

**BEFORE NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**UNDER** the Resource Management Act 1991

**A N D**

**IN THE MATTER** of applications to renew the resource consents associated with the operation of the wastewater treatment plants at Opononi and Kohukohu

**BETWEEN** **FAR NORTH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Applicant**

**NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**Consent Authority**

---

**EVIDENCE OF JOHAN HENDRIK GUY AND THOMAS DALE GORDON**

**(OPERATIONS)**

**3 MAY 2023**

---

---

**Counsel instructed:**  
Bronwyn Carruthers KC  
Shortland Chambers  
PO Box 4338  
AUCKLAND 1140  
bcarruthers@shortlandchambers.co.nz

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This evidence has been prepared jointly by us:
  - a. Johan Hendrik Guy, Process Manager at Ventia/Far North Waters (**FNW**). In this role I have responsibility for overseeing the Kohukohu and Opononi wastewater treatment plants (**WWTPs**).
  - b. Thomas Dale Gordon, Water – Wastewater Treatment Supervisor (Southern) at Ventia/FNW. In this role I have responsibility for day to day running and operation of the Kohukohu and Opononi WWTPs.
2. In this evidence we will address the submissions that raise issues about existing operations, maintenance and compliance at the WWTPs.

## **OPONONI**

3. We have reviewed all of the submissions received and comment on the operational matters raised as follows:
  - a. It is correct that there was a break in the pipe during the July 2022 storm event. The break was located where the pipe crosses the Waiarohia Stream. Within 24 hours the break was reported and repaired. Remedial action was completed to clean the stream of all the debris which caused the break.
  - b. There has been no break on the beach, and no breakage of the submarine discharge pipe that extends out to the harbour channel. Annual inspections by divers are carried out to check the length of the flexible submarine pipe and outfall. The last inspection was on 18 November 2022. The divers observed that the end of the flexible pipe is beginning to deteriorate and may need replacement in the future. The end of the pipe is identified by a marker buoy at the surface marking the location of the outfall, and a submerged buoy to assist in locating the outfall if the surface buoy breaks away.
  - c. Septage is not discharged to the Opononi ponds. As stated above, is a project to install CCTV cameras at all FNDC WWTP to address this illegal dumping of septage.

- d. We are operating the plant to achieve the best possible performance. There have been periods where the water quality limits have been exceeded but wherever possible operational adjustments are made.
- e. Past performance issues have been addressed with recent maintenance. In 2017 the constructed wetlands area was completely re-fenced to exclude stock. In 2018 both the waste stabilization ponds were desludged, a new aerator was installed into pond one and a Dissolved Oxygen monitor was installed at the discharge of pond one. In 2020 the weeds were removed from the constructed wetlands. In December 2022 follow-up maintenance started on the constructed wetlands and there is now regular wetland maintenance contract in place going forward. The treatment plant, when maintained, is operating as designed.
- f. Discharges of untreated wastewater are a failure in the reticulated network and can occur for a number of reasons. There are procedures in place to contain a spill as soon as it is reported to minimise any environment impact. The spill notification procedure includes notification to Northland Regional Council.
- g. There is no storage capacity in the system to manage storm events. The retention time is reduced during periods of heavy rain.

## **KOHUKOHU**

- 4. The submitters have raised issues with the:
  - a. Operation and maintenance of the Kohukohu WWTP
  - b. Septic tank maintenance
  - c. Pumpstation maintenance and odour
- 5. We have reviewed all of the submissions received and comment as follows:
  - a. a wastewater treatment plant operator visits the WWTP once a week. During this visit any required maintenance is completed.
  - b. regular monitoring of DO, pH and temperature at the pond inlet, pond outlet and wetland discharge is carried out and recorded.

- c. the plant is performing as expected and there are no performance concerns.
  - d. water quality monitoring results are public information and can be obtained upon request from either FNW or NRC.
  - e. mowing maintenance was not carried out between November 2022 – January 2023 due to lack of a ground maintenance crew. FNW is currently in negotiations with a subcontractor for a ground maintenance contract.
6. The septic tanks and pump station are separate assets to the WWTP. While the comments received on the septic tanks and pump station are, as we understand, not relevant to the WWTP consent or this application, it may be useful to the submitters for us to note:
- a. The septic tanks are currently emptied on a 3 year cycle. The last cycle was in 2021/2022.
  - b. The operators are required to submit tank cleaning records to FNDC every time a septic tank is serviced. These records are kept on the respective property files.
  - c. There has been evidence (e/g solids on the ground) of septic tank operators illegally discharging septage from tanks into WWTPs. There is a project to install CCTV cameras at all FNDC WWTP to address this illegal dumping of septage.
  - d. The location of the pumpstation is determined by topography. In a gravity system the pumpstation must be at the lowest point. It is a metal box. Landscaping has been considered but is problematic as plant roots can interfere with pipe and pumpstation function. If odour is an issue, this could be reduced by sealing the pumpstation and installing an odour unit which will look like a dome on top of the pumpstation. The dome may however exacerbate submitters' concerns about the visual effects of the pumpstation.

**Johan Hendrik Guy and Thomas Dale Gordon**

**3 May 2023**