



Comments on project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project, FTAA-2507-1089

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Introduction

1. On 31 October 2025 Matakanui Gold Limited (the Applicant) lodged a substantive application for Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project (the Project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the FTA Act). The Project seeks to establish, operate, rehabilitate and ultimately close an open pit and underground gold mining operation.
2. As a part of the application, the Applicant has applied for an archaeological authority. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) is the administering agency for the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 (HNZPT Act) under the FTA Act.
3. In addition, the Project is seeking to partially revoke a conservation covenant pursuant to s 42(4)(g) of the FTA Act, and part of the Project will be undertaken on an area entered on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero (the List) as an Historic Area.
4. Following lodgement, the Applicant has consulted with HNZPT on several occasions, including:
 - 28 November 2025 HNZPT met with Applicant's archaeologist - outlined and discuss requests for additional information
 - 17 December 2025 HNZPT provided written response to Applicant's archaeologist requesting additional information
 - 7 January 2026 draft addendum to the report provided by Applicant's archaeologist for initial review by HNZPT
 - Between 16 and 22 January 2026 HNZPT had ongoing discussion with Applicant's archaeologist to clarify additional information requests
 - 22 January 2026 Addendum delivered by Applicant's archaeologist to HNZPT
 - 2 February 2026 HNZPT requested further clarification and suggested a workshop

- 15 February 2026 Full day workshop with Applicant, consultant archaeologist, legal, and other heritage representatives to discuss applications and issues raised.
 - 19 February 2026 meeting of Applicant’s archaeologist and HNZPT to follow up workshop
 - 25 February receipt of updated heritage assessment
 - 3 March 2026 receipt of BOGP Blasting Vibrations Effects on Heritage Structures memo (Marshall Day 2025)
5. On 25 March 2026 HNZPT filed its s51 Report, including the recommendation to decline.
 6. In accordance with section 53(2)(k) of the FTA Act, HNZPT has been invited to comment on the substantive application as the administering agency for the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. The comments from HNZPT will focus on the potential adverse effects on the historic heritage values of the Project Area if the Project proceeds.

Archaeological Authority

7. HNZPT has provided comment in relation to the archaeological authority in its Section 51(2)(d) Report dated 25 March 2026.
8. In summary, HNZPT has recommended that the archaeological authority is **declined** under the FTA Act. The application is inconsistent with the matters set out in section 59(1)(a) of the HNZPT Act 2014 as well as the Tauāki Mātai Whaipara, Archaeology Statement and Taiāki Hapahapai, Advocacy Statement included in He Tauāki Kaupapahere Whānui, Statements of General Policy.
9. Accordingly, HNZPT has not supported the approval for Dr Naomi Woods as the person nominated to undertake the activity under the authority.

Bendigo Quartz Mining Historic Area

10. The Bendigo Quartz Reefs Historic Area (the historic area) extends into the Project area.
11. An assessment was completed by Heather Bauchop¹ to determine whether the historic area met the criteria for inclusion on the List specified in section 66 (1) of the HNZPT Act. The historic area was recognised for its historical, aesthetic, archaeological and technological values and confirmed by the Board of HNZPT in February 2015.

¹ Bauchop, H, 2015 New Zealand Heritage List/ Rārangi Kōrero Report for a Historic Area: Bendigo Quartz Reefs Historic Area, Otago (List No. 9097).

12. Bendigo Quartz Reefs Historic Area has historical significance as the preeminent quartz mining area in Otago, and as an area that tells the story of 1860s alluvial mining through to the Depression mining of the 1930s². Gold mining is one of the major themes in New Zealand's history and has had a great impact on the New Zealand landscape³.
13. The technological values also lie in the continuous historic landscape, representing most stages of nineteenth century mining technique and includes key features such as the restored Come in Time battery. With easy access to the public, the Come in Time battery enable people to understand the technology used in the goldfields⁴.
14. The aesthetic values lie in the connection of these sites to the unique landscape 'giving the strong feeling of isolation, emphasising the 'ghost town' feeling⁵'.
15. The archaeological values, explored in more detail in the section 51 report, lie in the evidence of nineteenth century vernacular stone construction methods and the valuable archaeological information on the lifeways of miners and their families present within the site. This is one of the best and most accessible sites in Otago that illustrates quartz mining archaeology⁶.
16. The boundaries of the historic area reflect the extent of historic mining activity and captures the entire mining history of Bendigo, from alluvial mining in the 1860s to depression mining in the 1920s. The historic area includes sites within the Bendigo Historic Reserve as well as Bendigo station clustered as follows:
 - the settlements of Welsh town and Logantown
 - Cromwell Quartz Mining Company Sites
 - mining sites around the Aurora Creek Catchment
 - Rise and Shine Creek and Bendigo Creek Mining Sites (Come in Time Battery and Rise and Shine claim)
 - roads and water races and dams
17. The project will directly affect sites within the historic area resulting in the destruction of all sites associated with the Rise and Shine Claim and modification of sites within the Come in Time Battery Complex.

