

Appendix 1 - Landscape Assessment by Mr Janic Slupski

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF of an application pursuant to s 88 of the Resource Management Act 1991

APPLICATION BY Gisborne District Council, (Land Rivers and Coastal Section)

FOR An upgrade to the Waipaoa Flood Control Scheme

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY

Janic Karl Slupski

Date: 27 July 2018

Qualifications and Experience

1. My name is Janic Karl Slupski. I am a senior policy planner at Gisborne District Council, a position I have held since January 2013.
2. I have qualifications in Landscape Architecture (MLA) and Geography (BSc, BA Hons, first class) from Lincoln University and Canterbury University respectively.
3. A significant portion of work within my current role has involved providing guidance on landscape and urban design matters across both Resource Management and strategic planning work. This includes providing advice to resource consents officers on landscape planning matters, preparation of urban design documents and policy guidance. I was involved for two years in the development the Proposed Gisborne Regional Freshwater Plan where I created a methodology for identifying outstanding freshwater bodies. The methodology was implemented for the Waipaoa Catchment Plan and the waterbodies identified are now an uncontested part of this document. I am currently managing the appeal process for this Plan.
4. I have five years previous experience as a landscape architect working within the private sector as well as local government. My experience here largely involves urban landscape design and master planning ranging from large infrastructure projects to small commercial and residential landscaping.
5. I confirm that I have read the Expert Witnesses Code of Conduct contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2014 and I agree to comply with it. In particular, unless I state otherwise, this evidence is within my sphere of expertise and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions I express.

Background

6. Gisborne District Council (Land, Rivers and Coastal Group) (the Applicant) proposes to upgrade the Waipaoa Flood Control Scheme. The upgrade involves strengthening existing stop banks along the Waipaoa River to improve resilience against flood events. The application also seeks consent to establish public cycleways along the crests of the strengthened stop banks.
7. As part of the proposal, I prepared a landscape statement for the Applicant in order to assess the effects of the scheme upgrade on surrounding landscape values. My assessment was attached to the Application. That assessment was based on predicted approximate stopbank levels as a result of modelling work undertaken on the Applicant's behalf, which I understand was based on a number of assumptions. In relation to the downstream component of the Scheme (i.e. where it meets the coastal marine area (CMA), some provision was made for sea level rise using a 1m sea level rise (above mean high water spring) as a boundary assumption. My conclusion was the effect of the changes, both within the Poverty Bay Coastal Margin Character Area and elsewhere were minimal.

8. I understand that since I wrote my initial assessment, and the application was lodged, a number of things have occurred, including:
 - a. As a result of submissions and further information requests from the consenting authority, the Applicant has further refined and calibrated the model on which the original approximate predicted stopbank heights were based; and
 - b. In particular, Mr Kouvelis (who is providing technical advice to the Reporting Officer) has raised queries about the sufficiency of planning for sea level rise (SLR) at the downstream end of the Scheme.

9. As a result, the Applicant has undertaken further modelling and assessment of the stopbank levels particularly in the Coastal Margin Character Area and has requested that I undertake an updated assessment of the visual, aesthetic and landscape implications on the local and wider environment from a 1.67m sea level rise (above mean sea level).

Description of proposal

10. The following table provides a comparison between the Resource Consent application stopbank levels (lodged in May 2017) and the latest proposed stopbank levels (June 2018) relative to the existing stopbank crest height covering the first 6km of stopbank.

11. The table indicates that the proposed stopbank raising (June 2018) is of a similar scale and pattern to the original application stopbank levels when considered within the context of the natural environment and heights of the existing stopbank above the surrounding ground levels.

