



PORT OF NAPIER WHARF AND DREDGING PROJECT

REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON REGARDING PRE-HEARING MEETING

Introduction

1. This report relates to the first of two pre-hearing meetings that I have chaired regarding the resource consent applications lodged by Port of Napier Limited (**Napier Port**) for construction of a new wharf, and 5 stages of capital dredging. The capital dredging is proposed in order to both deepen the existing 'swinging basin' and harbour entrance, and progressively extend a larger channel out from the Port to a final depth of 14.5 metres (below Chart Datum).
2. The proposal also involves ongoing maintenance dredging (removing material otherwise 'refilling' the dredged areas) and the disposal of dredged material from both capital and maintenance dredging over the duration of the consents sought (35 years).
3. The key issue discussed at this pre-hearing meeting related to the disposal of dredged material, from both capital and ongoing maintenance dredging.

Summary of Discussion

4. The submitters attending this pre-hearing meeting were uniformly of the view that the dredged material should be deposited around the sites of the existing consented disposal areas¹ (**'inshore disposal'**).
5. This had originally been proposed by Napier Port, prior to completing and lodging the resource consent applications in late 2017, seeking a coastal permit for a new disposal area some 4 to 6 kilometres offshore from Marine Parade (**'offshore disposal'**).
6. Napier Port representatives present at the meeting explained the rationale for the revised disposal area. This hinged on expert technical advice that material sourced from dredging would not be of longer-term benefit in terms of beach nourishment for the eroding Westshore coastline.
7. It was explained that finer grained material (in particular), as found to dominate the seabed material which would be dredged under the capital works campaigns, would instead migrate east to and beyond the shipping channel- creating the potential for environmental impacts, including on Pania Reef.
8. Napier Port confirmed that it was willing to make 'suitable material' available for beach re-nourishment purposes at Westshore, and to progress a Memorandum of Understanding through the consenting process to that end, but on the basis that the resource consenting requirements and costs associated with this disposal option were met by a third party (**MoU**). Napier Port also explained that material likely to be suitable for this purpose (i.e. with a larger grain size) would only come available at later stages of the proposed dredging, when the channel in areas A and A1² were dredged to their final depth, and this could be 20 years away.

¹ Refer Plan **appended**, sourced from Plan Set 3 in Volume 2 of the Application information and material.

² Refer AEE page 46- Figure 3-6.

9. By contrast, the prevailing view of the submitters (seeking inshore disposal) was that the material previously sourced from maintenance dredging, especially since 2015, had been of demonstrable benefit in protecting against coastal erosion at Westshore. They accepted that the dredged material disposed of in the inshore area may not remain *in situ* over the longer term, especially (as Napier Port explained) after larger storm events. As they see it however, there is an opportunity for a series of *periodic* deposits of material (from both capital and maintenance dredging) associated with these applications, which they consider would be of longer term benefit to Westshore.
10. They did not accept that it had been yet been proven that migration of finer materials from inshore disposal would have adverse effects on the coastal environment beyond the shipping channel, and on Pania Reef in particular.
11. The submitters also explained that in their view any potential effect on Pania Reef needed to be seen alongside the fact that there is a clear deficit of sand at Westshore, and that unless sand or other suitable material is repeatedly deposited within or near the Westshore beach area, there would continue to be significant erosion effects on that coastline. This is also considered by these submitters to be a relevant adverse effect on the environment which this proposal could help to address, with the view held by some that the Port is affecting natural deposition of sand at Westshore, and has been for some decades.

Maintenance dredging

12. There was specific discussion around whether Napier Port would be willing to continue inshore disposal of material from maintenance dredging, noting statements in the application that the existing coastal permit for inshore disposal might be surrendered. Napier Port has not sought resource consent for inshore disposal of material sourced from either future capital or maintenance dredging, but the current resource consent for deposition of such material does not expire until 2033, and could potentially provide for that activity (directly, or indirectly).
13. While Napier Port is (as noted above) willing to make suitable material available for use at Westshore, it is concerned that it would be inconsistent with the expert advice received (that material from capital dredging should be disposed of offshore to avoid an environmental impact), to then continue inshore disposal of material from maintenance dredging.
14. In response, and given the 20-year timeframe for the capital works programme to deliver 'suitable material', the point was made that there would be an ability to further test the potential for an offshore effect of from inshore disposal of material sourced from maintenance dredging, if continued in the meantime.
15. Napier Port advised that, regardless, it would continue to investigate the relationship between migration of finer materials deposited in the inshore area and potential effects on Pania Reef through continued collection of wave and current direction data, and studies on Pania Reef itself.

Outcome

16. In summary, the basic issue for the hearing so far as this group of submitters are concerned, if not resolved prior, will be whether the potential benefits of sequential deposition of material sourced from maintenance and capital dredging for Westshore warrant inshore disposal, having regard to the potential effects of resuspended sediment from an inshore disposal area on (and including) Pania Reef.
17. I invited Napier Port and the other parties to consider whether, with a view to a potential for the MoU to be progressed as tabled by Napier Port, there might be some scope for further assessment of the effects of inshore disposal of material sourced from *maintenance* dredging in the years ahead (on Pania Reef in particular), bearing in mind the 20 year timeframe before *capital* dredging is likely to yield what Napier Port considers to be suitable material for beach re-nourishment purposes. In the meantime, rather than surrendering the existing inshore disposal permit, this might be retained to (directly or indirectly) provide a consenting platform for disposal of such material when it does become available.
18. I also asked the parties to consider whether they might be willing to meet with the other group of submitters whose interest centred on the offshore disposal area, and its potential effects on Pania Reef and the wider Hawke's Bay fishery.

Martin Williams

29 June 2018