



FTAA-2604-1206: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Auld Creek

Date submitted:	1 May 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-01141	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	8 May 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Send email to Ministers to invite written comments
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for the Auld Creek project 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Ashley Sycamore		
Acting Manager	Ben Bunting	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Acting General Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location

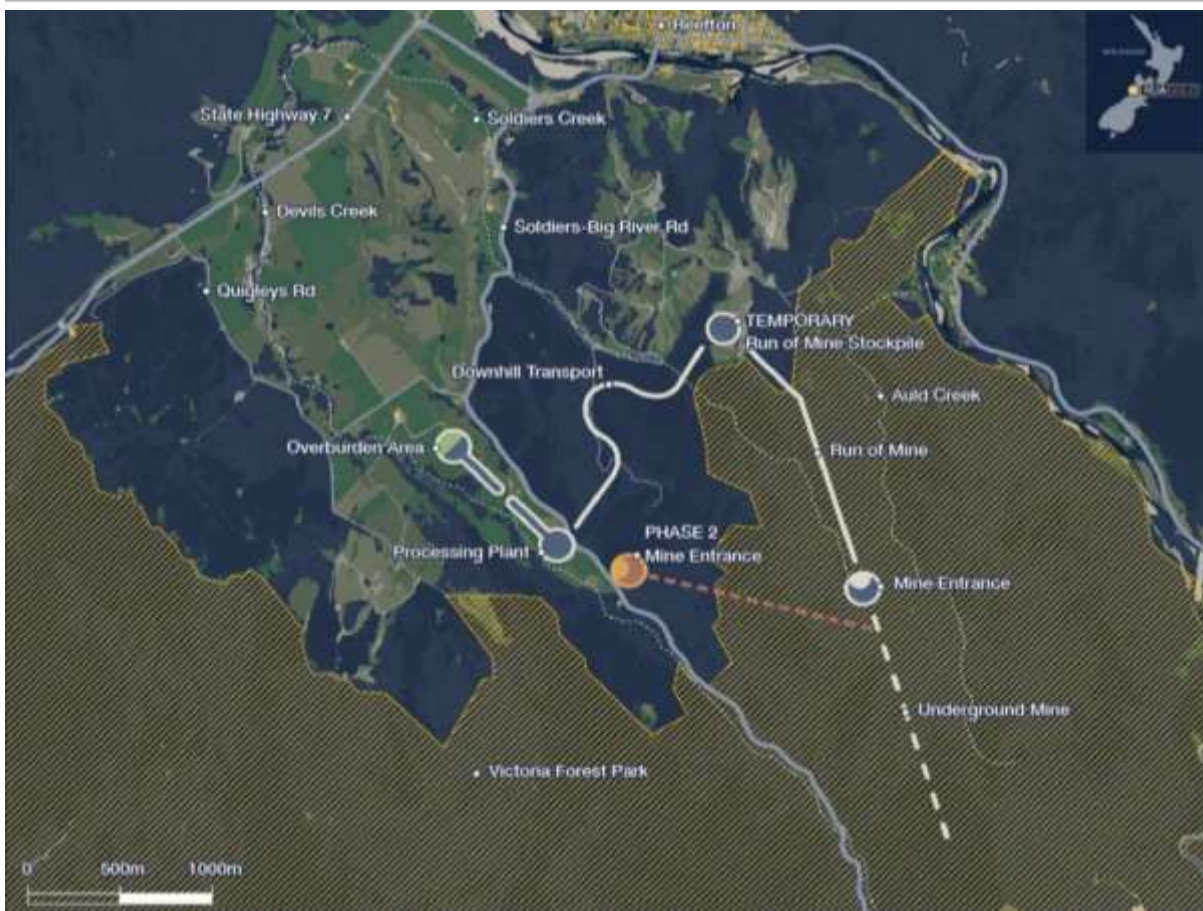


Image 1: Proposed site layout

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Reefton Resources Pty Limited (the applicant) to refer the Auld Creek project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to inform your final decision on whether to refer the project.

Project details

3. The project is for the phased development and operation of a new underground mine for the extraction of gold and antimony for approximately 6-8 years from the Auld Creek deposit. The mining permit is proposed for a duration of 30 years.
4. The project area encompasses multiple sites covering an area of approximately 1,009 hectares around three kilometres south of Reefton, within the Buller District of the West Coast Region. The project area is accessed from Quigleys Road, south of State Highway 7.
5. The project area includes public conservation land within Victoria Forest Park, administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC), as well as land owned by Ngāi

Tahu Forestry and privately owned land.

