

Attachment 6 to Memorandum #7: Response to RFI #3 Statement of Mason Jackson

Date	21 January 2026
To	Waitaha Hydro Expert Panel FTAA-2505-1069
From	Mason Jackson
Project advice provided for	<i>Waitaha Hydro Scheme</i>
Documents referred to	<i>NPS Renewable Electricity Generation Amendment 2025</i> <i>NPS for Electricity Networks Amendment 2025</i>
Signature	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 My name is Mason Jackson. I prepared the Waitaha Hydro Substantive Application (the “**Application**”) for the Waitaha Hydro Project (the “**Project**”).
- 1.2 In December 2025, ten national direction instruments were approved and came into force on 15 January 2026. Three of the instruments are new and seven are amendments to existing instruments. This bundle of new and amended national direction instruments has been approved by the Government to make it easier for councils to plan and deliver infrastructure and enable growth in the primary sector.

2. Panel Request for Further Information (22 December 2025)

- 2.1 In its third Request for Information (**RFI #3**), the Panel has requested the following information in respect of these recent changes in national direction;
- 1 *Identification of which of the new and/or amended national direction instruments are relevant to the Project; and*
 - 2 *For any relevant new or changed national direction instruments, provide:*
 - a. *A brief summary of those instruments/changes;*

- b. *An updated assessment of the Project against any of the relevant new and/or amended national direction instruments; and*
- c. *Confirmation from the relevant experts who relied on or undertook their assessments against the national direction instruments in force at the time as to whether and if so to what extent the changes have impacted their conclusions.*

2.2 I have been asked by Westpower Limited (the “**Applicant**”) to provide a response to these requests. To this end, I address each of these requests below.

3. Relevant new and/or amended national direction instruments

3.1 New and/or amended national direction instruments relevant to the Project include:

- a) The National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011 Amended 2025 (“**NPS-REG**”); and
- b) The National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks 2008 Amended 2025 (“**NPS-EN**”).

3.2 Sections 4 and 5 of this statement respectively provide summaries of the changes to the NPS-REG and NPS-EN along with detailed respective assessments of the Project against each amended instrument.

3.3 For the avoidance of doubt:

- a) The new National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025 (“**NPS-NH**”) is not relevant because it does not apply to infrastructure as defined in the Act¹. In this respect, the Project meets the Act’s definition of infrastructure since it involves *“facilities for the generation of electricity, lines used or intended to be used to convey electricity, and support structures for lines used or intended to be used to convey electricity”*;

¹ NPS-NH Clause 1.3 (2)

- b) The new National Policy Statement for Infrastructure 2025 (“**NPS-I**”) is also not relevant because it excludes the Project’s activities². That is, it explicitly excludes the following:

“renewable electricity generation activities and assets managed under the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011; and

the electricity transmission network and electricity distribution network activities and assets managed under the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission 2008 and its amendments.”

- c) The amended National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (“**NPS-IB**”) remains not relevant since it still excludes the development, operation, maintenance or upgrade of renewable electricity generation assets and activities and electricity transmission network assets and activities³; and
- d) The amendments made to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (“**NPS-FM**”) and the National Environmental Standard for Freshwater (“**NES-F**”) are not relevant since these changes are focussed on quarrying and mining activities, especially in relation to natural inland wetlands.

4. Summary of changes to the NPS-REG and statutory assessment of the Project

Summary of the changes to the NPS-REG

4.1 The amendments to the NPS-REG are to help achieve the Government’s objective of significantly increasing the supply of renewable electricity in New Zealand to achieve the country’s energy security and climate goals. The previous version of the NPS-REG was not delivering the desired acceleration of renewable electricity generation development to achieve these goals.

4.2 More specifically, the changes to the NPS-REG;

² NPS-I Clause 1.3 (1)

³ NPS-IB Clause 1.3 (3)

- a) Strengthen policy direction to recognise the significance of renewable electricity;
- b) Provide a more certain consenting environment for renewable electricity generation proposals, including for small-scale initiatives;
- c) Recognise Māori interests;
- d) Protect renewable electricity generation from reverse sensitivity;
- e) Recognise the operational and functional need to locate renewable electricity generation where a renewable resource is available; and
- f) Align with other national direction.

Statutory assessment of the Project against the Amended NPS-REG

4.3 Due to the large scale amendment made to the NPS-REG, a detailed assessment of the Project against this national direction instrument is provided below for the purpose of replacing Section 7.1.7.1 of the Application⁴.

Definitions

4.4 Relevant definitions set out Part 1.4 of the NPS-REG include:

ancillary renewable electricity generation (REG) activities mean an activity that supports and is subsidiary to a REG activity, including but not limited to:

- (a) vegetation clearance and tree trimming;*
- (b) earthworks and land disturbance;*
- (c) construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of access tracks, bridges and culverts; and*
- (d) construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of power supply and telecommunication cables and devices.*

renewable electricity generation (REG) means the generation of electricity from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, or ocean current energy sources

⁴ National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011.

renewable electricity generation (REG) activities include the full range of activities required for REG, including small-scale and community-scale REG, including:

- (a) the investigation, construction, operation, monitoring, maintenance, upgrade, repowering, decommissioning and removal of REG assets;
- (b) the storage of generated electricity, whether connected to REG, the electricity network or directly to a site or community;
- (c) the conveyance of generated electricity to electricity networks or directly to end users;
- (d) all ancillary REG activities; but
- (e) does not include electricity network assets as defined by the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission 2008 and its amendments

renewable electricity generation (REG) assets mean the physical components and structures for REG, including small-scale and community-scale REG, and include:

- (a) the supporting infrastructure required for ancillary REG activities and to generate and store electricity, such as monitoring equipment, cabling, access tracks and roads; and
- (b) the infrastructure required to convey generated and stored electricity to electricity networks or directly to end users

4.5 In summary, Westpower's proposal is a **renewable electricity generation (REG) Project** involving **REG activities** (including **REG ancillary activities**) and the construction, operation and maintenance of **REG assets**.