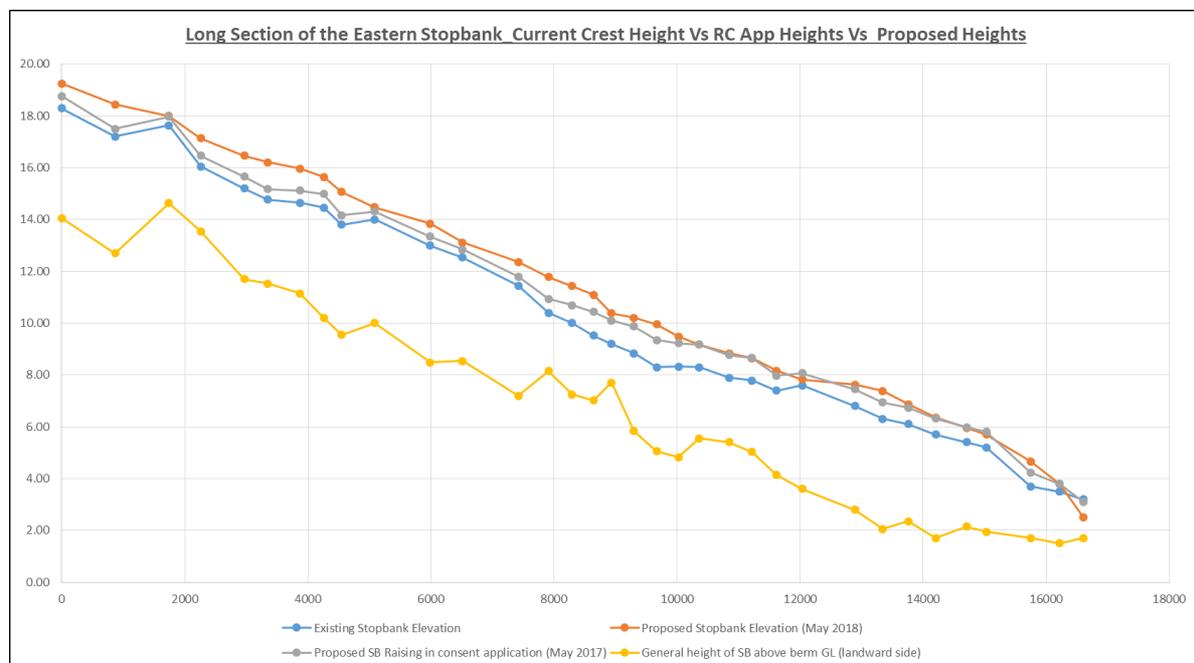


Table 1 - comparison between the Resource Consent levels (lodged in May 2017) and the proposed stopbank levels (June 2018) relative to the existing stopbank crest height near Waipaoa River mouth (eastern stopbank).

Effects on the Poverty Bay Coastal Margin

12. The stopbanks along the lower reach of the Waipaoa River are located within the Tuamotu Island Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL). Classified as Unit 16 in Schedule G11 of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan (the Tairāwhiti Plan), the area encompasses the southern extent of Poverty Bay including Te Kuri a Paoa, the coastal margin and waters south of the Waipaoa River mouth, and Wherowhero lagoon. The unit also extends northwest to include Sponge Bay / Tuamotu Island.