² Ibid, p32.

³ Kevin L. Jones, Ngā Tohuwhenua Mai Te Rangi: A New Zealand Archaeology in Aerial Photographs, Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1994, p257.

⁴ Bauchop, H, 2015 New Zealand Heritage List/ Rārangī Kōrero Report for a Historic Area: Bendigo Quartz Reefs Historic Area, Otago (List No. 9097), p32.

⁵ Ibid; p32.

⁶ Ibid; p32.

18. The destruction of these sites would have a significant effect on the values of the historic area. Removal of the earlier stages of alluvial mining that the Rise and Shine Claim represent would disrupt the continuous historic landscape and undermine the technological and archaeological values of the landscape. It was the Rise and Shine Claim, and the water it brought into the headwaters of Bendigo Creek, that enabled the more intensive mining at the Bendigo Reefs⁷.
19. The modification and destructions of sites associated with the Come in Time battery and the reduction of easy access would also undermine the values of the historic area.

Partial revocation of covenant

20. The Applicant is also seeking approval pursuant to s 42(4)(g) of the FTA Act for the revocation of a conservation covenant, being a covenant in force under section 77 of the Reserves Act 1977.
21. HNZPT understands this to be a partial revocation of the conservation covenant over the area coloured red in C.12 “Bendigo Conservation Covenant - Overview” (revocation area).
22. HNZPT has reviewed the application and the Department of Conservation (DOC) s51 Report⁸ in relation to the historic heritage values of the revocation area. HNZPT agrees with the DOC Report in relation to historic heritage values, particularly:
- a. the purpose of the covenant being to, *inter alia*, protect and maintain the high heritage values of the area in perpetuity;
 - b. the covenant protects the Rise and Shine historic mining landscape as a connected system, and enables public understanding through foot-access and interpretation in perpetuity;
 - c. the values of the mining sites contribute to the regional–national significance of Bendigo’s goldfields heritage;
 - d. these values will be significantly adversely affected, and in many cases permanently lost if a revocation is approved;

⁷ Ibid; p26.

⁸ Specifically, DOC s51(2)(b) Conservation Covenant Report BOGP and Appendices Appendix A Detailed Effects Assessment of DOC S51 Covenant Report, Appendix B Conditions related to a covenant amendment of DOC S51 Covenant Report, Appendix C Legal Submissions DOC of S51 DOC Covenant Report, Appendix D Application for exchange of property rights of DOC S51 Covenant Report and Appendix E Rich Fields of Bendigo Jill Hamel 1993 of DOC S51 Covenant Report; and Appendix H Expert Statement Heritage DOC Dr M Schmidt.

- e. the adverse effects on and loss of historic heritage values has been underestimated by the Applicant's consultant archaeologist; and
- f. that partial revocation as proposed, will compromise values of regional and national significance.

23. HNZPT does not propose to restate here the historic and cultural values of the revocation area, as these are well traversed in both the HNZPT and the DOC s51 Reports. However, we wish to make the following comments in relation to the regional and national significance of the historic heritage values within the revocation area:

- Gold mining is one of the major themes in New Zealand's history, and Bendigo illustrates the importance of gold mining, and particularly bedrock quartz mining in nineteenth century Otago.
- the Rise and Shine Complex is an exemplary archaeological landscape, with features demonstrating the full span of technological development and change over time in gold mining methods in Central Otago.
- these features are rarely documented in other Central Otago mining areas making them of high regional significance.
- the archaeological landscape helps to tell the story of mining life for the generations of gold miners in the region.
- the Bendigo Quartz Reef Historic Area is recognised on the List, which is a professionally researched and documented record of our national historical and cultural place-based heritage.
- entry on the List recognises the regional and national significance of a place to Aotearoa New Zealand's past and provides information about those places.
- the List entry for the Bendigo Quartz Reef Heritage Area records its historical, aesthetic, archaeological and technological values.