Objective

4.6 The overarching objective of the NPS-REG is to:

- a) ensure the national, regional and local benefits of REG are provided for;
- b) enable REG capacity and output to significantly increase;
- c) enable REG to support the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities, and for their health and safety;

- d) *enable REG to provide greater security of electricity supply and resilience to supply disruptions to all people and communities;*
- e) *enable REG to support achieving New Zealand's emission reduction target and implementation of the emissions reduction plan under the Climate Change Response Act 2002; and*
- f) *ensure REG is developed and operated in a safe, efficient and effective manner while managing the adverse effects from or on REG activities.*

Assessment

4.7 This objective is strongly directed towards “enabling” REG, and in doing so, recognises the raft of national, regional and local benefits that a well-designed and well managed REG asset can deliver.

4.8 The Waitaha Hydro Project will easily achieve this objective for the following key reasons:

- a) It represents a significant increase to the capacity and output of renewable electricity currently generated on the West Coast;
- b) It will result in significant economic benefits and tangible positive outcomes for people, communities and mana whenua as summarised in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the Application⁵ and as presented in more detail within the Economic Benefits Report⁶ and the Electricity Resilience Report⁷;
- c) It will significantly increase resilience for the Westpower Electricity Supply Network by providing increased protection against situations when no or restricted external transmission capacity into the region is available;
- d) It will offer a clean, reliable, and flexible energy solution that provides direct support to achieving the nation's emission reduction target and implementing its emissions reduction plan,

⁵ Positive Effects and Cultural Effects respectively.

⁶ [Appendix 15 economic benefits report.](#)

⁷ [Appendix-16-electricity-resilience-report.pdf.](#)

- e) It will strengthen energy security, economic development, and overall climate change resilience on the West Coast; and
- f) As discussed in Section 6 of the Application⁸, overall, the adverse environmental effects and public safety risks associated with the Project are acceptable and the various positive economic and tangible cultural benefits the Project will provide are considered significant.

Policies

4.9 Relevant NPS-REG policies are set out below and then briefly discussed in turn:

Policy A: National significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation

(1) Decision-makers on REG activities must recognise and provide for the national significance and the national, regional and local benefits of REG activities.

(2) Decision-makers must recognise that the benefits of REG activities include:

(a) avoiding, reducing and displacing greenhouse gas emissions;

(b) contributing to the security, resilience and independence of electricity supply at local, regional and national scales through diverse REG sources and electricity storage in diverse locations;

(c) providing for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities and for their health and safety;

(d) using renewable rather than finite sources of energy;

(e) avoiding reliance on imported and domestic fossil fuels for the purposes of generating electricity;

(f) the temporary and reversible nature of adverse effects on the environment of some REG technologies;

(g) reducing electricity losses by locating REG activities close to electricity demand and existing electricity networks; and

(h) reducing adverse effects by:

⁸ [Waitaha-Hydro-project-substantive-application-documents.pdf](#).

(i) co-locating REG with other appropriate REG assets and activities and other appropriate infrastructure and activities; and

(ii) locating REG activities to minimise adverse effects on other activities.

Assessment

4.10 Policy A powerfully supports the Panel towards granting approvals for the Project for the following key reasons:

- a) The Project represents an REG activity that will deliver local, regional and national benefits which must be recognised and provided for under Policy A(1); and
- b) The Project will provide the following specific benefits that must be recognised under Policy A(2);
 - i. In respect of Policies A(2)(a) and (e), it will displace existing thermal electricity generation – equivalent to a reduction in CO₂ emissions of 129,000 tonnes annually or the same as taking 69,000 internal combustion engine cars of the road⁹;
 - ii. In respect of Policy A(2)(b), it addresses existing resilience risks since it will be able to operate as an islanded generation node if the network is cut off from the transmission system;
 - iii. In respect of Policy A(2)(c), it results in significant economic benefits and tangible positive outcomes for people, communities and mana whenua as summarised in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 of the Application¹⁰ and as presented in more detail within the Economic Benefits Report¹¹ and the Electricity Resilience Report¹²;
 - iv. In respect of Policy A(2)(d), it uses the local renewable surface water resource which exists in extremely plentiful quantities at the site;

⁹ Assuming the Scheme produces 129 GWhs (129,000 MWhs) of renewable electricity

¹⁰ Positive Effects and Cultural Effects respectively

¹¹ [Appendix 15 economic benefits report.](#)

¹² [Appendix-16-electricity-resilience-report.pdf.](#)

- v. In respect of Policy A(2)(f), the scheme's above-ground, land-based infrastructure can be physically removed at end of life to enable the environment to return to a near pre-development state;
- vi. In respect of Policy A(2)(g), it is strategically located in an area where regional decarbonisation and electrification plans are forecast to cause significant future increases in demand¹³, will utilise existing electricity network infrastructure and it will reduce transmission line losses (and subsequently those costs to consumers) by being an additional supply of electricity being generated much closer to points of use; and
- vii. In respect of Policy A(2)(h), and as discussed in Section 6 of the Application¹⁴, it has acceptable levels of adverse effects on other activities. Notably, residual adverse effects on recreation have been assessed as acceptable and any effects on farming at the McLean property will be very minor, temporary in nature and accepted by the landowner. There will also be some disruption to local traffic flows during construction which might affect activities undertaken by nearby locals, however, these effects have also been assessed as being acceptable and temporary.