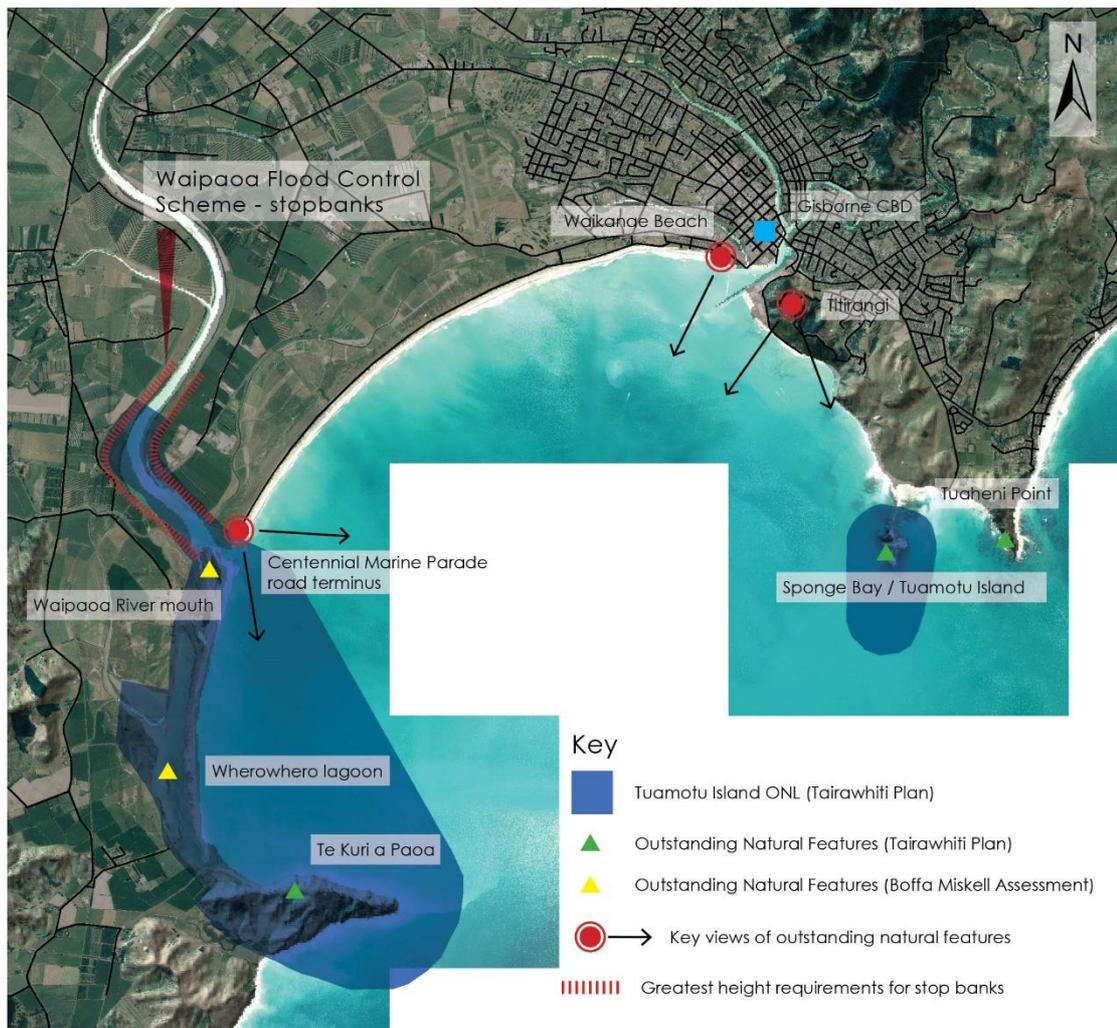


Figure 1: Tuamotu Outstanding Natural Landscape

Origin of outstanding natural landscape

13. The outstanding natural landscapes identified in Schedule G11 were originally developed from an assessment of landscape character for the region's coastal environment in 1995¹². Prepared by landscape architecture consultancy Boffa Miskell, the results formed Appendix 3 of Council's Regional Coastal Plan. These provisions were subsequently merged into the Tairāwhiti Plan on 30 June 2017.

¹² Boffa Miskell (1995) "An Assessment of the Landscape Character of the Coastal Environment of Gisborne District"

14. My observations of the attributes within this ONL (Unit 16) are consistent with and support both the original assessment and the description of the Unit's notable characteristics in Schedule G11. Despite being over 20 years old, this information remains relevant and useful for considering the appropriateness of the new stop bank proposal.