6. The applicant states the mining operation is to be undertaken in two phases. Phase one involves the development of a portal and adit (straight-line mine drive) on Crown land administered by DOC to access and mine the upper part of the deposit. Phase two involves accessing and mining the remaining deposit via an underground twin-decline tunnel from land owned by Ngāi Tahu Forestry.
7. The project also involves the closure and rehabilitation of the site over an estimated 2–5 years, including rehabilitation in accordance with an agreed closure plan, monitoring, and handover once closure criteria are met.
8. The project comprises the following activities:
 - a. continued mineral resource investigation and exploration progression at Auld Creek
 - b. establishing a new surface facilities area to house the surface infrastructure necessary to facilitate the development and operation of an underground mine located across privately owned farmland, disused Te Pūkenga land, and Ngāi Tahu Forestry land accessed via Quigleys Road
 - c. the establishment and operation of a temporary Run of Mine pad and associated haul road on Ngāi Tahu Forestry land
 - d. the required construction and upgrades of ancillary infrastructure including new network utility connections, public and private road upgrades and service connections
 - e. the construction, operation and maintenance of an access portal located on Ngāi Tahu Forestry land and associated access tunnel
 - f. the construction, operation and maintenance of a twin incline / decline tunnel extending from the access tunnel termination from Ngāi Tahu Forestry land to the Auld Creek orebody
 - g. construction, operation and maintenance of an access portal and associated adit at the top of the orebody located on DOC land
 - h. construction, operation and maintenance of the Auld Creek Underground Mine
 - i. activities over or within waterways, including the possible damming, diverting, taking and use, and construction of structures over and in waterways (including culverts)
 - j. take and use of groundwater
 - k. discharge of contaminants (including heat) to land, air and water
 - l. low impact surface and groundwater, ecological, meteorological, noise and vibration monitoring activities
 - m. ancillary activities that are required to support the activities identified above.
9. The applicant seeks the following approvals under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act
 - b. concessions under the Conservation Act 1987 as described in section 42(4)(e)

of the Act

- c. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act
- d. an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation for a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 as described in section 42(4)(j) of the Act
- e. an initial access arrangement under the Crown Minerals Act 1991 (CMA) as described in section 42(4)(l)
- f. a mining permit under the CMA as described in section 42(4)(n) of the Act.

Initial recommendations

- 10. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
- 11. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
- 12. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being:
 - a. West Coast Regional Council and Buller District Council as the relevant local authorities
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. the Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Resources as the other relevant portfolio Ministers
 - d. DOC (including the Director-General of Conservation) and New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals (within the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment) as the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the parties in Appendix 3 as the other identified Māori groups.
- 13. As the project area includes public conservation land, we note you must obtain a report from the Director-General of Conservation in accordance with section 19(1) of the Act.

Other parties to be invited under section 17(5)

- 14. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following parties as additional persons under section 17(5) of the Act. We have outlined the rationale for including each party:
 - a. *Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi*, as the agency responsible for State Highway 7, noting the applicant proposes intersection upgrades to the state highway to facilitate the project
 - b. *Chief Executive of the New Zealand Minerals Council*, as the industry association for New Zealand's minerals and mining sector, who could provide insights to inform the assessment of the project's significant regional and national benefits

- c. *Minister for the South Island*, as the Minister responsible for coordinating the South Island's regional interests, including economic development and infrastructure
- d. *Minister for Regional Development*, as the Minister responsible for supporting regional economic development, who may comment on the extent to which the project could deliver significant regional or national benefits
- e. *Minister for Economic Growth*, as the Minister responsible for promoting sustainable economic growth and productivity, who may comment on the extent to which the project could deliver significant regional or national economic benefits.