4.11 Overall, it is considered that the Project demonstrably achieves Policy A.

Policy B: Considering cumulative gains and losses of renewable electricity generation capacity

(1) Decision-makers on REG assets and activities must recognise and provide for the importance of:

(a) enabling cumulative increases of REG capacity and output at any scale and any location, including small-scale and community-scale REG assets and activities; and

¹³ Section 2.3.3 of the Application: [Waitaha-Hydro-project-substantive-application-documents.pdf](#).

¹⁴ [Waitaha-Hydro-project-substantive-application-documents.pdf](#).

(b) avoiding, where practicable, any overall or cumulative losses of REG capacity and output from a region or district or existing REG assets and activities.

(2) Decision-makers must have regard to any potential and reasonably foreseeable reduction in the utilisation of renewable electricity resources from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Assessment

4.12 The Project represents a notable cumulative increase in REG capacity on the West Coast. For context, although the scheme's installed generation capacity of 23MW is relatively modest compared to the major national hydro generation dams, given the anticipated high capacity factor¹⁵, it will likely deliver the same amount of electricity as would a 60-100MW solar farm.¹⁶ Under Policy B(1)(a), the Panel must recognise and provide for the Project's importance in this respect.

4.13 Overall, the Project achieves Policy B.

Policy C: Operational need or functional need for REG assets and activities to be in particular locations and environments

(1) Decision-makers must recognise and provide for REG assets and activities that have an operational need or functional need to be in particular locations and environments.

(2) Decision-makers must recognise that the operational need or functional need of REG assets and activities includes, but is not limited to, the need to:

(a) be located where a renewable electricity resource is located and available at a viable scale and quality to sustain the REG activity;

(b) be accessible and to connect to electricity networks and be nearby to electricity demand; and

¹⁵ The measure of how often a generating unit runs at maximum installed output.

¹⁶ Attachment 9, Statement of Rodger Griffiths, to Westpower's Memorandum #7 to the Expert Panel addresses this, as does: [Appendix-16-electricity-resilience-report.pdf](#), para 104 to 147.

(c) have sufficient and accessible land available to support all associated current and reasonably foreseeable future REG activities at that particular location.

(3) An assessment of alternative sites is not required to demonstrate that an operational or functional need exists.

Assessment

- 4.14 Hydro schemes have both a functional and operational need to be located on and alongside rivers. It follows that there is a functional and operational need for the Project to be located on and alongside the Waitaha River and that this must be recognised and provided for under Policy C(1).
- 4.15 Furthermore, in relation to Policy C(2), the Project's location is accessible to the nearby electricity network and will supply electricity to help meet existing and future demands near to the Project site on the West Coast.
- 4.16 Notwithstanding Policy C(3), Westpower has undertaken extensive assessments of alternative site options.
- 4.17 Overall, the Project achieves Policy C.

Policy E: Recognising and providing for Māori interests

(1) Decision-makers must recognise and provide for Māori interests in relation to REG assets and activities, including by:

(a) taking into account the outcome of any engagement with tangata whenua on a relevant resource consent, notice of requirement or private plan change;

(b) recognising the opportunities tangata whenua may have in developing and operating their own REG activities at any scale or in partnership; and

(c) local authorities:

(i) providing opportunities for tangata whenua involvement where REG assets and activities may affect a site of significance or issue of cultural significance to Māori; and

(ii) operating in a way that is consistent with any relevant iwi participation legislation or Mana Whakahono ā Rohe.

Assessment

4.18 The Project strongly achieves Policy E for the following key reasons:

- a) Poutini Ngāi Tahu have been involved as a key stakeholder to the proposal for many years and are now a partner with Westpower in it.
- b) With Poutini Ngāi Tahu being a partner in the Waitaha Hydro Project, not only does this recognise and provide for their own renewable energy development aspirations, it also provides an excellent vehicle for them to meaningfully exercise their kaitiaki duties and retain tino rangatiratanga. In doing so, this fully achieves part (1)(c) of this policy;
- c) There are no sites of cultural significance affected by the Project; and
- d) Poutini Ngāi Tahu have confirmed, in their section 53 comments that, the cultural effects and adverse effects on other matters of cultural significance to them, including wildlife, taonga species and taonga fish species, have been appropriately addressed to their satisfaction and that the proposal is consistent with their Mana Whakahono ā Rohe with West Coast Regional Council. To these extents, the proposal is highly consistent with part (1)(c) of this policy.
- e) *PNTs s53 comments confirm consistency with e(1)(c)(ii);*

Policy F: Enabling and managing the effects of REG assets and activities on the environment

(1) Decision-makers must enable REG assets and activities in all locations and environments.

(2) Where REG assets and activities are proposed to locate in or are likely to have adverse effects on environments and values provided for in section 6 of the Act, the provisions of this policy must be read alongside other relevant national direction, regional policy statements and regional and district plans.

(3) Where (2) does not apply, the adverse effects of REG assets and activities must be, where practicable, avoided, remedied or mitigated.

(4) Decision-makers must have particular regard to the use of adaptive management measures.

(5) When considering any residual adverse effects of REG assets and activities that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated, decision-makers shall have regard to offsetting measures or environmental compensation, including measures or compensation that benefit the local environment and community affected.

