

## Comments on a Substantive Application under section 53 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024: Kororā and coastal avifauna

Fast-track project name	Wellington International Airport Southern Seawall Renewal
Fast-track application number	FTAA-2510-1118
GW file number	FTA260318

Technical area	Kororā and coastal avifauna
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Date	19/02/2026
Documents considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">B.09 John Cockrem</a> kororā effects assessment</li> <li>• <a href="#">B.10 Bioresearches</a> coastal avifauna effects assessment</li> <li>• <a href="#">B.12 Bioresearches</a> residual effects analysis report: kororā</li> <li>• <a href="#">B.13 Boffa Miskell</a> kororā colony stage 1 and stage 2 plans</li> </ul>

## Comments

### Key issues

1. Developing robust outcome targets, timely progress review intervals, and clear response pathways to ensure the management of effects on kororā/little blue penguins and pohowera/banded dotterel habitat loss within the lifespan of this consent.

### Matters in contention and proposed solutions

#### *Kororā and pohowera effects management*

2. Kororā are nationally At Risk: Recovering, but in the Wellington Region they have been assessed to be of higher conservation concern, being Threatened: Vulnerable and even higher conservation concern on the mainland (i.e. excluding populations on the offshore islands) as Threatened: Endangered (Crisp et al 2024<sup>1</sup>). The bulk of the known 'mainland birds' in the region occur around the Wellington City coast. So, managing the effects on the mainland populations around the Wellington City coast is essential to their conservation recovery.
3. Pohowera have also been assessed to be of higher conservation concern regionally. Nationally, pohowera are listed as At Risk: Declining, but regionally (including on the

<sup>1</sup> Crisp P, Robertson H, McArthur N and Cotter S. 2024. *Conservation status of birds in the Wellington Region, 2023*. Greater Wellington Regional Council, Publication No. GW/KI-G-23/21, Wellington.

mainland) they have been assessed as Threatened: Endangered (Crisp et al 2024<sup>2</sup>). The last coastal bird survey of the region (2022/23) recorded a 25 percent decline in pohowera from the previous survey (2017/18) [McArthur 2025<sup>3</sup>]. Pohowera have a clustered distribution around the region's coastline. So, every population is important for addressing the worsening conservation status of this species.

4. The effects management approaches proposed by the Applicant for kororā and pohowera rely on the measurement of outputs (for example, the number of penguin nesting boxes provided).
5. This does not guarantee that the effects on these species will be adequately managed. For example, it does not matter how many penguin nesting boxes have been provided, if the penguins do not use them.
6. Best practice suggests that we identify outcome targets, monitor progress over a stipulated timeframe, and have clear interventions if it appears that these targets are not likely to be met.
7. For example, we might use the number of penguin nesting opportunities lost from the seawall as a target for uptake of the penguin colony areas within the 20-year proposed duration of monitoring. Through annual monitoring, the potential to achieve this target could be tested at five-year intervals. If it appears that nesting box uptake is not on track at the five-year checkpoints, then an independent review should be commissioned and the recommendations given effect to remedy the matter.
8. Likewise, for pohowera, the number of breeding pairs losing access to their current nesting habitat could be used as a target. With annual monitoring of the proposed mitigation site on the runway apron to test whether there is equivalent uptake by nesting pairs. If there is not, then an independent review should be commissioned to determine whether the mitigation is viable or whether offsetting or compensation are required to manage the effects.

## Conditions

9. Kororā nesting box uptake target based on the numbers of pairs of birds attempting to breed in the seawall at the time of construction. With annual monitoring and five-year checkpoints. Requiring independent review and actions to be agreed with the consenting authority to achieve the target, to offset, or compensate the effects if this is not possible within a stipulated timeframe.

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<sup>2</sup> Crisp P, Robertson H, McArthur N and Cotter S. 2024. *Conservation status of birds in the Wellington Region, 2023*. Greater Wellington Regional Council, Publication No. GW/KI-G-23/21, Wellington.

<sup>3</sup> McArthur, N. 2025. *State and trends in the diversity, abundance and distribution of coastal birds in the Wellington region*. Client report prepared for Greater Wellington Regional Council, Wellington.

10. Pohowera nesting pair target based on the numbers of pairs of birds attempting to breed in the area of works. With annual monitoring and stipulated checkpoints. Requiring independent review and actions to be agreed with the consenting authority to achieve the target, to offset, or compensate the effects if this is not possible within a stipulated timeframe.