

A1650893

13 March 2020

Ministry for the Environment  
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## **Gisborne District Council's submission on the 'National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity' proposal**

1. Thank you for providing Gisborne District Council the opportunity to submit on the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity proposal.

### **Structure of our submission**

2. This submission has two key parts:
  - Part 1: This letter, which discusses the 'big picture' concerns for staff of Gisborne District Council.
  - Part 2: Table one, an appendix to this letter, which contains a detailed review of the Draft National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (draft NPS-IB), with our submission points and recommendations.

### **Key Points**

3. Council supports central government's objective to improve indigenous biodiversity management in Aotearoa. We support the draft NPS-IB, and the intent of the proposal is broadly consistent with our approach to the management of indigenous biodiversity in Tairāwhiti.
4. Tairāwhiti 2050 - our regional spatial plan - illustrates the challenges, opportunities and aspirations our region has for the next 30 years. Restoring our natural heritage is a significant part of this vision.
5. However, Council would like to highlight some issues it sees around the content of the NPS-IB and its implementation.
6. Our principal concern is that Council and our communities have limited resources to implement the draft NPS-IB.
7. Council operates in a challenging environment where delivering and maintaining essential services, activities and infrastructure at service levels appropriate to meet community needs costs more than our rating base alone can fund. Without external funding assistance, extension of timeframes and additional technical support, the level

of work posed in the policy would further extend rates and charges beyond what our communities can afford.

8. Achieving the desired indigenous biodiversity measures within reasonably short timeframes (two – six years) is ambitious, particularly for smaller unitary authorities. While we agree with the intent to improve the management of indigenous biodiversity, the proposal places significant expectations on landowners, councils, tangata whenua and communities to effect change.
9. While we support the proposal's intent to engage with tangata whenua to develop methods and strategies to manage indigenous biodiversity, we urge the Ministry to recognize that this poses a significant amount of work for both tangata whenua and councils. We recommend the Ministry consider provision of support for iwi, councils and landowners, and extend the timeline for implementation, particularly for the identification of SNAs and the development of a regional biodiversity strategy.
10. We recommend the collaborative development of a national implementation plan that includes contributions from government to resolving capacity shortfalls and in providing other forms of assistance required to enable timeframes to be met.
11. Council also believes the draft NPS-IB could give more support to the provisions relating to its fundamental concept - Hutia te Rito – and to climate change.
12. Council is concerned that the proposed NPS-IB has not taken a consistent approach to the concept of Hutia te Rito, with respect to Māori cultural and environmental issues. The proposal provides clear direction for Hutia te Rito in the higher level provisions but Part 3 (Implementation) and the appendices seem entirely focused on a western scientific approach.
13. In particular, Sections 3.8, 3.9 and Appendix 1 seem to overlook the need to recognise and provide for Hutia Te Rito (policy 3.2). Provisions for identifying Significant Natural Areas and managing adverse effects on them are particularly important parts of the NPS-IB. They need to better reflect this central concept to achieve internal consistency across the document, and to avoid issues during implementation.
14. Council also questions whether the NPS-IB adequately considers methods for tangata whenua decision-making on Māori cultural and environmental values. To address this, further integration of Hutia Te Rito could be included in other sections of the document.
15. In Council's view, the policies around climate change within the proposed NPS-IB need to be emphasised further. Climate change will have significant effects on the natural and physical resources of this country including indigenous biodiversity. Our native species and ecosystems are likely to experience a whole range of impacts as a result of climate change, but some ecosystems and species will be more vulnerable. Climate change needs to be considered throughout the NPS-IB to reflect the scale of threat it poses to our indigenous biodiversity.
16. The exclusion of plantation forestry from Section 3.9 of the draft NPS-IB underestimates the impacts of plantation forestry on indigenous biodiversity. This is a particular issue in Tairāwhiti, due to the amount of production forestry in our region.

17. We also consider that the proposed NPS-IB should be part of a wider cultural shift toward community knowledge and monitoring of our indigenous biodiversity, and that existing knowledge and oral histories are passed onto future generations.
18. A suggested avenue for this could be through the education system (with a focus on high school in particular). We also see an opportunity for the restoration of our local indigenous biodiversity through avenues such as cadetships for rangatahi (on the proviso that these would recognise a wide range of skills (not just science degrees), and that it would be paid employment).
19. Staff of Gisborne District Council would like the opportunity to further submit or speak to this submission in the future.