4.19 The Project is consistent with Policy F for the following reasons:

- a) Subject to Policies F(2) to F(5), it is an REG asset that must be enabled under Policy F(1); and
- b) In relation to Policies F(2) to F(5):
 - i. Although the Project will result in adverse effects on environments and values provided for in section 6 of the Act (namely, the natural character of lakes and rivers and their margins, outstanding natural landscapes, areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna, public access to and along rivers), Westpower has engaged relevant experts to identify and assess the magnitude of these effects, and to provide recommendations to amend the project's design, prepare management plans, and suggest approval conditions to appropriately avoid, remedy or mitigate these effects (including the proffering of adaptive management initiatives in line with Policy F(4)¹⁷) to the extent where, in the round, the Scheme is consistent with other national direction, regional policy statement, regional plan and district plan provisions that address such effects¹⁸. This approach is consistent with Policy F(2).
 - ii. For other adverse effects beyond section 6 of the Act, Westpower has adopted the same approach to identify and appropriately avoid, remedy or mitigate these in line with Policy F(3).
 - iii. Where, following the above avoid, remedy or mitigate exercises, there are residual adverse effects that are more than minor (e.g.

¹⁷ For example, suggested adaptive management conditions to address uncertainties with respect to effects associated with station ramping, and effects associated with potential biological growth within the abstraction reach,

¹⁸ See Section 7 and [Appendix-51-statutory-assessment-regional-and-district-plans.pdf](#) of the Application and [Memorandum-5-Attachment-5-statement-Mason-Jackson-RFI-response-10-December.pdf](#) (TTPP Decisions Version Statutory Assessment) of Westpower's Memorandum 5.

adverse effects on recreation and potential adverse effects on who) and in some cases where there are residual adverse effects that are minor or less than minor (e.g. construction effect on bats, forest birds and lizards) Westpower has offered compensation. This compensation package amounts to a sum of approximately \$2M over the life of any approvals granted and is designed to appropriately address residual adverse effects while concurrently benefiting the local environment and some affected parties (e.g. WWNZ). This approach is considered consistent with Policy F(5).

Conclusion

- 4.20 In the Application, it was concluded that the development and operation of the Waitaha Hydro Scheme would be demonstrably consistent with the NPS-REG (as it existed at the time of lodgement). This conclusion was made largely on the basis that it, very directly, supported that version of the NPS-REG's relatively focussed overall objective to provide for the development, operation and maintenance of new renewable electricity generation activities so that New Zealand could meet or exceed its national target for renewable electricity generation.
- 4.21 The amended NPS-REG's objective is more nuanced and includes several other related elements to consider. The Project fully achieves these other elements, and as a consequence, has become even more consistent with the NPS-REG as compared to the previous version. This should not be unexpected given that the Government's reasons for amending the NPS-REG were to significantly increase the supply of renewable electricity in New Zealand which they weren't seeing, to their satisfaction, under the previous version of this national direction instrument.
- 4.22 In response to the Panel's information request 2(c), the planning assessment conclusions set out in the Application have changed slightly considering the amended NPS-REG insofar as I now consider the Project to be even more consistent with this national direction instrument.

5. Summary of changes to the NPS-EN and statutory assessment of the Project

Summary of changes to the NPS-EN

- 5.1 An initial change to note is that the naming of this instrument is being changed from the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission 2008 (“**NPS-ET**”) to the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks 2008 (amended 2025). This change signals its expanded scope in providing national direction for the entire electricity network – both the electricity transmission network (the National Grid) and the electricity distribution network.
- 5.2 Because the Project includes electricity distribution lines but does not include any National Grid activities, the NPS-ET was not relevant at the time the Application was lodged. However, with the addition of electricity distribution networks to the scope of the renamed NPS-EN, the Panel now needs to consider and have regard to it when making its decisions on the resource consents for the Project since the proposal includes various electricity distribution network activities.
- 5.3 In addition to its renaming, other changes to this national direction instrument have been made to:
- a) Strengthen policy direction to create a more certain consenting environment for proposals involving electricity transmission and distribution networks;
 - b) Recognise the national significance of electricity networks;
 - c) Recognise the operational and functional need to locate in particular environments;
 - d) Enable routine maintenance and upgrade work;
 - e) Recognise the role of electricity networks in well-functioning urban areas;
 - f) Manage adverse effects of electricity network activities on the environment;

- g) Recognise Māori interests and provide for early engagement to identify and protect cultural values;
- h) Protect the electricity network from the adverse effects of third-party activities; and
- i) Align with other national direction, particularly renewable electricity generation and infrastructure instruments.

Statutory assessment of the Project against the amended NPS-EN

Definitions

5.4 Key definitions set out Part 1.4 of the NPS-EN include:

ancillary electricity network activities (ancillary EN activities) mean all supporting and subsidiary activities necessary to provide for the EN and EN assets, including, but not limited to:

- (a) *vegetation clearance and tree trimming;*
- (b) *earthworks and land disturbance;*
- (c) *construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of access tracks, accessways, bridges and culverts; and*
- (d) *construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of power supply, telecommunication cables and devices*

electricity distribution network (EDN) means all assets and activities that provide electricity distribution and that:

- (a) *is owned or used by a person or body who is both an electricity distributor and an electricity operator;*
- (b) *comprise the network of distribution lines, cables (overhead, underground or submarine), switching stations, support structures, substations, transformers, kiosks, cabinets, connections to grid exit points, customer connections, and works used to distribute electricity from the electricity transmission network or generation activities; and*
- (c) *includes ancillary EN activities*

