

File ref: 26-BRF-02334 / FTAA-2605-1237

31 August 2026

Tim Rhodes
Wi Pere Trust (the applicant)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

c/o Susan Jones
Mitchell Daysh Limited (the agent)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Tim

Notice of Decisions on the referral application for the Pouarua Water Storage Scheme project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

This notice of decisions is for a referral application received from Wi Pere Trust (the applicant) for the Pouarua Water Storage Scheme project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act).

Project details

The project description is to construct and operate a water storage scheme located at and adjacent to Tangihanga Station, Tangihanga, and an associated water distribution system in the Gisborne Region.

The project involves the construction of a dam to form a new large-capacity reservoir, with a footprint that would occupy up to 300 hectares, on the Pouarua Stream and a water distribution system extending throughout the district located within road reserve. The preferred dam configuration consists of a zoned earth embankment structure with height ranging from approximately 34 to 39 meters and crest length between approximately 190 to 230 meters. The projected normal top water level ranges from 60 to 65 meters above sea level, creating a reservoir storage capacity between approximately 25.1 and 38.6 million cubic meters respectively.

The reservoir would store water collected from local catchment runoff and from pumping water currently available for allocation from the Waipaoa River during high river flow periods. Stored water would then be released when demand is high or during dry-year water restrictions to a downstream water distribution system for a range of potential uses.

Additional elements of the project include: associated hydraulic structures, a control room and equipment building, a pump station and associated building, mechanical and electrical equipment, a sedimentation and storage holding pond (if required), a rising main up to 4.5 kilometres long,

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power supplies from the existing network augmented by other sources if required, and a new permanent access road.

The project will require the proposed approvals:

- a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
- b. approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
- c. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
- d. approvals or dispensations under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.

Statutory framework for referral applications

The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

The project can only be accepted if the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) is satisfied the criteria in section 22 are met, which includes being satisfied the project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits and referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost effective way than under normal processes, and is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Under section 21(3) of the Act, the Minister must decline a referral application if:

- the Minister is satisfied that the project does not meet the criteria in section 22
- the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity
- the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision.

Additionally, the Minister has the discretion to decline a referral application for any other reason, even if the project meets the criteria outlined in section 22 of the Act.

Decision on referral application

The Minister has decided to accept the referral application under section 21(1)(c) and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process under section 26(2)(a). The Minister is satisfied that the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act, for the reasons detailed below.

Reasons for accepting referral application

The Minister is satisfied the project:

- a. is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits; and
- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process –
 - i. would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes; and
 - ii. is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Specifically, the Minister is satisfied the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act because:

- a. it is a development/infrastructure project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)] because it involves the construction of new water storage and distribution infrastructure and it would:
 - i. deliver new regionally significant infrastructure through the construction of a water storage dam with a capacity of up to 38.6 million cubic metres of water, and a network to distribute that water throughout the region [section 22(2)(a)(ii)]
 - ii. deliver significant economic benefits through a net increase of about \$628m in value-added GDP to the regional economy and enable approximately 555 full-time equivalent years of employment [section 22(2)(a)(ix)]
 - iii. support primary industries through the provision of water to enable resilience to the effects of dry years and droughts, and improve the certainty of investment in primary production in the region [section 22(2)(a)(v)]
 - iv. support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards by providing resilience to droughts and the effects of severe weather events [section 22(2)(a)(viii)]
- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project [section 22(1)(b)(i)], including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes because it enables multiple approvals to be considered concurrently, timeframes are shorter than standard processes, public notification is precluded and appeals are limited to the High Court on points of law
- c. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)(ii)] because, while it is a large-scale project, it is not novel in the New Zealand context and is not out of step with the kind of projects an expert panel would be expected to consider under standard processes.

The Minister is satisfied there is no reason they must decline the project under section 21(3) of the Act. The Minister is also satisfied there is no reason to decline the project under section 21(4) and (5) of the Act.

Specified matters for accepted referral application

1. Wi Pere Trust who lodged the referral application are specified as the person authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project under section 27(2).
2. In relation to a substantive application for the project:
 - a. A deadline for lodging the application applies under section 27(3)(b)(i), the application must be lodged by two years from the date of issue of this letter.
 - b. The following information must be submitted with the application lodged for the project – section 27(3)(b)(ii):

- i. evidence of any consultation undertaken, or agreements reached between the applicant and Gisborne District Council regarding approvals required for the locating of the distribution network within road reserves
 - ii. an integrated transport assessment which includes, but is not limited to construction traffic volumes, haulage routes, access arrangements, state highway corridor occupation, and temporary traffic management requirements
- c. The persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to any specified in section 53 – section 27(3)(b)(iii): the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi.

Under section 28 of the Act, the Secretary for the Environment must also give written notice of decisions made by the Minister on an accepted referral application to the parties specified in Appendix 1 of this letter.

If you have any queries about this notice of decisions, please email referral@fasttrack.govt.nz and include the name of the lead contact – Max Gander-Cooper.

If you have any queries about the substantive process, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 225 537).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Frame', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephanie Frame

Manager – Fast-track Operations

Appendix 1: Section 28 – Notice of Minister’s decision on accepted referral application

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Section 28(1)(a) – The applicant	Wi Pere Trust
Section 28(1)(ii) – Anyone invited to comment on the application	
<i>Relevant local authorities</i>	Gisborne District Council
<i>Relevant portfolio Ministers</i>	Minister for the Environment Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti Minister for Māori Development Minister of Conservation Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Minister of Agriculture Associate Minister of Agriculture
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	Department of Conservation Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga
<i>The Māori groups under s17(d)</i>	Rongowhakaata Iwi Trust Te Aitanga ā Māhaki Trust Rongowhakaata Settlement Trust Te Whānau a Kai Te Rūnanganui o Ngā Ariki Kaiputahi Trust Ngā Uri o Tamanui Trust Tāmanuhiri Tūtū Poroporo Trust Takitimu Marae Mangatū Blocks Incorporation
<i>Owners of Māori land in the project area</i>	Te Tumu Paeroa Office of the Māori Trustee Wi Pere Trust
<i>Any other persons under s17(5)</i>	Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi Chief Executive of Trust Tairāwhiti Minister for Regional Development Associate Minister for Regional Development Minister of Climate Change Minister for Economic Growth
Section 28(2) – Other parties for an accepted referral application	
<i>The Panel Convener</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>Any iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities (other than those that must be notified as identified above) that the Minister considers have an interest in the matter</i>	No additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities have been identified beyond those listed above.
<i>Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	As identified above.