24. Although HNZPT is not a party to the conservation covenant, it recognises the on-going protection that is afforded to the heritage values through the covenant being in force. Any reduction in the area that is subject to these protection measures exposes the heritage values to irreversible loss.

25. Taking all of this into account, HNZPT does not consider it appropriate to grant the approval to partially revoke the conservation covenant.

Applicant's Heritage Assessment⁹

26. The Applicant's Heritage Assessment concludes that:

The proposed works will have an overall major impact on the heritage and archaeological values of the project area, seeing an almost total loss of heritage values within the footprint of the mining operation. In addition, the works will have a moderate impact on the heritage values of the Bendigo Quartz Reefs Historic Area and a moderate impact on the Bendigo Conservation Covenant area heritage values. However, the areas of highest heritage values of both the Bendigo Covenant area and the Bendigo Quartz Reef Historic Area fall outside the BOGP footprint and will not be impacted by the proposed works. (Woods, p172)

27. This statement is demonstrative of the failings within the assessment to understand and appreciate the values in the interconnectedness of the intact sites of the entire mining landscape. This, in turn, has led to the adverse effects of the Project being underestimated in the Heritage Assessment, with no justification for the conclusion that the works will have a moderate impact.

28. As such, HNZPT prepared its own assessment in order to complete its s51 Report. HNZPT has now reviewed the DOC Heritage Assessment (Appendix H Expert Statement Heritage DOC Dr M Schmidt) and notes the alignment in both approach and conclusions with the HNZPT assessment. This is because the approach of these assessments is consistent with previous heritage assessments of the area, including Hamel and Bauchop, that consider the value of the intact sites in their context.

29. The DOC and HNZPT heritage assessments reach the same conclusion as the Applicant, that the works will have a major impact on the heritage and archaeological values of the project area. However, the effects of this major impact differ because the Applicant has understated the existing heritage values of the Project area.

30. When looked at as a series of interconnected sites, the only approach is to agree with past assessments that this is a landscape of highly significant heritage value. Therefore, it is not appropriate to assign individual values to each site in order to reach a conclusion that the areas of highest value will not be impacted as they are outside the area.

⁹ This has been prepared by Dr Naomi Woods and is presented in the Application as B.34A - New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd - Heritage Assessment (NZHP 2025a) (10 March 2026) and B.34B - New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd - Heritage Assessment (NZHP 2025a) (10 March 2026)

31. Their value lies in the fact this is an intact series of heritage and archaeological sites that form an interconnected landscape. This represents the continuous historic mining of the Bendigo and tells the stories of our past shaping our understanding of the Gold Rush era of our nation's history.

Noise and Vibration Effects

32. Notwithstanding that we have recommended a decline to the archaeological authority, we note the following in relation to noise and vibration:

- a. A preliminary assessment of blasting activities at the Bendigo Ophir Gold Project was undertaken by the applicant's Noise and Vibration Consultant at the request of HNZPT¹⁰.
- b. The assessment noted that blasting as part of the mining activity was likely to generate ground vibration levels that could affect nearby heritage features.
- c. This was best managed through a Blasting Vibration Management Plan that should incorporate:
 - i. Dilapidation surveys
 - ii. Test blasts
 - iii. Blast design optimisation

33. This information has not been incorporated into the Applicant's Heritage Assessment and may result in further effects on sites located outside, but, in close proximity to, the Project Area that have not been assessed.

Conclusion

34. As described in both the HNZPT s51 Report and the DOC suite of s51 Reports pertaining to historic heritage, this area is a highly significant historic landscape with a large number of intact interconnected archaeological sites, in addition to post 1900 historic heritage values.

35. The Project will modify or destroy the majority of the recorded archaeological sites in the Project area, resulting in a significant loss of historic heritage values.

36. Notwithstanding the Applicant's Heritage Assessment does consider that the Project will have an overall major impact on the heritage and archaeological values of the project area; it also concludes that both the granting of an archaeological authority and partial revocation of a

¹⁰ K.06 Marshall Day Acoustics – BOGP Blasting Vibration Effects on Heritage Structures(10 March 2026) included in the substantive application.

conservation covenant are appropriate and any adverse effects can be mitigated through conditions.

37. HNZPT continues to strongly disagree with this assessment, with more detail provided in its s51 Report at [13-17] and Appendix A of that Report.
38. HNZPT confirms its recommendation that the archaeological authority should be declined.
39. HNZPT also opposes the application to partially revoke the conservation covenant as this would result in a vulnerability for the significant historic heritage values that the covenant seeks to protect.