
MINUTE 11 OF THE EXPERT PANEL

Ecology

Alternative to Brynderwyn Hills [FTAA-2603-1178]

[2 October 2026]

[1] The Panel has now received advice from its technical adviser, Dr Martin Neale, in relation to ecology. That advice remains in draft and has not yet been published or circulated during the suspension period, at the Applicant's request.

[2] The Panel has also reviewed the ecology peer review contained within the Cultural Impact Assessment provided by Pouwhenua o Tiakiriri Kūkupa Trust on behalf of Te Parawhau Hapū (dated July 2026) and the report received from the Department of Conservation under section 51(2)(c) of the FTAA¹, dated 29 July 2026.

[3] The Panel also observed various wetlands during its site visit undertaken on 5 August 2026 (as recorded in Minute 6).

[4] In light of that information, the Panel met with the Applicant on 1 October 2026. The purpose of the meeting was to signal the Panel's concerns with aspects of the ecological assessments undertaken on behalf of the Applicant (relating to both freshwater and terrestrial ecology) including in relation to methodology, consistency and reliability. The Panel indicated that it intends to request the Applicant to commission a peer review of those ecological assessments, which may involve some field verification.

[5] Given the conditions of the suspension (which restrict any new procedural

¹ Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

steps being undertaken during the suspension),² the Panel has asked the Applicant to consider and confirm, by **5 p.m. on 16 October 2026**, whether it would like the Panel to progress the following matters during the suspension period:

- (a) Publish Dr Neale's ecology advice on the fast-track website;
- (b) Provide a list of issues the Panel intends the Applicant to address in relation to ecology, in advance of formalising a request that the Applicant commission a peer review report once processing resumes;
- (c) Provide recommendations as to who the Panel considers would be a suitable peer reviewer on the basis that the Panel will require a reliable assessment to enable it to make findings on the ecological issues required to determine the application.

[6] The offer for the Panel to provide the information set out in paragraph [5] above during the suspension period assumes that the current suspension will continue until the 50th working day, being 20 October 2026, rather than ceasing earlier. The Applicant has indicated that it is currently unable to provide further clarity around when processing might resume, or whether, upon expiry of the 50 working days, it would request a further suspension.³

[7] The Panel has indicated its preliminary view that it is unlikely to return the application if the 50 working day suspension expires and the Applicant has not requested resumption of processing.⁴ Rather, the Panel anticipates it would continue processing the application. This would mean that comments from invited parties would fall due on the date that processing resumes. The Panel has indicated to the Applicant that it would be unlikely to grant a further suspension

² The Panel upheld the Applicant's request for a suspension on those terms, as recorded in Minute 7 dated 11 August 2026.

³ An application may be suspended for up to 100 working days in total, if it is suspended more than once, pursuant to section 66(6) of the FTAA.

⁴ The Panel is entitled to either return or resume processing of an application that has been suspended for 50 working days pursuant to section 66(2) of the FTAA.

until comments on the application are received.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MHill', is enclosed in a light gray rectangular box. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'M' being large and prominent.

Mary Hill
Alternative to Brynderwyn Hills Expert Panel Chair