Attributes that define this outstanding natural landscape

15. There are two outstanding features that define this ONL:
- Te Kuri a Paoa and Sponge Bay / Tuamotu Island. These two distinctive features enclose and define Poverty Bay. Both are highly visible – they are close to Gisborne city and good road access creates many opportunities to view them along the Bay. Their visual prominence is exaggerated by the contrasting low-lying flood plain of the Poverty Bay Flats. The elongated scarp of Te Kuri a Paoa is the more prominent of the two. Projecting out into the Bay, it is a visually distinctive, highly memorable landform, and a definitive feature of the Poverty Bay area.
 - Wherowhero and Waipaoa River mouth estuaries. Both are significant for their wetland, estuarine and coastal lagoon habitats. While no longer pristine environments, they nevertheless contribute to the natural character of the ONL. Volunteers continue to revegetate these areas with indigenous plant species to enhance their ecological value.
16. While not part of the ONL, the beach and dune environment north of the Waipaoa River mouth also makes an important contribution to its natural character and visual amenity. It extends the natural setting of the coastal margin and provides a valuable transition from the outstanding features within the ONL to the surrounding productive landscape.
17. Similar to the beach and dune environment, the lower reach of the Waipaoa River and the adjacent stopbanks show greater evidence of landscape modification but have been included within this ONL. It is important to note that the stopbanks were present at the time the Boffa Miskell assessment was prepared. Their inclusion reinforces two important points:
- That while considered outstanding as a whole, it is clear that the ONL's attributes are concentrated in the two outstanding features defined above. In other words, outstanding attributes are not uniformly distributed across the ONL. Instead, the wider ONL provides the landscape context for the outstanding qualities identified.
 - That the creation of the ONL as a discrete unit is a tool to help us understand the landscape and the unique character of place. The delineation between an ONL and its surrounds is rarely a sharp division but typically grade from one unit to another. Boundaries cannot be translated sharply onto the ground but seen as an area where adjacent landscapes come together.
18. In light of this, it is my opinion that the lower reach of the Waipaoa River and the adjacent stopbanks provide a useful transition and buffer zone between one landscape unit and another. While showing greater evidence of landscape modification this area retains a degree of naturalness in both the scale and patterns of land use. The expansive setting, together with the continuity of exotic grass cover,

enables the existing stopbanks to fit comfortably within the ONL without adversely affecting its key attributes.

19. The focus of the proposal should therefore be to ensure appropriate consideration of any landscape changes is made to ensure the gradual transition from one landscape to another is preserved.



Figure 2: View upstream towards stop bank from Centennial Marine Parade road end (stop-bank highlighted in red)

Assessment of Effects of the Proposal Accounting for updated Sea Level Rise (SLR) guidance

20. It remains my position that the proposed increase in stopbank height will not adversely affect the attributes that make this ONL outstanding. The following reasons are pertinent:

Location of stopbanks

21. The stopbanks are located away from Centennial Marine Parade road end, beach front and river mouth. Because of this, they will continue to have no adverse impact on the visual drama of Te Kuri a Paoa, the natural values of Wherowhero and Waipaoa River mouth lagoons or natural character of the coastal edge.
22. Views of Te Kuri a Paoa are particularly important. The stopbanks are located away from the area where the headland can be typically viewed. They are also located away from the viewshaft and are not associated with the experience of this feature. The average increase of 0.8m in crest heights proposed for the first 5km of the stopbank will not change the quality or nature of this experience. Nor will the proposal affect any other views gained of Te Kuri a Paoa from along the margins of Poverty Bay.

Integration with surrounding landscape

23. Following the stopbank improvements the proposed stopbank will continue to remain integrated with the surrounding landscape scale and land use patterns.
24. The visual experience at the road end is expansive, influenced by the broad perception of the Poverty Bay Flats as well as the sweeping arc of Poverty Bay itself. This sense of scale is exaggerated by the sharp relief of Te Kuri a Paoa as well as the bordering lowland hills to the south. Sections of grazed land and cropping are extensive and the absence of hard structures reinforces this sense of scale. Being planted in

exotic grasses, the stopbank will continue to form part of this productive landscape. The broad undulating saltmarsh landscape running along Centennial Marine Parade will also reduce the visual contrast between the elevated stopbank and its surrounds as will the broad dune system to the north of the river mouth. The outcome is that the surrounding landscape is likely to absorb much of the visual effect of increased stop bank levels.

25. The stopbanks will likely be more discernible from the road end, but will still remain a relatively minor feature in the landscape from a visual perspective. As such, they are likely to remain consistent with the existing character of the lower reach of the Waipaoa River, and continue to function as part of a transition zone from one landscape to another.
26. The addition of a cycleway to the crest of the stopbank and landscaping to the road end and cycleway entry will further enhance the amenity and the value of the ONL and further integrate it within its coastal context.