The EDN does not include the electricity transmission network (ETN)

electricity distribution network provider (EDN provider) means an electricity distributor and/or electricity operator

electricity distributor as defined in section 2 of the Electricity Act 1992

electricity network (EN) means the electricity transmission network (ETN) and the electricity distribution network (EDN)

electricity network activities (EN activities) means the construction, operation, maintenance, development, upgrading, replacement, decommissioning or removal of electricity network assets, and includes ancillary EN activities

electricity network assets (EN assets) means the physical components of the EN and any physical components of ancillary EN activities that support operation of the EN

electricity operator as defined in section 2 of the Electricity Act 1992

non-routine electricity network activities (non-routine EN activities) means:

- (a) the upgrading, rebuilding or replacement of, or changes to, EN assets or EN activities that are not defined as routine EN activities; or
- (b) the construction of new EN assets not carried out on or related to EN lines, or at an EN substation, that exist at the time of construction; or
- (c) new connections to electricity generation or demand activities upon request of a third party (other than Transpower New Zealand Limited or an electricity distributor); or
- (d) relocation or undergrounding of assets to enable urban or infrastructure development upon request of a third party (other than Transpower New Zealand Limited or an electricity distributor)

routine electricity network activities (routine EN activities) mean:

- (a) activities required for, or associated with, the operation of existing EN assets; or
- (b) activities that replace an existing EN asset with a modern equivalent or substitute, where the replacement will not result in an increase in the nature, scale or intensity of the activity; or
- (c) maintenance, repair and upgrading of existing EN assets necessary to continue to deliver the same or a similar level of service; or

- (d) *upgrading of existing EN assets necessary to improve resilience, where the upgrade will not result in an increase in the nature, scale or intensity of the activity; or*
- (e) *the removal, decommissioning or dismantling of EN assets; or*
- (f) *all activities identified as a permitted or controlled activity in any national environmental standards for electricity networks or similar standards; and*
- (g) *related ancillary EN activities to (a)–(f)*

upgrading means improving the capacity, level of service, efficiency, safety, security, resilience, effectiveness or longevity of existing EN assets and includes the replacement, renewal, addition, expansion and intensification of existing EN assets.

5.5 In summary, under the NPS-ET:

- a) Westpower is an **electricity distribution network provider (EDN provider)** and an **electricity distributor** and an **electricity operator**; and
- b) the Project involves;
 - i. **electricity network activities (EN activities)**;
 - ii. **ancillary electricity network activities (ancillary EN activities)**;
 - iii. the construction of an additional section of the existing **electricity distribution network (EDN)** – being the new transmission lines generally between the Power Station and the SH6 / Waitaha Road intersection – also defined as a **non-routine EN activity**;
 - iv. **upgrading** the section of existing transmission lines generally between the SH6 / Waitaha Road intersection and the Waitaha Substation – also defined as a **non-routine EN activity**;
 - v. **upgrading** the Waitaha Substation - also defined as a **non-routine EN activity**; and
 - vi. The operation and maintenance of all associated **EN assets** – also defined as **routine EN activities**.

Objective

5.6 The overarching objective of the NPS-ET is as follows:

(1) The national significance of the electricity network is recognised, protected and provided for, so that the network:

(a) is upgraded, improved and resilient to provide for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of present and future generations and their health and safety;

(b) is developed and operated in a timely, efficient and ongoing manner while managing adverse effects from or on the EN; and

(c) supports achievement of New Zealand's climate change mitigation and renewable energy targets.

Assessment

5.7 In partnership with Poutini Ngāi Tahu, Westpower's proposal to expand the EN, including upgrades to the Waitaha Substation and to the section of existing transmission lines between the SH6 / Waitaha Road intersection, will enable additional renewable electricity generated by the Waitaha Hydro Scheme to be utilised by West Coast communities. In turn, this will provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing. Provided these activities are undertaken in accordance with relevant health and safety requirements, as Westpower proposes, Objective 1(a) will be fully satisfied.

5.8 As discussed in Section 2.3.3 and 6.2.3 of the Application, due to underlying regional growth and confirmed decarbonising and electrification projects on the West Coast, Westpower is forecasting a 55% increase in peak demand on their network over the next 10 years, with other large West Coast projects recently also being confirmed on the Fast-track list¹⁹, this future demand could even be higher. Therefore, the timing of the proposed EN development will match this forecasted regional increase in electricity demand, and to this extent, represents an efficient response to it. It is also a response where the adverse effects associated with the proposed EN activities are acceptable as

¹⁹ Examples include Arahura Papakāinga Housing Project, Buller Plateaux Continuation Project.

demonstrated by the following key conclusions documented in relevant Westpower technical expert assessment reports:

- a) Regarding landscape and amenity effects;
 - i. Although there will be adverse effects on values which contribute to the ONL status of ONL18 and ONL22 (with respect to the Scheme and associated new section of EDN above Macgregor Creek), the Landscape Report confirms that the landscape will remain outstanding even with this infrastructure in place; and
 - ii. With respect to the new section of EDN below Macgregor Creek, across McLean Farm, and alongside Waitaha Road, Mr Bentley confirms the adverse effects are no more than low-moderate²⁰; and
 - iii. With respect to ONL 20 (where upgrades to the section of existing transmission lines alongside the northern end of Waitaha Road, SH6 and the southern end of Beach Road will occur), Mr Bentley confirms that these EN activities will result in effects that will essentially be the same in scale and character as currently exists¹⁸ and for the viewing audience, primarily travelling at speed, the adverse visual effects of the electricity upgrade in this ONL would be low.
- b) Regarding effects on indigenous vegetation²¹:
 - i. The Hydro Scheme (including new EN assets) located in Area 2 between the Power Station and Macgregor Creek result in minor adverse effects; and
 - ii. The new EN assets located in Area 3 and the new and upgraded EN assets in Area 4 (collectively between Macgregor Creek and the Waitaha Substation) result in negligible adverse effects;
- c) Regarding effects on birds, the potential for the new and upgraded EN assets to cause electrocution are considered negligible²²; and

²⁰ [Memorandum-5-Attachment-2-statement-James-Bentley-RFI-response-10-December_Redacted.pdf](#).

