BEFORE THE HEARING COMMISSIONERS
AT WHANGAREI

IN THE MATTER	of the Resource Management Act 1991 ("**the Act**")
AND	
IN THE MATTER	of the Resource Management Act 1991
AND	
IN THE MATTER	of the hearing of submissions on Proposed Plan Change 114 to the Whangarei District Plan

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STATEMENT BY ANGELA PHYLLIS HALLIDAY FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND

29 JUNE 2017

SUMMARY STATEMENT

1. This statement provides an overview of Horticulture New Zealand ("**HortNZ**") involvement in Plan Changes 114 Landscapes to the Whangarei District Plan and provides the context in which HortNZ undertakes it's involvement in district and regional planning processes.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

2. My name is Angela Phyllis Halliday. I am the Manager, Natural Resources and Environment with Horticulture New Zealand ("HortNZ"). I have been in this role since July 2016 and prior to this I was Advisor, Natural Resources and Environment with HortNZ from April 2014.

3. Prior to that I was in a compliance role at the Southland District Council which focused on Resource Management and Environmental Health. Prior to this I worked in an Economic Development Agency in Southland in a marketing based role and was a member of the Southland Conservation Board from 2008 – 2010.

4. I have qualifications in science (BSc) with a major in Zoology and a graduate Diploma of Wildlife Management from Otago University. I am currently studying extramurally towards a Masters in Resource and Environmental Planning and have a Graduate Diploma of Environmental Health from Massey University. I am involved with District and Regional Council policy and planning processes throughout New Zealand in both the pre-plan collaborative process and post plan implementation process.

5. I am responsible for overseeing HortNZ's involvement in district and regional planning processes throughout New Zealand and implementing HortNZ's wider resource management and research programme.

6. As a result of this role, my qualifications, and previous experience, I consider that I have an understanding of the potential impacts District Planning policy decisions on horticultural growers in the Whangarei region.

SCOPE OF THIS STATEMENT

7. This evidence provides a statement about horticulture in the Whangarei District and how the Proposed PC 114 will affect those operations in relation to Whatitiri Shield volcano.

8. In preparing this evidence I have relied on:

   (a) The landscape architect evidence by Bridget Gilbert

   (b) The geology evidence by Bruce Hayward

   (c) The planning assessment by Lynette Wharfe

   (d) The grower case studies attached to this evidence

9. Matters addressed in this evidence are:

   (a) HortNZ and its RMA involvement

   (b) HortNZ's involvement in PC114

   (c) Horticulture on Whatitiri

HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND AND ITS RMA INVOLVEMENT

10. HortNZ was established on 1 December 2005, combining the New Zealand Vegetable and Potato Growers' and New Zealand Fruitgrowers' and New Zealand Berryfruit Growers Federations.

11. The vision of HortNZ is 'Healthy food for all forever.'

12. The vision is supported through the Mission statement: 'Creating an enduring environment where growers prosper.'

13. The vision and mission are implemented through enabling, promoting and advocating for growers in NZ.

14. HortNZ's involvement in resource management planning processes is part of achieving these outcomes.

15. The principles that HortNZ considers in assessing the implementation of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) include:

    a) The effects based purpose of the RMA;
    b) Non-regulatory methods should be employed by councils;
    c) Regulation should impact fairly on the whole community, make sense in practice, and be developed in full consultation with those affected by it;
    d) Early consultation of land users in plan preparation;
    e) Ensuring that RMA plans work in the growers' interests both in an environmental and economic production sense.

16. Involvement in RMA processes began under the Vegetable and Potato Growers Federation in 1997, extending to the Fruitgrowers Federation in 2000 and has continued and expanded under the combined organisation.

17. Many of the issues are common between plans so HortNZ brings that experience and background into current planning processes.

18. Nationally, the sector represents 5600 growers producing around 110 crops (focused on producing food for people). Roughly $2.9 billion in domestic revenue is generated yearly, and another $3.2 billion of fresh on board value is produced for export.

19. The industry body is committed to continuous environmental improvement, and has spent significant resource on a good management practice program for growers, covering issues of significance to markets and councils, known as NZGAP.

20. HortNZ is the umbrella organisation for 21 separate product groups covering 110 crops that are outlined in the Commodity Levies (Vegetables and Fruit) Order 2007. Product groups are also levy collecting organisations working on sector specific matters in collaboration with HortNZ which is working on industry specific matters. (HortNZ does not represent winegrowers or wine makers).

21. The two key product groups in the Whangarei District are the kiwifruit product group, (NZ Kiwifruit Growers Inc) and the avocado product group (Avocado's NZ). HortNZ has worked closely with both these product groups and growers throughout the PC114 process.

HORTNZ INVOLVEMENT IN PC114

22. HortNZ made submissions and further submissions on Proposed PC114.

23. As noted in the s42A Report (Para 145) HortNZ was not sent a copy of the Draft Plan Change or included in the pre-notification consultation as this appears to have been limited to affected landowners. Therefore no comments were made by HortNZ on the Draft Plan Change.