Effects on Poverty Bay (inland)

27. The Waipaoa Flood Control Scheme forms an integral part of the Poverty Bay landscape and is visually well integrated with their surroundings.
28. Due to the modified nature of the Poverty Bay Flats and the scheme's strong relationship to and consistency with surrounding landuse patterns, the area will remain resilient enough to accommodate the proposed scheme upgrade without any significant impact on the character and values found there. The finished works will continue to be keeping with the productive values and the effects of the scheme on the surrounding landscape can be considered as low. Moreover, the proposed works can be seen as supporting and protecting the irrigation and food production values of the Poverty Bay Flats.
29. As with my previous landscape statement, the visual effects of the proposal are most likely to be perceived where the stopbanks travel alongside stretches of SH2. However, even with additional increases to stopbank levels, it is unlikely that the stopbanks, once constructed, will be perceived any differently to how they are now. The scale of the settled landscape, the prominence of the planted landscape, the moderating effect of trees and shelterbelts, and the use of the stopbanks for pasture – all of these aspects will work to integrate the stopbanks with their productive surrounds.
30. For the same reasons, a proposed cycle trail along the crest of the stopbanks is unlikely to pose any adverse effects upon the surrounding landscape values. Indeed, the construction of the cycleway will more than likely enhance community wellbeing through improving public access to and along the coastal environment and Waipaoa River, and enhancing the amenity of these character areas through low impact recreational use. The cycleway is also likely to contribute to local economic development by supporting local tourism opportunities.
31. Some consideration will need to be given to design and landscaping to screen views where private property may occur close to the trail. Dropping the cycleway down one side of the stopbank away from private property would be an appropriate alteration.

Block planting of trees would also help to break up views of the stopbank and cycleway and further integrate the structure as a part of the lived-in landscape.

Landscape and visual effects associated with the proposed stopbank bypass, Ormond Township

32. Like other parts of the Waipaoa Flood Control Scheme, the Muhanga Stream has been modified to support productive land uses on the Poverty Bay Flats. Pasture runs along the waterway to provide for stock grazing with stock fencing a visible element that supports this land use. A mix of exotic evergreen and deciduous trees can also be found between the stopbanks. Other aspects of the modified landscape include:

- Powerlines that cross the waterway
- Vehicle access along the crest of the stopbanks
- Concrete revetment walls to some sections of the eastern stopbank
- A culvert with floodgates, where Matawai Road (SH2) crosses the waterway roughly 300m upstream of where the stopbank extension is proposed
- Residential dwellings on either side of the existing stopbanks.

33. In terms of visual amenity, this section of the flood control scheme contributes to the surrounding pastoral landscape and the broader pattern of intensive pastoral and horticultural land uses on the Poverty Bay Flats. Other than these productive functions, I see no other notable features between the stopbanks. The unrestricted passage of native fish is an important freshwater value across the whole of the region and will need to be provided for to give effect to the Gisborne Regional Freshwater Plan.

34. The proposed stopbank bypass is unlikely to have any adverse effects on visual amenity or any other landscape values found near the proposed site. The extension will be grassed and will merge with the adjacent stopbanks and the wider pastoral surrounds. Visibility of the extension will also be limited to vantage points from the crest of the stopbanks. Because of the curve in this section of the flood control scheme, it is likely that views from the stopbanks will also be limited. Concrete pipes to the base of the extension will provide for the unrestricted passage of native fish along the waterway. New 'fish friendly' floodgates will be installed as part of the work. The removal of the existing 'non fish friendly' floodgates to on the Matawai Road culverts will further enhance this value.

Summary of effects

35. Based on my understanding of the landscape and planning provisions related to both character areas, I believe the proposal will continue to pose no adverse effects on either the coastal environment or the wider Poverty Bay landscape.

36. With regard to the proposed cycleway, I reiterate my previous recommendation that suitable landscaping be undertaken where the trail accesses the stopbank within the Poverty Bay Coastal Margin. The Applicant has proposed and agreed on implementing the mitigation measure of dropping the cycle trail off the stopbank crest and down to the riverside toe so that there is no visual impact or adverse effect on dwellings located

adjacent to the existing stopbank (on the landward side). In this circumstance, no landscaping will be required.

37. Overall, the proposal will continue to have a low effect on the character and values found across the Poverty Bay Flats and within the coastal environment and there are no identifiable reasons why the upgrade should not proceed based on landscape considerations.