For further clarification please contact Keita Kohere Director, Transformation and Relationships  
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Nāku Noa nā,



Keita Kohere  
**Director, Transformation and Relationships**

Appendix 1: submission on the Draft NPS-IB				Gisborne District Council seeks the following decisions:
Pg #	Section Heading and Reference	Support / Oppose /Seek Amendments	Issue / Reason	
15	Part 2: Objectives and policies  Objectives 2, 3 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support the objectives and policies as they mandate a consistent approach to protecting indigenous biodiversity nationally.</p> <p>We support the overarching intent of the policies, and objectives, and particularly support objectives 3 and 6 relating to the underlying concept of Hutia Te Rito and its implementation. However we recognise that achieving these objectives will require substantial effort from councils and from iwi.</p>	We recommend that these provisions are retained.
17, 18	Part 3: Implementation requirements  3.3. Tangata whenua as kaitiaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the intent</li> <li>• Seek an amendment</li> <li>• Seek clarity</li> </ul>	<p>We support the intent of these provisions, particularly the intent of subprovision (3). Providing tangata whenua opportunities to bring cultural understanding to restoration and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity would further recognise their role as kaitiaki. We suggest this could be reflected through a new measure such as – d) bringing cultural understanding to biodiversity restoration.</p> <p>However we also acknowledge the capacity constraints that exist for tangata whenua and iwi. The work required to identify taonga is vast, and the NPS-IB ignores the breadth and depth of the work required for engagement to be meaningful. This is only one of many projects that central government expect iwi to contribute to, and with the proposed dates for identification of SNA's being close to dates in the Essential Freshwater package, tangata whenua (and Council's) resources will be stretched.</p> <p>We note that although subprovision 4 makes some provision for tangata whenua to act as kaitiaki, there is a lack of subsequent provisions for tangata whenua decision-making throughout the remainder of the NPS-IB. We are sceptical that Hutia te Rito can be implemented meaningfully without further provisions throughout the NPS-IB.</p>	<p>We recommend amendment to subprovision (3), to add “– d) bringing cultural understanding to biodiversity restoration”.</p> <p>We seek clarification from the Ministry as to whether iwi and hāpu will be resourced to participate in the process as outlined in 3.3.</p> <p>We recommend amendments throughout the NPS-IB to give meaningful effect to the ethos of Hutia te Rito specified in provision 3.2.</p>
18	3.4 Integrated approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support this policy focusing on integration of key issues because it is clear that they do not exist alone, by considering indigenous biodiversity in relation to the surrounding environment the draft NPS-IB enables communities to see the holistic issues as a whole.</p>	We recommend that these provisions are retained.