24. HortNZ met with growers in Whangarei after the Proposed Plan Changes were notified in August 2016 and it became apparent that a considerable number were affected by the ONF provisions for Whatitiri.

25. Lynette Wharfe and I then met with the growers to discuss their concerns. They outlined to us that although some changes had been made to the Proposed Plan Change that they still had concerns regarding some aspects of the provisions.

26. I note that Mr Mortimer states in his s42A Report (Para 148) that concessions were made to ensure that the proposed rules don't unfairly restrict existing uses, such as horticulture in the Whatitiri

ONF. The report goes on to state that HortNZ now seeks an even more permissive regime for buildings, structures and earthworks within the large landform ONF's.

27. The position set out by HortNZ in its submission on PC114 was developed in consultation with the growers, with a number of further meetings and conference calls being held, where the key issues of concern were discussed in detail.

28. It is HortNZ's role to advocate for its growers so I consider that the approach that has been taken was appropriate in the circumstances. Rather than a permissive approach HortNZ's position has been to seek changes sought by growers which were not addressed or achieved through the pre-consultation.

29. In addition HortNZ has engaged a landscape architect to assist to ensure that the provisions that are sought are reasonable and appropriate to protect the characteristics and qualities of the ONF.

30. HortNZ has also engaged Dr Bruce Hayward, the pre-eminent geologist in this field, who has assisted greatly in identifying the aspects of the ONF that are important to retain.

31. The changes that are attached to the evidence of Lynette Wharfe have been developed through consultation with growers and expert advice.

HORTICULTURE ON WHATITIRI

32. Avocado and kiwifruit are the main horticulture crops that are grown within the Whatitiri ONF

33. There are 58 Avocado orchards, covering an area of 349.45 hectares. The value of production is $18.5 million per year.

34. There are 5 kiwifruit orchards covering and area of 21.19 hectares in the Whatitiri ONF.

35. A map showing the location of growers on Whatitiri is attached to the evidence of Ms Gilbert.

36. Attached to my statement are two grower case studies, one kiwifruit and one avocado that outline details of growing on Whatitiri.

37. Whatitiri is a successful area for avocados:

    (a) It has well-drained Brown loam/Basalt base soils of volcanic origin and very suited to avocado production.

    (b) Avocados reach maximum productive potential on elevated, well drained land, of flat to gently rolling contour

making the gentle sloping hillsides of Whatitiri perfectly suited.

(c) It has access to excellent-quality irrigation water through past investment in irrigation infrastructure and water schemes.

(d) The cool subtropical, generally frost-free climate of the area is ideal for the production of avocados.

38. Shelter from wind is critical to successful avocado production and both live (trees) and artificial shelter is in use. Trees are often trimmed to be kept dense and are typically topped at a height of between 8 and 12 metres. or left un-topped on windward boundaries.

39. Potential of root rot (phytophthora) due to root saturation is an issue that needs to be managed. Growers use techniques such as planting in mounds and ensuring adequate drainage to address this issue.

40. Both green and gold kiwifruit are grown in Whatitiri with more gold coming on stream due to recent conversions. Orchard gate returns (OGR) for Haywards green and $60,000 ha and $120,000/ha OGR for gold.

41. Whatitiri is a successful area for kiwifruit due to:

(a) Fertile volcanic soils

(b) Proximity to irrigation water supplied by Maungatapere Water Company

42. The potential for vine and fruit damage from wind presents a challenge with artificial crop protection being used to manage this issue. Such shelter adds warmth which increases the Taste Zespri Grade (TZG) of the fruit which incentivises growers to produce fruit that is aligned to market requirements.

43. Some contouring may be undertaken prior to establishment of crop support structures and planting and for health and safety purposes flat areas are needed for loading pads for forklifts and trucks.

APPROACH IN PC114 TO WHATITIRI ONF

44. HortNZ recognises that Whangarei District Council needs to include landscape provisions in the district plan to give effect to the Regional Policy Statement, including provisions for Whatitiri as and ONF.

45. The evidence of Dr Hayward outlines what are important characteristics of Whatitiri that need to be protected, particularly “the almost circular, gently sloping small shield volcano as viewed from a distance.” (para 2.2)

46. He considers that some activities, such as small-scale modifications can be undertaken on Whatitiri without compromising the geoheritage values of Whatitiri (Para 4.2).

47. He comments on the appropriateness of the changes sought in the evidence of Ms Lynette Wharfe and supported in the landscape evidence of Ms Bridget Gilbert.

48. The addition of a new column (A1) specifically for Whatitiri in LAN 5. Table 1 assists in enabling specific provisions for Whatitiri as distinct from the other large landforms in Column A.

49. The changes sought provide an appropriate framework for horticulture to be undertaken on Whatitiri without compromising the geoheritage values.

Conclusion

50. Horticulture is an important activity on Whatitiri and growers recognise the importance of the feature while also providing them with the many important attributes that are needed for growing systems.

51. Therefore I seek that the Hearing Panel give due consideration to the changes that are sought through the experts and growers that are presenting on HortNZ’s behalf in order to maintain the viability of these businesses whilst maintaining the special characteristics that make the Whatatiri volcanic cone unique..

