



PORT OF NAPIER WHARF AND DREDGING PROJECT

REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON REGARDING PRE-HEARING MEETING

Introduction

1. This report relates to the second of two pre-hearing meetings 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 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 also related to the disposal of dredged material, from both capital and ongoing maintenance dredging.

Summary of Discussion

4. Napier Port explained that it had originally proposed disposal of dredged material around the sites of the existing consented disposal areas near Westshore.¹ However, alongside feedback from stakeholders during consultation raising concerns about the wider environmental effects of this option, Napier Port received advice from its technical experts, that (particularly) finer grained dredged material deposited in the inshore areas would migrate east through and over the shipping channel, and on to Pania Reef.
5. Napier Port therefore took the decision to look at an offshore site, drawing on a 2005 study of alternatives, and locating the offshore disposal field as now proposed with reference to that technical advice.
6. Napier Port also explained the staged nature of the campaigns with stage 1 likely to take place between 2022 and 2027, and later stages progressing over the following 20 years.
7. A range of submitters representing the perspectives of recreational and commercial fishing, as well as recreational diving and surfing, were present at the meeting.
8. Their concerns regarding the selected offshore disposal site were (firstly) centred on the direct effect of deposition of dredged material over the 340-hectare area, which they noted would smother fin fish food-source species in the area, described as a breeding ground for juvenile fish, and a regular commercial fishing ground. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the potential impacts of sediment released both during and after dredging (from resuspension) including on Town and Pania reefs.
9. Existing visibility constraints for recreational diving as a result of background sediment from other sources were noted, with the concern that this situation would be made worse by Napier Port's dredging campaigns. On the other hand, the view was shared that it would cut across efforts to reduce the levels of land generated sediment on the

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

seabed of Hawke Bay, for Napier Port to dispose of such a significant volume of dredged material at the selected site.

10. Some submitters queried whether the modelling suggesting a southerly current trend (away from Pania Reef from the disposal field) was accurate, noting observations of a northerly current from their activities in the area, towards the reefs. It was suggested that a site between a depth of 80 to 100 metres (rather than 20 to 30 metres) would be better to avoid such effects, and have less impact on juvenile fish.
11. This group of submitters considers it essential to “get this right from the start”, because if monitoring detected an effect after the fact, that would be too late.
12. Other concerns related to the effects of the dredging campaigns and wharf extension (along with the existing port structures) on the Hardinge Road and City reef surf breaks.
13. Ngati Parau explained support for the recommendations in the Cultural Impact Assessment and for the shifting of the disposal site to a position where a potential impact on Pania Reef is removed. The Hapu seek to be involved in monitoring to ensure this and other taonga are not affected.
14. Napier Port explained its proposed consent conditions structure involving a Water Quality Management plan, through which it would monitor turbidity levels at Pania reef in real time during the dredging campaigns. Napier Port would be able take action and even cease dredging if levels get close to the expert recommended effect threshold, and until normal background turbidity levels resumed.
15. Over the longer term, comprehensive monitoring over the disposal and reef areas would reveal whether effects remain as predicted under the Napier Port expert modelling, prior to later stages of the dredging campaigns.
16. Napier Port explained that its technical experts were reviewing the key points made in submissions, including many of the issues raised during the pre-hearing meeting, and that these would be addressed in evidence with the benefit of further monitoring and modelling that had taken place since the application was lodged.
17. It was also noted that the disposal site had been selected on a “like for like” basis, i.e. whereby the material being deposited was similar to that naturally found within the disposal field. The expert on marine resources had confirmed an appropriate level of comfort with the proposed disposal site in terms of its ecological values. It was not proposed to investigate an alternative site at 80-100m depth.

Outcome

18. These issues between the submitters and Napier Port were not resolved. Napier Port remains confident in its science and intends to complete preparation of evidence on the outstanding issues, as summarised above.
19. It was suggested that Napier Port consider whether it could make some of its experts available to the submitters so that they could speak to them directly about their concerns, and ask them questions. It was noted by submitters that it is very difficult to

engage with the extensive technical material in the Napier Port application, and that they would have very little time to respond to the Napier Port expert evidence through the standard timetable that would precede the hearing before Independent Commissioners.

20. In the meantime, Napier Port agreed to make the Benthic Ecology and Fisheries Resources Report (Appendix H to its application) directly available to the submitters through provision of a web link.

Martin Williams

2 July 2018