²¹ [Appendix-20-vegetation-report.pdf](#) .

²² [Appendix-21-terrestrial-fauna-report.pdf](#).

d) The new and upgraded EN assets will meet the maximum exposure level listed in the International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection Guidelines for limiting exposure to time-varying electric and magnetic fields (1Hz - 100 kHz) (Health Physics (6):818-836; 2010), and the recommendations from the World Health Organisation's monograph Environmental Health Criteria 238, June 2007²³.

5.9 In these respects, the Project fully achieves Objective 1(b).

5.10 The proposed EN and ancillary EN activities are a vital part of the Project. Without them, there is no Project. It follows that the proposed EN and ancillary EN activities enable the Waitaha Hydro Scheme, inclusive of all its benefits, to be realised – including its support to New Zealand in achieving its climate change mitigation and renewable energy targets. To this extent, the Project also fully achieves Objective 1(c).

Policies

5.11 Relevant NPS-EN policies are set out below and then briefly discussed in turn:

Policy 1

(1) Decision-makers on EN activities must:

(a) recognise and provide for the national significance of the EN; and

(b) provide for the ongoing benefits of the EN to be realised at national, regional and local scales, relative to any localised adverse effects.

Assessment

5.12 The proposed EN activities and EN assets included in Westpower's proposal, and the ongoing benefits they will provide to the West Coast must be recognised and provided for by the Panel while also noting that the associated adverse effects are acceptable (refer above to the assessment of the NPS-EN Objective).

²³ Attachment 1C of Westpower's Memorandum #2 (17 November 2025): [Memo 11.07.24](#).

Policy 2

(1) Decision-makers must recognise that the benefits of the EN include:

(a) providing for the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities to meet the needs of present and future generations and their health and safety;

(b) providing services that are essential to support human life and the development, growth and functioning of districts, regions, New Zealand and the economy;

(c) providing safe, secure, reliable and resilient electricity supply that is responsive to demand from homes, communities and businesses at a local, regional and national scale;

(d) efficient storage and transfer of electricity;

(e) supporting climate change mitigation and the electrification of the economy, including by:

(i) supporting new, expanded or increased renewable electricity generation;

(ii) increasing and improving network capacity; and

(iii) providing direct connections for industry and commercial development; and

(f) enhancing supply of electricity through the ETN by removing points of congestion.

Assessment

5.13 The proposed EN activities are strongly supported by Policy 2 because, in combination with the proposed Waitaha Hydro Scheme, the new and upgraded EN assets will achieve (1)(a) through (e).

5.14 Part (1)(f) of this policy is not relevant since the Project does not require, nor intends to undertake, any easing of congestion.

Policy 3

(1) Decision-makers must recognise and provide for Māori interests in relation to EN activities, including by:

(a) taking into account the outcomes of any engagement with tangata whenua on any relevant resource consent, notice of requirement or private plan change;

(b) recognising the opportunities tangata whenua may have in developing and operating their own EDN assets at any scale or in partnership;

(c) avoiding, where practicable, or otherwise mitigating, the adverse effects of EN activities on sites of significance to Māori; and

(d) local authorities:

(i) providing opportunities for tangata whenua involvement where EN activities may affect a site of significance or issue of cultural significance to Māori; and

(ii) operating in a way that is consistent with any relevant iwi participation legislation or Mana Whakahono ā Rohe.

Assessment

5.15 The proposal achieves Policy 3 because:

- a) Poutini Ngāi Tahu have been involved as a key stakeholder to the proposal for many years and are now a partner with Westpower in it. The proposed consent conditions incorporates the outcomes of this engagement, particularly in respect of managing actual and potential effects on the Waitaha River and on taonga species. This aligns well with part (1)(a) of this policy;
- b) With Poutini Ngāi Tahu being a partner in the Project, this directly recognises and provides for their own renewable energy development aspirations, and fully achieves part (1)(b) of this policy;
- c) There are no sites of cultural significance affected by the Project; and
- d) Poutini Ngāi Tahu have confirmed, in their section 53 comments that, the cultural effects and adverse effects on other matters of cultural significance to them, including wildlife, taonga species and taonga fish species, have been appropriately addressed to their satisfaction and that they consider the proposal is also consistent with their Mana Whakahono

ā Rohe with West Coast Regional Council. To these extents, the proposal fully achieves part (1)(d) of this policy.

Policy 4

(1) Decision-makers must recognise that it is the role of Transpower New Zealand Limited or the EDN provider to:

(a) determine the purpose, scope, required capacity and technical solution for proposed EN activities; and

(b) consider sites, routes and methods, where appropriate, and identify the preferred site, route and method for EN activities, ancillary EN activities and EN assets.