Action sought

15. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature



Ben Bunting
Acting Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Area
	Auld Creek (the project)	Reefton Resources Pty Limited (the applicant)	The project area encompasses multiple sites covering an area of approximately 1,009 hectares around three kilometres south of Reefton, within the Buller District of the West Coast Region. The project area includes public conservation land within Victoria Forest Park, administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC), as well as land owned by Ngāi Tahu Forestry and privately owned land.
Project description	The project is for the phased development and operation of a new underground mine for the extraction of gold and antimony for approximately 6-8 years from the Auld Creek deposit, near Reefton in the West Coast region. The mining permit is proposed for a duration of 30 years. The applicant states the mining operation is to be undertaken in two phases. Phase one involves the development of a portal and adit (straight line mine drive) on Crown land administered by DOC to access and mine the upper part of the deposit. Phase two involves accessing and mining the remaining deposit via an underground twin decline tunnel from land owned by Ngāi Tahu Forestry. The project also involves the closure and rehabilitation of the site over an estimated 2–5 years, including rehabilitation in accordance with an agreed closure plan, monitoring, and handover once closure criteria are met. The project comprises the following activities: - continued mineral resource investigation and exploration progression at Auld Creek - establishing a new surface facilities area to house the surface infrastructure necessary to facilitate the development and operation of an underground mine located across privately owned farmland, disused Te Pūkenga land, and Ngāi Tahu Forestry land accessed via Quigleys Road - the establishment and operation of a temporary Run of Mine pad and associated haul road on Ngāi Tahu Forestry land - the required construction and upgrades of ancillary infrastructure including new network utility connections, public and private road upgrades and service connections - the construction, operation and maintenance of an access portal located on Ngāi Tahu Forestry land and associated access tunnel - the construction, operation and maintenance of a twin incline / decline tunnel extending from the access tunnel termination from Ngāi Tahu Forestry land to the Auld Creek orebody - construction, operation and maintenance of an access portal and associated adit at the top of the orebody located on DOC land - construction, operation and maintenance of the Auld Creek Underground Mine - activities over or within waterways, including the possible damming, diverting, taking and use, and construction of structures over and in waterways (including culverts) - take and use of groundwater - discharge of contaminants (including heat) to land, air and water - low impact surface and groundwater, ecological, meteorological, noise and vibration monitoring activities - ancillary activities that are required to support the activities identified above. The applicant seeks the following approvals under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project: - resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act - concessions under the Conservation Act 1987 as described in section 42(4)(e) of the Act - wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act - an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation for a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 as described in section 42(4)(j) of the Act - an initial access arrangement under the Crown Minerals Act 1991 (CMA) as described in section 42(4)(l) - a mining permit under the CMA as described in section 42(4)(n) of the Act.		
Notification and/or consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has notified in writing and/or consulted:		
	<i>the relevant local authorities</i> - Buller District Council (BDC) - West Coast Regional Council (WCRC)	<i>the relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</i> - Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu - Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae	<i>the relevant administering agencies</i> - DOC / Director-General of Conservation - Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
Section 22 assessment criteria			
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)] The only current GPS relates to grocery competition. This is not relevant to your decisions on the project. You <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant. The applicant considers the project, being a new underground mine for the extraction of gold and antimony, is a development or infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits, for the reasons outlined below:		

