevance to the Planning Water Right and Harbours Act consent. The information requested by the Department of Conservation forms a useful guide regarding the approach that the Council will be obliged to adopt to obtain the various consent required and it also determines the **range of experts** which the Council may need to consult.

Mr Cameron suggests that before that project is undertaken the Council should satisfy itself that the works proposed will achieve the Community's objective. He sees that objective as being to prevent flooding and thereby enhance the value of the property and Community generally (as you know some of the residents have seen the main objective as the ease of access to the river mouth). While a technical report is required, Mr Cameron is suggesting a cost benefit analysis would be appropriate particularly given the content of the Rangitikei District Scheme which specifically contemplates flooding problems at Koitiata, and the steps residents should take to minimise their effect. Nevertheless, **safety and health** issues may also be involved. We have no information concerning this at present and so any Engineering approach might need to be adopted with care.

We are discussing the form of an Engineering opinion which might be obtained and the format for a cost benefit analysis of what is proposed together with an assessment of any relevant safety or health issues. When we have that work completed the Council will be in a better position to determine whether or not it wishes to proceed to obtain the various consents required, and it should also be in a position to assess the likelihood of success at each stage of the process.

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The procedures may appear to be complex but expert evidence when it is assembled may well simplify the decision making process for it. At this stage, I would recommend that we take a **step by step** approach because of the **considerable costs** involved in the whole project. I am talking to the Council about the matter and if it agrees, will proceed as suggested above. I should point out that the Council will be taking a close interest, not just because it has an obligation to ensure the health and safety of the Koitiata residents but because of the substantial costs that will be involved on a **District wide basis**, should the project be taken right through to completion as originally intended.

I hope the above is helpful for you and your Committee, I would be happy to discuss any aspect of the above in more detail with any of you, should you wish to.

Yours sincerely,



C. Fullerton-Smith  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**