Assessment

5.16 Regarding Policy 4, notwithstanding the transmission optionality assessments undertaken by Westpower, the Panel must simply assess their chosen proposed design and corridor alignment on its own merits recognising that these aspects are for Westpower to determine.

Policy 5

(1) Decision-makers must provide for routine EN activities to occur in all locations and environments, provided adverse effects on the environment are, where practicable, avoided, remedied or mitigated, while acknowledging the existing nature of the assets.

Assessment

5.17 The Proposal achieves Policy 5 on the basis that future EN routine activities (e.g. maintenance) will result in de-minimis effects – as is the case already in respect of Westpower’s routine EN activities on existing network assets.

Policy 6

(1) In rural environments, decision-makers should ensure that non-routine EN activities seek to avoid adverse effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes, areas of high natural character, and areas of high recreation value and amenity.

Assessment

- 5.18 The only non-routine EN activities proposed as part of the Project relevant to Policy 6 are the Upgrades to existing transmission lines located in ONL20 alongside the northern end of Waitaha Road, alongside SH6 and alongside the southern end of Beach Road.
- 5.19 The construction and operation of this Project component cannot avoid all adverse effects on outstanding natural landscapes and areas of high natural character and amenity, however, the following contextual aspects need to be considered when undertaking an overall assessment of Policy 6:
- a) The use of the policy's deliberate wording requiring that decision makers ***"should ensure that non-routine EN activities seek to avoid adverse effects"*** [emphasis added]. This is a notable step away from an absolute "avoidance" policy requirement;
 - b) The relationship that Policy 6 has with Policy 7 which, broadly, acknowledges the operational or functional need of the EN to be located in, and convey electricity, over long distances, in all locations and environments;
 - c) The relationship that Policy 6 has with Policy 8(1)(b) that guides decision makers to *"recognise that there may be unavoidable adverse effects, regardless of the route, site and method chosen, with adverse effects reduced as far as practicable"*, in turn, aligning with, and supporting, the wording used in Policy 6 that deliberately steps away from requiring absolute avoidance;
 - d) The relationship that Policy 6 has with Policy 8(1)(c) that guides decision makers to *"provide for EN activities that have an operational need or functional need to be in particular locations and environments, including in areas where section 6 matters apply, even where there may be unavoidable adverse effects on those environments"*, again aligning with and supporting the non-absolute avoidance wording used in Policy 6; and

- e) The acceptable level of adverse environmental effects associated with proposed EN components of the Project as summarised above in the assessment of the Objective of this NPS.
- 5.20 When considered against Policy 6, including an assessment of this policy's interactions with Policy 7 (i.e. the functional need for the Hydro Scheme to be located in a high amenity environment and the operational need for it to have a transmission connection, in this case, one which efficiently uses existing EN lines that happen to already be located in an ONL) and its interactions with Policy 8 (i.e. Westpower's transmission design and alignment which reduces adverse effects as far as practicable), the Project is not inconsistent with this provision.
- 5.21 In other words, although Westpower has "sought" to avoid adverse effects as far as practicable (in line with Policy 8), due to functional and operational needs (recognised in Policy 7), all effects cannot be avoided, and through the connections between Policies 6, 7 and 8, this is provided for under the NPS-EN.

Policy 7

- (1) Decision-makers must recognise and provide for the operational need or functional need of the EN to operate in, be located in, or traverse environments, including:*
- (a) the need for EN assets to convey electricity over long distances and in all locations and environments, including:*
- (i) within and across urban and rural environments;*
- (ii) within the coastal environment, including the coastal marine area;*
and
- (iii) across jurisdictional boundaries within and across districts and regions; and*
- (b) the need for the EN to operate effectively and efficiently as an interconnected system across New Zealand;*

- (c) *recognition that the ETN and EDN are separate networks that have differing functional needs and operational needs;*
- (d) *the requirement for regular maintenance and upgrading of the EN due to its age, the need to improve EN resilience, and the need to increase and improve capacity to meet changing demand and supply;*
- (e) *the need for the EN to connect to electricity generation, and to respond to demand, wherever located; and*
- (f) *the functional need for the EN to locate in areas at risk from natural hazards, where Transpower New Zealand Limited or the EDN provider have considered and managed potential natural hazard risks.*

Assessment

5.22 As already noted above in relation to Policy 6, and in relation to part (1)(a) of this policy, there is a functional need for the Hydro Scheme to be located in the Waitaha River (a high amenity and landscape value environment (ONL22)) and there is an operational need for it to connect to the EN which, in this case, partly utilises existing EN lines already located in another a high amenity and landscape value environment (ONL20). These factors are also an unavoidable consequence of an effective and efficient electricity network that connects electricity generation, wherever located, to improve the West Coast's EN resilience and the need to increase and improve EN capacity in response to changing demand. Under parts (d) and (e) of Policy 7, the Panel must recognise and provide for this in their decision.

5.23 Regarding Part (f) of this policy, the Panel should also recognise and provide for those parts of the proposed new EN assets that have a functional need to be located in (and traverse) the Alpine Fault.

