
MINUTE 4 OF THE EXPERT PANEL
Recording Site Visit and Other Matters (RFP's)
Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project
[FTAA-2507-1089]
[16 March 2026]

Site visit

[1] This Minute records the site inspection undertaken by the Panel on the afternoon of 4 March and the morning of 5 March 2026.

[2] The inspection was facilitated by the Applicant and attended by all members of the Panel together with an EPA representative. The Panel was guided by Applicant representatives Damien Spring, Cheryl Low and Mary Asky, and the inspection was undertaken using vehicles supplied by the Applicant.

[3] The inspection on 4 March 2026 focused on the Direct Disturbance Area (DDA), comprising approximately 568 hectares. Access was gained via SH8 and Ardgour Road, where an inspection of the proposed realignment was undertaken, followed by travel along the site access road already constructed. Observations were made from locations broadly corresponding with points numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 on the site plan provided to all Panel members (**Plan C.02 – BOGP Project Site Layout, Tour Locations**).

[4] Although individual Panel members engaged with Applicant representatives at each location, the Panel is satisfied that the information imparted was, in all cases, limited to clarification and/or direction to relevant reports included in the Application. The Panel is further satisfied that no new information was provided

of the sort appropriately required to be brought to the attention of persons invited to comment under s 53 of the Act.

[5] The inspection on 5 March 2026 commenced with visits to historic sites to the south of the DDA and included inspection of the area of the proposed take from the Bendigo aquifer, the areas in which the proposed Ardgour and Bendigo sanctuaries are to be established, and the area of the proposed Ardgour Rise Alignment, which the Applicant proposes as substituted access in the event of partial closure of the Thompson Gorge Track.

[6] This latter area was accessed via a private track, along which the Panel travelled as far as the existing airstrip (identified as Viewpoint 13 on the site plan). From there, the Panel was transported via Tarras, Luggate, and elevated portions of the Pisa Range, stopping at various vantage points to consider the potential effects of the proposed development on distant views across the valley and Lake Dunstan, before returning to Cromwell at approximately 1.00 pm.

Request for information (panel approach)

[7] The Panel would also like to outline the approach to Requests for Information (RFIs) under s 67 of the Fast-track Approval Act 2024 (the Act).

[8] Although Panel members are still assimilating all the technical information in the Application, it is already apparent that there will be extensive requirements for further information pursuant to s 67(1)(a)(i) of the Act. The Act does not limit the number of requests or dictate timing other than that they must predate the Panel's decisions under s 81.

[9] The Panel considers there to be utility in issuing, within the next 1-2 weeks, a first round of RFIs. Inevitably more will follow. But, in doing so on a staged basis, the Panel considers best use can be made of all available time, including the lacuna between its issue of s 53 invitations and receipt of comments and the applicant's replies. To the extent RFIs might be responded to within the time limit

for comments under s55(1), they may also inform that process.

Communication with the Panel

[10] The Panel wish to announce the primary method of communication with, or relating to the activities of the Panel, should be by way of legal memorandum, filed, where practical, within office hours to bendigoftaa@fasttrack.govt.nz. Such memorandum and the Panel's response will, be publicly available on the Fast-track website (with any exceptional request to the contrary the subject of separate Panel consideration).

[11] The Panel intend to set out some broad timetable objectives for the period ending 31 May 2026, to be further updated at that point. However, given that the number and content of s 53 comments is, as yet, unknown, the Panel intends to retain maximum flexibility to meet all contingencies.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. A. Muir'.

Hon Matthew Muir KC

Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project Expert Panel Chair

Plan C.02 – BOGP Project Site Layout, Tour Locations

Tour Locations:

1. State Highway 8/Ardgour Intersection.
2. Administration Area.
3. Shepherds Creek.
4. Processing Area.
5. Rise and Shine Pit.
6. Tailings Storage Facility.
7. Srex Pits.
8. Thompson Gorge Saddle.
9. Rise and Shine Creek and Wetland.
10. Come in Time Pit.
11. Bendigo Sanctuary.
12. Ardgour Sanctuary.
13. Ardgour Airstrip.
14. Blue Mines Road.

