

13/01/2026

Organisation:

Tawhiri-Matea Ltd

Darren Walton - Director

Samara Martin - Shareholder

Address:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Postal address:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Email:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Phone:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We can receive emails and our email addresses are correct (preferred method of communication.)

Engagement and consultation

1. We became aware of the application for the Waitaha Hydro Project (the project) via letter on 29/11/2025. Prior to this we believed the application had been rejected based on news articles in national media.
2. When researching the purchasing of our land in the Waitaha Valley Westpower's Facebook page stated the project was 'rejected.' The 'rejected' status of the project was taken into consideration when we purchased the land on 14/02/2023.
3. The first letter we received from the Fast-track team on the 29/11/2025, we followed the link provided to read the documents related to the latest application.
4. We number of reports and information available to be overwhelming. Being only available in digital format and we did not find it user-friendly.
5. We invested a week emailing the Fast-track team and Westpower requesting hard copies of all the documents only to be told that this would not be provided because "it runs to over 2000 pages, including a comprehensive list of studies as appendices."
6. We were traveling so our access to the internet was unpredictable. It is reasonable to expect, given the significant impact the project will have on adjacent landowners, Westpower could anticipate that digital access does not meet the needs of all parties invited to comment.
7. We were unable to access all the reports due to our circumstances so this may contribute to mistakes when commenting.
8. Westpower did send a USB containing the Fast-track Application documents on the 08/12/2025. These mitigated issues related to internet access but was unhelpful in terms of navigating the large volume of information as it was still in a digital format.
9. In the Westpower Fast-track approval application dated 03/05/2024 it is stated that "Westpower has consulted widely with a large group of stakeholders including but not limited to: The local communities – information evenings..." these were advertised in local newspapers, on local radio and on social media.
10. This approach assumes that all landowners live in the local community and therefore all access local media. We do not live in the district, so we were unaware of these notices. Furthermore, the Westpower Facebook page had not been updated for two years (at which point the project had been rejected by the former government on environmental grounds).
11. It is unreasonable to expect that their Facebook page would be regularly checked if it offers irregular updates.

12. Additionally, only ten days' notice was given on the Facebook page, meaning it was unlikely we would have been able to arrange travel from Wellington to attend.
13. Westpower should have ensured that all impacted by the project were directly invited to these meetings, with time to travel for those who do not live in the district.
14. A panel letter arrived at the Company's registered address inviting us to comment 29/11/2025. The second letter dated the 16/12/2025 was only seen yesterday 12/01/26 after we returned from holiday.
15. It is assumed that the Tawhiri-Matea director's email address could have been found through both the district and regional councils as we pay rates to both.
16. Westpower was aware that we were traveling, and they have Samara Martin's email address because it was used multiple times when contacting The Hydro Team on waitahahydro@westpower.co.nz. In future please can all correspondence be sent to both email addresses: d.walton@cnr.co.nz, s.martin@cnr.co.nz
17. Westpower states that another opportunity to speak directly with their experts was provided at AgFest. This is another example of assuming all affected parties live on the West Coast or attend AgFest.
18. In the report released in July 2025 (prepared by Rodger Griffiths for Westpower Ltd) in Appendix 3 there are several statements that are untrue in our case. These include "Engagement with the local community has occurred over a long period given the time this project has been underway".
19. In our case the first we heard was on 29/11/2025 (a little over a month ago) when we received the invitation to comment.
20. This report also states that contact numbers were provided for adjacent landowners. They were not in our case.
21. We contacted Westpower on the number on their website asking for a call back. We received a telephone call, but being away from home without our notes, we were unable to take full advantage of the opportunity.
22. When I asked if I could call again given the circumstances, I was again directed to their information email address.
23. In future it would be helpful to be assigned a Westpower spokesperson who we can contact directly as further questions arise.
24. In the Fast-track approval application submitted on 03/05/2024 there is a claim that "specific engagement (including meetings) took place with...adjacent landowners."
25. No 'specific engagement' occurred in our case, not in any form, before the date of the first letter. Indeed, the only 'specific engagement' offered to us was when we received the letter inviting us to comment.

26. We used Westpower's online information request form when we were attempting to receive hard copies of the submission documents. However, we lost access from 19/12/2025 until 05/01/2026. They were closed for the Christmas/New Year period. Despite this, when it was available, we typically received a response within 24 hours.
27. In Minute #3 released by the Panel it is stated "The Panel acknowledges the volume of material associated with the Waitaha Hydro application...Directs the applicant to make available one hard copy of the application at the Westland District Council office". We do not live in the district and by the time we visited our farm in Pukekura the office was closed for the Christmas/New Year period (closed from 12pm on 24/12/2025. Reopened 05/01/2026.)
28. Inviting us to comment on a project that will significantly affect the peaceful enjoyment of our land and potentially access to some of our resources during the construction phase at this time of year limits our ability to do so. It is an unreasonable expectation that we could appropriately respond to the volume of information within the time available given difficulties access the information and given the closures during the holiday period.
29. We had pre-existing travel and family obligations, alongside a heavy workload to complete before business closed over the Christmas/New Year period. Those organisations appointed to support us also shut down over many weeks during this time.