	<i>The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]</i> The applicant states that the project itself has not been identified as a priority project. However, the applicant considers that the project aligns with priorities set out in the <i>Mineral Strategy for New Zealand 2040</i>, released by MBIE in January 2025, which establishes government goals and targets for the mining sector, including supporting a productive and resilient economy through responsible and sustainable practices. The applicant notes that the strategy includes a goal to double the value of mineral exports to \$3 billion by 2035 and identifies three growth drivers: scaling up current mineral exports, realising new critical mineral opportunities in New Zealand, and adding value through domestic processing and refining. The applicant considers the project meets these drivers by scaling up gold exports, developing the largest known antimony deposit in New Zealand (which the strategy identifies as the country's most significant antimony resource), and expanding on-site processing in Reefton, including processing antimony into mineral concentrate rather than exporting raw ore. <i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant states that the project will deliver significant economic benefits at local, regional, and national levels, and that without the project the assessed \$597 million in foreign direct investment, \$2.3 billion in exports, and around 200 permanent jobs would not occur. The applicant cites economic assessment evidence indicating total export revenue of approximately \$2.269 billion over the production period (net present value – NPV of \$1.636 billion), average New Zealand-based capital and operating expenditure of around \$125 million per year (totalling \$1.125 billion), and a total gross domestic product (GDP) contribution of \$3.627 billion over the project lifecycle (NPV \$2.462 billion), excluding large imported items. The applicant further states that the project would support substantial employment in the Buller District, with average total employment effects of 477 people and peak employment of up to 771 people, and would generate total tax contributions of approximately \$359 million (NPV \$261 million). <i>Will support primary industries, including aquaculture [s22(2)(a)(v)]</i> The applicant states that mining is a primary production activity, as defined in the National Planning Standard 2019. The applicant considers the project will support employment for mine workers and enable investment in operational capacity, infrastructure, and security. The applicant further considers that referral of the project would promote investor certainty in the near and long term and encourage further exploration and development in Reefton. On this basis, the applicant considers the project would contribute to supporting New Zealand's primary industries. <i>Will support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum [s22(2)(a)(vi)]</i> The applicant states the project would support the development of natural resources through the extraction of gold and antimony, which they consider will generate significant regional and national employment and economic benefits. <i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant states that the project has been assessed as consistent with the following local and regional planning documents: the West Coast Regional Policy Statement 2020; the West Coast Regional Land and Water Plan; the West Coast Regional Air Quality Plan; the Buller Long Term Plan; the Operative Buller District Plan; the Te Tai o Poutini Plan; and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu's Freshwater Policy Statement. The applicant considers that this consistency is achieved through project design decisions, including the location of surface infrastructure and the use of underground mining methods, supported by early engagement with regulators, iwi authorities, and technical experts.		
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i> The applicant considers that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project by enabling approvals to be obtained more efficiently than under normal statutory processes. The applicant identifies that the project requires multiple approvals that would otherwise be sought under different legislative regimes and before different decision-makers, including resource consents, permits, and concessions. Given the range of approvals required, the applicant considers that using the fast-track approvals process would significantly streamline decision-making for the project. The applicant further states that approvals for new mining projects under standard processes are typically lengthy, complex, and costly, often involving public notification, hearings, and appeals that can extend timeframes by several years. The applicant considers that referral to the fast-track approvals process would significantly reduce both the processing timeframe (by approximately two years) and the costs associated with authorising the project compared to normal processes. <i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant states that the project, while large-scale, is not overly complex as it involves an underground mine with effects that are well understood and can be managed through appropriate measures, as demonstrated by comparable operations in the West Coast region, such as the Snowy River Mine (identified by the applicant as similar to the current project – located approximately 17 kilometres south of the project area). The applicant considers that independent technical reports will support a high-quality application, enabling efficient processing and ensuring the project will not materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process. The applicant notes that nearly all required approvals, including the proposed mining permit, can be sought through the fast-track approvals process, with remaining approvals outside the Act limited to minor access arrangements over private land that can be progressed in parallel. The applicant further states that any NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) approvals related to public road construction or diversion would occur during detailed design or later construction phases and would not impact the fast-track approvals process.		
Minister invites comments	<i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i> - relevant local authorities: - WCRC - BDC - the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development - other relevant portfolio Ministers: - Minister of Conservation – as the project requires approvals under the Conservation Act 1987 (including the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983), the Wildlife Act 1953, and the CMA (on Crown land administered by DOC) - Minister for Resources – as the project involves the development and operation of a new underground mine for the extraction of gold and antimony - relevant administering agencies: - DOC / Director-General of Conservation – as the project requires approvals under the Conservation Act 1987 (including the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983), the Wildlife Act 1953, and	<i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i> We recommend you invite comments from the following additional persons, for the specified reasons: - the Chief Executive of NZTA – as the agency responsible for State Highway 7, noting the applicant proposes intersection upgrades to the state highway to facilitate the project - the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Minerals Council – as the industry association for New Zealand's minerals and mining sector, who could provide insights to inform the assessment of the project's significant regional and national benefits - Minister for the South Island – as the Minister responsible for coordinating the South Island's regional interests, including economic development and infrastructure - Minister for Regional Development – as the Minister responsible for supporting regional economic development, who may comment on the extent to which the project could deliver significant regional or national benefits	<i>The Minister may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.</i> We have not identified any further information to be sought at this stage.

	the CMA (on Crown land administered by DOC – the appropriate Minister for the relevant land is the Minister of Conservation) – New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals (within MBIE) – as the project requires an access arrangement and mining permit under the CMA e. the Māori groups identified in Appendix 3.	e. Minister for Economic Growth – as the Minister responsible for promoting sustainable economic growth and productivity, who may comment on the extent to which the project could deliver significant regional or national economic benefits.	
Recommendations			Minister's decision
a.	Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the parties under section 17.		Noted
b.	Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.		Noted
c.	Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.		Noted
d.	Note that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.		Noted
e.	Note that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.		Noted
f.	Agree to progress the Auld Creek project to our Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).		Yes / No
g.	Agree to provide the application to, and invite written comments from: i. WCRC and BDC as the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a) ii. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development under section 17(1)(b) iii. the Minister of Conservation and the Minister for Resources as the other relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b) iv. DOC / Director-General of Conservation and New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals (within MBIE) as the relevant administering agencies under section 17(1)(c) v. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups under section 17(1)(d) vi. any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified.		Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
h.	Agree to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5): i. the Chief Executive of NZTA ii. the Chief Executive of the New Zealand Minerals Council iii. the Minister for the South Island iv. the Minister for Regional Development v. the Minister for Economic Growth.		Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i.	Note that section 19(1) of the Act requires you to obtain and consider a report in relation to the use of public conservation land for the project from the Director-General of Conservation.		Noted
j.	Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.		Noted
k.	Agree to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.		Yes / No

Signed:

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Appendix 1: Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application, then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. any other relevant portfolio Ministers
 - d. the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - f. the owners of Māori land in the project area (if applicable)
 - g. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

Appendix 2: Application documents for the Auld Creek project

Appendix 3: List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity – Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (s18(2)(a))
Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae	Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga – Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)); Treaty settlement entity – Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (s18(2)(a))
Pokeka Poutini Ngāi Tahu Limited	Other Māori groups with relevant interest (s18(2)(k))