

Before the Hearings Panels

Under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
In the matter Proposed Plan Change 1 (PC1) to the Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region

**Memorandum of counsel on behalf of Wellington Regional Council
regarding pausing Plan Change 1 hearings**

Date: 1 July 2025



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MAY IT PLEASE THE PANELS

- 1 This memorandum of counsel is filed on behalf of Wellington Regional Council (**GWRC**).
- 2 On 11 June 2025, GWRC filed a memorandum with the Panels seeking that the hearing dates for Hearing Stream 4 be vacated. This was to allow time for GWRC to consider next steps for Plan Change 1 (**PC1**) in light of the consultation documents released by the government on 29 May 2025, which included proposed changes to the NPS-FM (which is a key document for PC1).
- 3 In Minute 13, the Panels vacated the Hearing Stream 4 hearing dates and directed GWRC to report back to the Panels by 2 July 2025, with a suggested way forward post the 26 June full Council meeting.
- 4 At the full Council meeting on 26 June 2025, the Council resolved to put PC1 on pause and to re-start the process once the Council had enough confidence to proceed with PC1, which is likely to be when a new NPS-FM is gazetted (likely to be early 2026).
- 5 This pause also allows for consideration of other national direction and legislation, including wastewater standards being finalised by Taumata Arowai and the roll-out of Local Water Done Well.
- 6 PC1 could then address the key freshwater issues with appropriate regard to the full regulatory landscape in early 2026.
- 7 At its meeting on 26 June 2025, the Council also considered the fact that the PC1 provisions as notified will remain in place for longer than originally planned if the PC1 hearing process is paused (ie, longer than the 2 year timeframe prescribed by the RMA for a decision on PC1). The Council resolved that a limited

variation should be initiated in relation to some of the stormwater provisions, which GWRC is now working through the details of.

- 8 This proposed course of action (pausing PC1 hearings and initiating a variation) will also require seeking (and obtaining):
 - 8.1 Extensions for decision timeframes on PC1 from the Chief Freshwater Commissioner (for the freshwater planning process) and Minister for the Environment (for the Schedule 1 planning process), and
 - 8.2 Approval of a freshwater variation for notification by the Minister and Chief Freshwater Commissioner.
- 9 GWRC is currently working through the process for getting these applications filed for consideration by the Minister and Chief Freshwater Commissioner and will continue to work with them over the coming months.
- 10 Accordingly, to implement these decisions of the Council, GWRC is seeking that:
 - 10.1 The hearing process for the balance of PC1 is put on hold until 2026.
 - 10.2 Once the details of the amended NPS-FM are finalised, GWRC is to report to the Panels within 1 month on a suggested way forward to complete the PC1 hearing process.
 - 10.3 Leave is provided to GWRC (and any other party) to seek alterations to the above or further directions, as needed, to reflect the status or details of the proposed national direction (or other legislative) changes.
 - 10.4 Next steps are then directed by the Panels once a memorandum is filed in accordance with 10.2 above.

- 11 In addition, HS3 right of reply material from GWRC will still be filed by 2 July 2025 for Hearing Stream 3, as directed by Minute 13 from the Panels.
- 12 GWRC is aware that all parties need adequate time to prepare for resumed hearings and it will work with the Panels to ensure that reasonable notice is provided once a way forward is clearer.
- 13 GWRC would like to thank all parties and the Panels for their engagement in the PC1 process to date and the patience shown in working through this response to the latest proposals by the government.

Date: 1 July 2025



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Kerry M Anderson / Emma L Manohar
Counsel for Wellington Regional Council