5.24 The Project achieves Policy 7.

Policy 8

(1) When considering the environmental effects of EN activities and ancillary EN activities, including measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects on the environment, decision-makers must:

(a) have regard to the extent to which any adverse effects have been avoided, remedied or mitigated through the selection of route, site or method of undertaking the work;

(b) recognise that there may be unavoidable adverse effects, regardless of the route, site and method chosen, with adverse effects reduced as far as practicable;

(c) provide for EN activities that have an operational need or functional need to be in particular locations and environments, including in areas where section 6 matters apply, even where there may be unavoidable adverse effects on those environments;

(d) consider the constraints imposed on achieving those measures by any operational need of the EN;

(e) recognise that development, upgrading and improvement of the EN will be necessary to maintain and improve the capacity and delivery of the EN over time;

(f) recognise that EN activities may result in changes in amenity that are unavoidable and necessary to achieve an effective, efficient, safe, secure, reliable and resilient EN, and that such changes may not constitute adverse effects under the Act;

(g) adopt relevant international standards (that have been adopted for use in New Zealand), national standards, and recognised best practice standards and methodologies to assess and manage adverse effects; and

(h) consider the financial and timing implications of mitigation measures and any consent conditions to ensure these are proportionate to the adverse effects of the EN or particular EN activities.

Assessment

5.25 The Project achieves Policy 8 for the following key reasons:

- a) In respect of Part (a) of this policy, the chosen EN lines route minimises its overall length by connecting it to existing EN lines adjacent to SH6, it minimises direct landowner impacts by utilising Waitaha Road reserve land, it minimises loss of indigenous vegetation in ONL20 by aligning it

alongside the Power Station access road, and it avoids any indigenous vegetation loss in ONL22 associated with EN line upgrades;

- b) In respect of Part (b) of this policy, although adverse effects associated with Westpower's chosen EN lines design an alignment are not wholly avoided, they have been minimised to an acceptable level supported by Westpower's technical experts (refer to the assessment above on the NPS-EN Objective);
- c) In respect of Part (c) of this policy, although the EN activities will result in adverse effects on environments and values provided for in section 6 of the Act, there is a clear operational and functional need for the Project to be located in environments where these values exist, and to this extent, having some level of adverse effect on them is unavoidable;
- d) In respect of Part (e) of this policy, the proposed new and upgraded EN assets are vital in ensuring that the EN has capacity to support the Project, and in turn, respond to meet future forecasted increases in electricity demand on the West Coast (as demonstrated in the Economic Benefits Report²⁴).
- e) In respect of Part (f) of this policy, although the proposed EN activities will result in adverse effects, these have been appropriately minimised and any residual effects are considered an unavoidable consequence of achieving the benefits of the Project.
- f) In respect of Part (g) of this policy, Westpower has proposed appropriate conditions as part of any approvals granted to ensure relevant international standards (that have been adopted for use in New Zealand), national standards, and recognised best practice standards and methodologies are adopted in the design, operation and maintenance of the Project's EN assets (including to meet the maximum exposure level listed in the International Commission on Non-ionizing Radiation Protection Guidelines for limiting exposure to time-varying electric and magnetic fields (1Hz - 100 kHz) (Health Physics (6):818-836; 2010), and

²⁴ [Appendix 15 economic benefits report.](#)

the recommendations from the World Health Organisation's monograph Environmental Health Criteria 238, June 2007).

- g) In respect of Part (h) of this policy, it is considered that the updated proffered conditions set out in **Attachment 1** to Westpower's Memorandum #7 to the Expert Panel are appropriately proportionate to the adverse effects of the proposed EN and EN activities.

Policy 10

- (1) *Transpower or the EDN provider must consider practicable opportunities and measures to reduce the existing adverse effects of EN assets when considering non-routine EN activities, taking into account the functional need, operational need and the financial implications of any measures to reduce adverse effects.*

Assessment

- 5.26 As outlined within the Project Overview Report²⁵, Westpower considered numerous different options for the transmission line design and alignment including using other private land north of McLean Farm and using a route along the true left of the Waitaha River. At 3.62(d) the Project Overview Report it states:

“a realigned transmission route following the local roads and State Highway 6 to a connection point with Westpower’s 66 kV line (at Westpower’s existing Waitaha Substation site in Bold Head Road) so that the alternatives of crossing private land or traversing to the true left of the Waitaha River (requiring more vegetation clearance) are no longer needed”

- 5.27 Mr Bentley confirms that the discarded options would have resulted in far greater adverse natural character effects and greater indigenous vegetation loss as compared to the chosen and proposed design. These options may also have required a transmission pole to be located within the bed of the Waitaha River – which the proposed design avoids.

²⁵ [Appendix 3 project overview report part1.](#)

5.28 As already discussed, although the proposed EN activities will result in adverse effects, these are unavoidable due to the operational and functional need to physically locate the EN lines in the environments between the Power Station and the EN connection point.

Policy 14

(1) *Local authorities must manage electric or magnetic fields associated with the EN based on recommendations from the World Health Organization monograph Environmental Health Criteria (No 238, Extremely low frequency fields) and International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection 'Guidelines for limiting exposure to time-varying electric and magnetic fields (1 Hz to 100 kHz)' (Health Physics 99(6): 818–836; 2010) (ICNIRP Guidelines) or their revisions, or any other applicable New Zealand standards.*

Assessment

5.29 Westpower has proposed a condition, as part of any Westland District Council approvals granted, to ensure Policy 14 is achieved and has proffered such a conditions in the revised suggested resource conditions **Attachment 1** to Memorandum #7.

Conclusion

5.30 The electricity network activities associated with the Waitaha Hydro Project are consistent with the policy intent and direction of the NPS-EN.

5.31 In response to the Panel's information request 2(c), as already noted, the planning assessment conclusions set out in the Application did not address the NPS-EN because the predecessor version was not relevant at the time of lodgement. To this extent, the assessment set out in this section of my statement is new information for the Panel's consideration.

Mason Jackson