Angela Halliday
29 June 2017

Appendix 1: Grower case studies

Whangarei District Plan Hearings PC114 Landscape

Grower case study for Whatitiri – Growing avocados on Whatitiri

I am John Wiessing and I grow avocados on 30 hectares at 326 Whatitiri Rd, on the western side of Whatitiri hill.

My orchard is located within the Whatitiri ONF and in the Rural Production Environment Zone.

The reasons why I grow at Whatitiri is because of:

1) Fertile soils
2) Proximity to reticulated water supply from the Maungatapere Water Company

Challenges with growing in the area are:

1) Tree health decline due to root rot (phytophthora) which is exacerbated by root saturation. This is remedied by replanting more tolerant clonal rootstocks on mounded or terraced well drained soil.
2) Tree and fruit damage from wind. This is reduced by planting shelterbelts or erecting artificial shelters

As part of the avocado growing operation we undertake:

1) Preparation of planting sites by digging drains or swales, ripping, mounding or terracing or stepping land to create flat platforms
2) Irrigating, spraying ,fertilising, and picking

Land preparation:
The land preparation involves:

1. Either mounding or terracing and/or ripping
2. Installing surface drains

Mounding (or ridging) involves moving topsoil from the inter-row space to create a ridge or mound along the planting row. Typically rows are 7 to 10 meters apart and the height of the mounds are 700 to 1000 mm, therefore 350 to 500 mm from the original ground level. Mounding is normally done on ground with less than 10 degree slope.

Terracing (or stepping) involves moving topsoil to create flat areas along the contour lines. Again row spaces are 7 to 10 meters apart and the height of the terrace faces are 1 to 1.5 meters. Because of the cut and fill this means the original level soil is altered by 0.5m to 0.75 m. Terracing is usually done on slopes above 5 degrees.

The purpose of mounding and terracing is to create a drier root zone which leads to better tree health and therefore improved productivity.

Background:
After WDC released the first draft of the 114 Plan Change another grower, Dave Routley and I, met with Glenn Mortimer and voiced our concern that land preparation for planting avocados by mounding or terracing would not be a permitted activity according to the Activity Table earthwork volume limit and the land preparation definition (which excluded ripping and mounding).
Glenn later informed me that the definition would be changed to allow ripping and mounding. We need to be sure that these activities are included in the definition for land preparation and are provided for.
Earthworks

Earthworks is defined in the Plan as: *any modification to the shape of the land surface, including removal of soil, excavation, infilling, re-contouring and construction of any road, track, landing or drainage channel.*

Activities that growers would undertake that are covered by this definition include:

1) Digging surface drains
2) Levelling building sites
3) Constructing access races
4) Levelling or contouring blocks after surface rock removal

Typically surface drains are 1 metre wide and 1 metre deep and are the length of the block, say 120 metres, therefore 120 cubic meters per hectare
For a typical site for an implement shed of 250 square meters on the average 5 degree slope approximately 150 cubic meters would be removed.

Buildings
The main types of buildings that growers need to construct are:

1) Implement sheds for machinery and bin storage
2) Dwellings

Implement sheds are typically 200 to 300 square metres and up to 6 metres high. The proposed 5.5 metre height limit would be adequate for most sheds.

A restriction on colour for landscape purposes such as dull and dark greens, greys, browns and blacks, would be supported as a sensible mitigation tool.

Whangarei District Plan Hearings PC114 Landscape

Grower case study for growing Kiwifruit

I am Mike Crum and with my wife Cathy (trading as MP and CJ Crum Ltd) we have a 20ha organic kiwifruit orchard at Maungatapere on Northern side of Whatitiri Mountain. We also have an orchard contractors and beekeeping business.

Our orchard is located within the Whatiriti ONF.

We grow at Whatatiri because of the:

- Fertile volcanic soils
- Proximity to irrigation water supplied by Maungatapere Water Co.

Challenges with growing in the area include:

- Vine and fruit damage from wind. This is eliminated by erecting artificial shelter cloth.
- Shelter cloth provides the added advantage of a higher TZG due to warm environment created.

Land preparation
Some of the activities undertaken as part of growing Kiwifruit on Whatitiri include land preparation as kiwifruit require structures and planting preparation that require digging holes for both posts and plants.

Earthworks
We also undertake earthworks for loading pads which are needed as our vines mature and hence our crops have higher volumes. Such loading pads would generally need to be 50m by 50m in the near future to comply with trucking and forklift health and safety requirements. We already had a close miss this season because the pad was too small.

Buildings
As employers of a fulltime workforce of up to twenty eight staff and up to sixty – seventy people during the year we use Tatton Road as our base. Sheds are needed to store machinery, and fertiliser while not in use. As our business expands our shed base also expands. The requirements for most orchards are already restricted with health and safety laws.

Artificial crop protection structures
We use structures to provide protection to our crops with the colour requirements for cloth needing to be lighter in colour to allow in light. Dull colours prohibit photosynthesis of the leaves which lower the Taste Zespri Grade (TZG).