Gravel extraction:

1. The map showing the area consents are being sought for gravel extraction indicates that this will be hard against our Waitaha River boundary (Our North/East Boundary).
2. We have questions regarding Riparian rights. We believe we have rights to request gravel extraction from that part of the river under the District Plan. Specifically:
 - a. Rule 29. Gravel extraction Gravel extraction from the bed of a river is a permitted activity provided the following conditions are met: Either: (i) The gravel is extracted from the bed for use in reasonable domestic or agricultural purposes on a landholding adjacent to the extraction site, and the quantity does not exceed 1000 cubic metres in any 12 month period from rivers listed under Schedule A or 500 cubic metres in any 12 month period from rivers listed in Schedule B; or (ii) The gravel is extracted from one of the sites listed in Schedule 12 and the quantity extracted from each site does not exceed 300 cubic metres per person in any 12 month period; or (iii) If Rule 29 (i) or (ii) do not apply, the quantity extracted per

person from any river does not exceed 10 cubic metres per month. And:

(a) Persons wishing to remove gravel must notify the Regional Council in writing of the location, size and timing of the take prior to the take occurring; and (b) No refuelling of equipment, or fuel storage, is to occur on any area of a riverbed; and (c) Extraction takes place: 10 i) Only on the dry bed of the river and; ii) At least 5 metres from any river bank; and iii) No deeper than the level of water in the river.

3. We claim an existing opportunity to access resources is afforded to us as adjoining landowners, and that we can meet the conditions of the permitted activity. We have an interest in the gravel you are intending to extract. We also have an investment into obtaining that gravel with a formed track to the river.
4. Reading the project mapping coordinates for the riverbed gravel extraction at Location 6 gives us significant concern. The coordinates (particularly the southern coordinates) appear to infringe well past the river edge, and into our private land. We assume this is some sort of error, but it does not inspire any sort of confidence when we are required to check your documentation to detect such. Please could you do your own checking to establish the exact locations of your gravel extraction activity. We would like a further conversation about this and any likely resource consent application you make, as your intention is outside a permitted activity.
5. According to the map provided the approximate location of the gravel screening area is directly opposite our Northern boundary. We were unable to locate information about times of operation and dust, noise and light pollution as these will most affect us daily when we are on our land.

Location of transmission lines

1. According to the Fast-track approvals application submitted on the 03/05/2024 there is a section explaining that, at that time, the option of running the transmission line across the Waitaha river was still being considered. This suggests that the lines may go down Allen Road. We assume that it has since been confirmed that it will instead run down Waitaha Road.
2. If this decision has not yet been finalised, we would like to be directly consulted.

Construction timeframes

1. There are contradictions in reports regarding the estimated construction timeframes. It is the construction that will have the most impact on us. One states 3 – 4 years minimum whilst the Fast-track application states 2 – 4 years. Though we recognize that word-of-mouth has little value it has been shared that a Westpower employee stated it would take ten years to construct. We also note that an application has been lodged seeking a fifteen-year construction consent.

2. In the Fast-track application, based on the assumption consents move quickly and no unforeseen issues arise, site commencement (whatever that means in practice) will begin in July 2026 and the project itself will be completed in December 2029.
3. We request that we are kept accurately informed about any and all changes related to time frames as this will allow us to make informed choices about our investment of time and resources. The noise from gravel screening may make our time there uncomfortable, we seek a reasonable peaceful enjoyment of the natural environment.

Environment

1. Though we recognise that Forest and Bird were not invited to comment on this latest application we do support the submission to Westpower's 2016 DOC concession application. We believe their expert insight is still relevant.
2. We hope to see significant investment made by Westpower in the Waitaha Valley itself by conducting flora and fauna pest control.
3. We hold concerns about pests such as deer, geese, rabbits, ahares, goats and pigs being pushed onto our pastures from the riverbed and up the valley. If this were to happen in excess, we would incur financial costs and potential loss of business. We hold a concern about the geese, which when displaced can quickly destroy pasture.
4. We dispute the argument that the Waitaha valley, and the Morgan Gorge in particular, is not "high on 'naturalness' due to a number of modifications, including pests, evidence of tracks, huts and a swing bridge and for its use for hunting and kayaking." It can be argued that it is the 'naturalness' that brings people into the valley (including tourists who contribute to the financial wellbeing of the coast in general) and therefore the swing bridge, tracks and huts add value.
5. Pests certainly are a concern; however, this is a national issue that requires investment and support to address. Pest management is important to us, which is why we participate in programmes that target introduced species.
6. For us we chose to purchase land in the Waitaha Valley because of its natural beauty and quiet environment. In the Fast-track application there is a quote that particularly resonated for us; "The effects on natural character, landscape and visual amenity would be more than minor at a local level, mainly due to the industrial intrusion into an otherwise natural environment."

General comments

1. For us there will be no benefit of your project (we have no power connection and do not anticipate obtaining one). There is no compensation for what we will lose

in terms of our peaceful enjoyment of the land during the construction phase of the project.

2. At this stage there are many unanswered questions. It is hoped that future engagement and consultation will be managed in a way that allows us to participate fully, understanding that we do not live in South Westland, and we travel often. Please can all future communications be sent via email to both the addresses listed above.