
MINUTE 1 OF THE EXPERT PANEL
Bream Bay Sand Extraction Project Expert Panel [FTAA-2511-1150]
13 April 2026
First Meeting / Project Overview Briefing / Preliminary Steps /
Unsolicited Correspondence

[1] Further to Minute 5 of the Panel Convener dated 31 March 2026, this Expert Panel has today commenced work on the Bream Bay Sand Extraction Project (**Project**), being a listed project within Schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (**FTAA**). While it is obviously very early days for the Panel, it issues this first minute to confirm a number of preliminary matters, and to provide interested parties with an update as to expected next steps.

First Meeting (with Panel Convener and EPA)

[2] On Tuesday 7 April 2026 the Panel had its first meeting with the Panel Convener and with the EPA staff that will be assisting with administrative matters. This meeting was administrative in nature only.

[3] The Panel particularly wishes to thank the Panel Convener for the steps that they have taken to date and for the orderly manner in which they have addressed various preliminary matters. Those matters are outlined in the minutes that have been issued by the Panel Convener and which are available on the Fast-track website.

Project Overview Briefing

[4] A Project Overview Briefing has been arranged for the Panel tomorrow, to be attended by the Applicant and representatives from the Northland Regional Council. The application is reasonably complex, involving a 208 page application / assessment of effects and 35 attachments, some of which also extend to hundreds of pages. The Project Overview Briefing will assist the Panel to navigate the documents before it in a timely way, particularly as may be necessary for its decision-making regarding invitations to comment (for which the Panel is provided only 10 working days).

[5] In case it is formally required, the Panel requests via this minute:

- (a) That the Applicant provide a Project Overview Briefing to the Panel on **Tuesday 14 April 2026, from 11am – 1pm.**
- (b) That representatives from the following parties attend this briefing:
 - (i) McCallum Brothers Limited (the Applicant); and
 - (ii) Northland Regional Council.

[6] The purpose of the briefing is to familiarise the Panel with:

- (a) the broad content of the application for approvals;
- (b) the key points of evidence (technical reports, assessments and other information) provided by the Applicant in support of the application;
- (c) the content and structure of the Applicant's proposed draft conditions; and
- (d) other relevant matters.

[7] During the briefing:

- (a) the Applicant will present a high-level overview of the application;
- (b) the Panel will have the opportunity to ask any preliminary questions about the application, noting that Panel members will not have had

an opportunity to consider matters in detail at this early stage. Questions of a substantive nature will be captured through the formal request for further information process; and

- (c) participants may raise any matters they wish to bring to the Panel's attention.

[8] Further details for briefing attendees can be provided by Keely Paler, Application Lead, at: info@fasttrack.govt.nz.

[9] The Panel does not consider it necessary to request that any other parties, including other statutory participants, mana whenua, and / or potential commenters, attend the briefing. We understand that the speed with which this briefing has been arranged, and the limited invited attendees, may be of concern. In particular, and importantly, the Panel appreciates that concerns could be raised that the briefing might not fully accord with tikanga.

[10] The Panel has considered this aspect carefully, and is fully cognisant of its obligation to apply the principles of natural justice and to adopt procedures that recognise tikanga Māori and mātauranga where appropriate.

[11] On balance, the Panel is of the view that it will be helpful to its understanding of the application to receive, as a preliminary step, an online briefing by the Applicant with the Northland Regional Council in attendance. Panel members have not had time to become fully informed of the detailed matters relating to the application, and the briefing will therefore assist the Panel's early understanding of the matters listed at paragraph [6], above. The increased understanding of the application will assist to inform the Panel's decision on who, other than the statutory participants, should be invited to comment.

[12] In the interests of transparency, and to provide future commenters with the same information as that provided to the Panel, the briefing will be recorded and made available on the Fast-track website. The Panel also anticipates issuing a minute following the briefing, particularly should any substantive matters arise.

Preliminary Steps (invitations to comment, and the Panel's site visit)

[13] The next formal step in the FTAA process is the Panel's issuing of invitations to comment (section 53 FTAA) which must be done by **Tuesday 28 April 2026**. Comments from invited persons will then be due by **Tuesday 26 May 2026**.

[14] The Panel will be undertaking a site visit prior to decision-making regarding invitations to comment. This will include a visit to land-based places of interest around Te Ākau Bream Bay and, weather permitting, a boat trip to view the Sand Extraction Area and Control Areas.

[15] It is intended to have the sand-mining vessel, the *William Fraser*, present within the Sand Extraction Area for the Panel's visit. Again, this will be subject to weather conditions and any operational constraints for the vessel at the relevant time. While some of the vessel's machinery and plant may be turned on for short periods, so that the Panel can observe these in operation (including from locations on land), no sand mining will be undertaken.

[16] The Panel anticipates that further site visits will be required, for example following receipt of invited comments.

Unsolicited Correspondence

[17] Various Panel Convener minutes make it clear that there have been several items of unsolicited correspondence received by the EPA relating to the Project. Some were received prior to this Panel's appointment, and some following. The Panel understands correspondence has been variously addressed to the EPA, the Panel Convener, and / or to the Expert Panel (including "once appointed").

[18] The Panel has asked the EPA to provide it with copies of the material received which is addressed to this Panel (or impliedly so), in order to determine whether to accept the correspondence, and if accepting the correspondence, any response or actions required. The Panel notes that under clause 10(1) of

Schedule 3 to the FTAA, it must regulate its own procedure as it thinks appropriate, without procedural formality, and in a manner that best promotes the just and timely determination of the approvals sought.

[19] A further minute should be expected shortly addressing unsolicited correspondence.

Decision Timing

[20] In terms of other relevant steps, the Panel notes the Panel Convener's provision of 90 working days following the receipt of invited comments for the Panel's decision making. The Panel's final decision documents are therefore due on **1 October 2026**, subject to processing of the application being suspended for any of the reasons outlined in section 60 of the FTAA, and to the date for inviting comments (section 53) being 28 April 2026.



Catherine Somerville-Frost

Bream Bay Sand Extraction Project Expert Panel Chair