

# **Regionally significant infrastructure, renewable energy and economic wellbeing**

**Recommendations in response to  
submissions on the Proposed Regional Plan  
for Northland - Section 42A hearing report**

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## Purpose and format of the report

1. This report provides the hearing panel the rationale for the recommended changes to the Proposed Plan for Northland (the Plan) in response to submissions on regionally significant infrastructure and renewable energy. The recommended changes are set out in the document *Proposed Regional Plan for Northland – S42A recommended changes*.
2. The recommendations made in this report are the opinion of the author and are not binding on the hearing panel. It should not be assumed that the hearing panel will reach the same conclusions.
3. The authors recommendations may change as a result of presentations and evidence provided to the hearing panel. It's expected the hearing panel will ask authors to report any changes to their recommendations at the end of the hearing.
4. The recommendations focus on changes to the Plan provisions. If there is no recommendation, then it's to be assumed that the recommendation is to retain the wording as notified.
5. Generally, the specific recommended changes to the provisions are *not* set out word-for-word in this report. The specific changes (including scope for changes) are shown in the document *Proposed Regional Plan for Northland – S42A recommended changes*.
6. This report is structured with a focus on the following key matters:
  - Economic wellbeing
  - Regionally significant infrastructure objective and policies
  - Renewable energy objective and policy
7. Further submitters are generally not referred to as they are in support or opposition of original submissions (they cannot go beyond the scope of the original submissions). The exception is where a further submission raises reasons that have not been raised in the submissions and are material to the analyses.
8. The approach of addressing matters raised in submissions (rather than addressing submissions and/or and submission points individually) is consistent with Clause 10 of Schedule 1 to the RMA.

## Report authors

9. My name is Jon Trewin and I have overall responsibility for the regionally significant infrastructure, renewable energy and (limited to discussion on a new objective only) economic wellbeing parts of this report. I have worked as a Policy Analyst for the Northland Regional Council (regional council) since 2009. For further details about my qualifications and experience, refer to the S42 report: *General approach*.
10. Ben Lee (Policy Development Manager, Northland Regional Council) has assisted me with the preparation of this report:

## Relevant provisions and scope of report

11. The provisions in the Proposed Plan relating to regionally significant infrastructure are:
  - Rule C.1.1.18 *Hard protection structures for reclamations associated with regionally significant infrastructure – discretionary activity*
  - Rule C.1.6.3 *Reclamation for regionally significant infrastructure – discretionary activity*
  - Policy D.4.30 *Benefits of freshwater structures, dams and diversions*
  - Policy D.5.20 *Dredging, disturbance and deposition - effects on areas with significant values*
  - Policy D.6.1 *Appropriateness of hard protection structures*
12. The provisions in the Proposed Plan relating to economic wellbeing are:
  - Policy D.2.2. *Social, cultural and economic benefits of activities.*
13. There are no provisions relating to renewable energy.
14. This S42A report focuses on the submissions requesting the inclusion of objectives and policies to generally recognise the benefits of economic wellbeing, regionally significant infrastructure and renewable energy. The submissions on the provisions are addressed in the relevant S42A report addressing the primary matter the provision addresses.
15. The analysis in the *Approach to objectives and policies* section in the S42A report: *General approach* considered the merits of the single objective and is now recommending the inclusion of a suite of objectives. That recommendation is the basis for the

recommendations regarding the inclusion of objectives for regionally significant infrastructure, economic wellbeing and renewable energy generation.

## Economic wellbeing objectives and policies

16. Discussion on existing policy D.2.2 *Social, cultural and economic benefits of activities* is contained in the report S42a report – General approach.
17. In the Proposed Plan there is no objective for economic wellbeing (there exists one in the RPS). Consistent with the general desire by submitters to for the plan to include specific objectives I recommend an objective (based on that in the RPS) promoting economic wellbeing.

## Regionally significant infrastructure objectives and policies

18. There were many submissions requesting additional objectives and policies recognising and promoting the benefits of regionally significant infrastructure (for example Northpower, New Zealand Transport Agency, First Gas Limited, Top Energy, Refining New Zealand, and Transpower).
19. The RPS includes an extensive suite of provisions recognising the value of regionally significant infrastructure. As far as I can tell, none of the submissions provided suggested specific wording for regionally significant infrastructure objectives or policies that go beyond what is already addressed in the RPS.
20. Following on from the analysis in the *Approach to objectives and policies* section in the S42A report: *General approach* I am recommending the inclusion of a regionally significant infrastructure objective in the Plan – based on Objective 3.7 of the RPS. I am also recommending the inclusion of two new policies that largely reflect Policies 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 of the RPS. I am recommending including these policies to more fully give effect to Method 5.3.4 of the RPS which requires that the Plan include provisions to give effect to Policies 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 of the RPS by including, amongst other things, policies to implement the RPS policies.
21. I anticipate the inclusion of the regionally significant infrastructure objectives and policies will go some way to satisfying the concerns of the submitters requesting the inclusion of

regionally significant infrastructure provisions as well as satisfying the requirements of the RPS.

22. There were several submitters requesting changes to the definition for regionally significant infrastructure. The definition refers to Appendix 3 of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) which sets out a list of regionally significant infrastructure. It is my view that the definition of regionally significant infrastructure in the plan should be the same as in the RPS to avoid any confusion. Also, the debate about what is regionally significant infrastructure was had and well tested (including through appeals to the Environment Court) through the development of the RPS. Consequently I recommend the definition stay as it is.

## **Renewable energy objectives and policies**

23. Several submitters (including First Gas Limited and Northpower) sought the inclusion of objectives and policies to recognise the benefits of renewable energy generation.
24. The RPS includes objectives and policies recognising the benefits of renewable energy generation that give (in part) effect to the National Policy Statement on Renewable Electricity Generation 2011. Furthermore, the RPS requires through Method 5.4.3 the inclusion of objectives, policies and methods (including rules) to encourage, promote and provide for renewable electricity generation. Although the RPS is limited to including provisions on renewable electricity generation, I see no reason the regional plan cannot also include the broader considerations around renewable energy (generation of electricity and heat).
25. I am therefore recommending the inclusion of a renewable energy generation objective in the Plan – based on Objective 3.9 of the RPS - and a renewable energy generation policy that mirrors policies in the RPS somewhat although is more pointed towards the types of activities the regional council might receive resource consents for.