

25 February 2008

Board of Inquiry
Free Post Grid Upgrade Submissions
10B Crescent Court
HAMILTON EAST 3247

**MAUNGATAUTARI ECOLOGICAL ISLAND TRUST – SUBMISSION ON
TRANSPOWER’S NOTICES OF REQUIREMENT FOR THE NORTH
ISLAND GRID UPGRADE**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 My name is James Bernard Mylchreest. I am the Chief Executive of the Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust, a position I have held for the past six years. I have a Master of Public Policy from Victoria University and New Zealand Certificate of Town & Country Planning.
- 1.2 Prior to my appointment as Chief Executive to the Trust I was Deputy General Manager of the Waipa District Council and was involved with the preparation of the Waipa District Plan, which was developed during the 1990's, and contains the provisions on Special Landscape Character Areas.
- 1.3 The Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust is a registered charitable trust (HN/1168808) established by the community with a vision:

“To remove, forever, introduced mammalian pests and predators from Maungatautari, and to restore to the forest a healthy diversity of indigenous plants and animals not seen in our lifetime.”
- 1.4 The Trust has raised \$16m over the past six years from a variety of fundraising grants and donations and support from over 1,800 financial members to achieve its vision.
- 1.5 The Trust now requires approximately \$1.5m per annum to maintain the project and is reliant on voluntary grants and donations, memberships and visitor contributions.

1.6 Maintaining Maungatautari's special landscape character is considered necessary to ensure the long term sustainability of the project and continued public support.

1.7 The Trust believes that:

- (i) The western alignment of the proposed North Island Grid Upgrade will have a negative impact on the landscape character of Maungatautari;
- (ii) The proposal is contrary to the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Waipa District Plan as it relates to the Special Landscape Character Areas; and
- (iii) The Waipa District Council has an obligation to enforce the provisions of its District Plan which have been supported by the community for 20 years.

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust is concerned about the proposed new overhead transmission line from Whakamaru to Brownhill Road which is to be 400kv capable but operate initially at 220kv. The particular parts of the transmission line are those that impact on the Special Landscape Character Areas of Maungatautari and Lake Karapiro.

3. STATUTORY PROVISIONS

3.1 It is expected that Waipa District Council will be lodging a detailed submission on the statutory framework surrounding the concept of sustainable management and matters of national importance and the Trust does not wish to duplicate these submissions. It does, however, wish to include a reference to the statutory provisions should Waipa District Council not pursue its submission.

- (i) Section 5(1) of the RMA states the purpose of the Act which is to promote sustainable management of natural and physical resources and includes the need, amongst other things, to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of activities on the environment.
- (ii) Section 6 of the RMA relates to matters of national importance to be considered when making decisions on resource management i.e.
 - a) the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands and lakes and rivers and their margins and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development

- b) the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development...”
- (iii) Section 7 of the RMA requires particular regard to be had to other matters including the:
 - efficient use and development of natural resources
 - maintenance and enhancement of amenity values and of the quality of the environment; and
 - finite characteristics of natural and physical resources
- (iv) The Waipa District Plan has numerous objectives, policies and rules relating to the special landscape control areas including the provision of rules for the provision of public works and works of utility service operators.

4. MAUNGATAUTARI ECOLOGICAL ISLAND PROJECT

- 4.1 The Maungatautari Ecological Island Trust was formed in February 2002 because of a community desire to restore the ecosystem function (life force, mauri) of the remaining 3400ha of indigenous forest on the upper slopes of Maungatautari. It was selected as Maungatautari and the smaller Te Tapui are the only remaining extensive areas of indigenous forest left in the central Waikato basin and because of Maungatautari’s iconic landscape feature to a large number of residents in the Waikato region.
- 4.2 Whilst the pest-proof fence protects the remnant forest environment from a cultural perspective “protecting the mana of the maunga” extends beyond the fence and includes the lower slopes down to the Waikato River and Lake Karapiro. It is recorded that Maungatautari was home to more than 5,000 Maori in pre-European times who would have relied on the total maunga for spiritual and physical sustenance, not just the upper slopes.
- 4.3 The impact of the restoration work behind the fence will, and is already, having a significant impact on land surrounding the fenced area with a halo effect as indigenous species spread out from the physically protected area inside the fence. The improved water quality will encourage the protection of streams and esplanade strips as they flow down the mountain slopes.
- 4.4 The enhanced ecosystem and the reintroduction of many of New Zealand’s unique and critically endangered species will lead to the increased utilisation of the mountain. It will provide an unparalleled opportunity for New Zealanders and international visitors alike to view many threatened and endemic species in their natural environment.

- 4.5 Appended are two letters of support identifying the environmental importance of the Maungatautari project:
- (i) The Department of Conservation senior science staff signed by John Gumbley, Technical Support Manager for Waikato Conservator; and
 - (ii) Geoff Park, M.Sc.Hons, PhD(Anu), Landscape Ecology and History.
- 4.6 New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010 has as one of its four goals “Securing and Conserving a Long Term Future” with objectives:
- “(i) Environmental Protection – to recognise the value of the natural environment and actively protect, support and promote its sustainability.
 - (ii) Maori Participation – to ensure Maori are partners in the tourism sector and that Maori culture and identity is protected.
 - (iii) Heritage Promotion – to proactively foster the recognition, understanding and appreciation of New Zealand’s built, historical, cultural and Maori heritage.
 - (iv) Community Goodwill – to have New Zealanders and their communities understand and actively support tourism.”
- 4.7 Maungatautari is considered to have the potential to become an international visitor destination in its own right and will add significantly to the economic growth of the Waikato Region.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The Special Landscape Character Areas have been properly established and consistently managed by the Waipa District Council to protect the high amenity and environmental values of Maungatautari and Lake Karapiro which have been clearly recognised by the community of Waipa. The proposed upgrade does not comply with the performance standards in the District Plan and would have required a Resource Consent if the Minister had not invoked the call-in process under the Resource Management Act.

Should the Upper North Island Grid Upgrade proceed through the Special Landscape Character Area of Maungatautari and Lake Karapiro it will have a negative impact on New Zealand’s “clean green” image particularly with the large number of national and international visitors to these world renowned destinations. I am unaware of any similar attractions on the eastern alignment.

Any diminution to the landscape qualities of Maungatautari could potentially reduce visitor numbers to the project thus have a general negative economic impact on the Waikato Region and specifically impact on the Trust's ability to become self-sustaining.

Although the Trust initially indicated they would like to be heard, we would now like to withdraw that request.

Yours faithfully

Jim Mylchreest
CHIEF EXECUTIVE