18, 19	3.5 Resilience to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the intent</li> <li>• Seek amendments</li> </ul>	<p>We fully support the intent to include resilience to climate change in the NPS-IB. However, we don't think the provisions go far enough. Using language such as "considering the effects of climate change" does not reflect the severity of climate change as an all-encompassing issue for all ecosystems, and a potential driver for indigenous biodiversity loss on a large scale. We recommend that more prescriptive language is used, to align with the severity of the issue being addressed.</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are strengthened.</p> <p>We suggest that resilience to climate change be included as a key consideration in Appendix 1</p> <p>We also suggest that the avoidance of indigenous biodiversity loss due to climate change be included in section 3.5.</p>
19	3.6 Precautionary approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support this policy as it provides a safeguard for indigenous biodiversity where little is known about the effects of an activity.</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are retained.</p>
19, 20	3.8 Identifying significant natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support intent</li> <li>• Seek amendments to timeframes</li> </ul>	<p>We support the intent of (2), and in particular sub-provision 2a. However, we think that to carry out this mahi using principles a, b, c &amp; e will require more time than 5 years as referenced in (3).</p> <p>As a unitary authority, it falls on GDC to identify the SNA's in Tairāwhiti, as well as creating a Regional Biodiversity Strategy. This factor, combined with the short time frames, is likely to exacerbate a shortage of ecologists to do the same work for all councils.</p>	<p>We recommend the Ministry for the Environment amend 3.8 (3) to make it practicable to implement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extending the timeframe to 2030, and provide implementation support to Council's and Iwi.</li> </ul>
22	3.10 Managing adverse effects in plantation forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek amendments</li> </ul>	<p>The National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry has no effective policies regulating the protection of indigenous biodiversity, unless SNA's have already been identified. Regarding our point above, we consider the NPS-IB is a critical piece of legislation for establishing a robust, interim bottom-line. This will serve to protect Indigenous Biodiversity which has not yet been formally identified as an SNA, until such time as councils are able to carry out the identification process.</p> <p>Including plantation forestry in provision 3.9 would have a three-fold positive effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better erosion control in between exotic species,</li> <li>• Reduced likelihood of forestry slash entering waterways (a significant issue in Tairāwhiti) and</li> <li>• Better uptake of carbon dioxide.</li> </ul>	<p>We recommend the deletion of provision 3.10(1).</p>
23, 24	3.12 Existing activities in SNAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support this provision as it contains relatively flexible criteria to support the management of indigenous biodiversity where there are existing activities in SNAs, particularly for the pastoral farming industry.</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are retained.</p>
24, 25	3.13 General rules applying outside SNAs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support subprovision 3 and its consideration of the potential of Maori land.</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are retained.</p>

25	3.14 Identified taonga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Seek clarification</li> </ul>	<p>We support 3.14, particularly subprovision 2 which allows tangata whenua to decide whether they want to identify taonga or not.</p> <p>However due to the constraints on iwi and hapū, resourcing may be required in order to enable full tangata whenua involvement in this process.</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are retained.</p> <p>We recommend that iwi and hapū are resourced to enable effective participation in this process.</p>
25, 26	3.15 Highly mobile fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oppose</li> </ul>	<p>We do not support the inclusion of highly mobile fauna. We acknowledge that resource management plans have a role in managing impacts on highly mobile fauna, through habitat protection. However, we do not agree with councils being given the role of protection and sourcing and dissemination of data for highly mobile fauna. This would be a significant shift in roles between DOC and councils and places species conservation in an RMA framework.</p> <p>We also note that most councils do not necessarily have the information and expertise to undertake this role.</p>	<p>We recommend the deletion of provision 3.15</p>
26, 27	3.16 Restoration and enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> <li>• Seek amendment</li> <li>• Seek clarity</li> </ul>	<p>We support the overarching intent of this section. We particularly endorse (4), including the prioritisation of indigenous biodiversity projects.</p> <p>We also see an opportunity to include a provision on climate change resilience in this section. SNA's whose ecological integrity has been degraded are inherently more likely to be at risk to the effects of climate change.</p> <p>We support the intent of provision 5, however we seek clarity as to whether central government will fund this aspect. As mentioned above, Gisborne District Council operates in a challenging environment where delivering and maintaining essential services, activities and infrastructure at service levels appropriate to meet community needs, costs more than our rating base alone can fund. Without external funding assistance, this provision would be another aspect of implementing this NPS that is beyond what our community's affordability.</p> <p>We support Provision 6, as we see resource consents as a practical tool to improve areas of indigenous biodiversity.</p>	<p>We recommend an amendment to subprovision (4) to consider climate change as an attribute in prioritising indigenous biodiversity restoration and enhancement.</p> <p>Council also seeks clarity as to whether funding will be provided to councils to incentivise restoration and enhancement.</p>
27, 28	3.17 Increasing indigenous vegetation cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support</li> </ul>	<p>We support the provisions in this section, particularly (4) which targets 10% indigenous vegetation cover in urban areas.</p>	<p>We recommend these provisions are retained.</p>
28	3.18 Regional Biodiversity strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support intent</li> <li>• Oppose timeframe</li> </ul>	<p>We support this provision. Being a unitary authority, we are responsible for the identification of SNA's, as well as the drafting of a regional biodiversity strategy.</p>	<p>We recommend these provisions are retained.</p>

			<p>The drafting of a regional biodiversity strategy is broadly in line with identified priorities in our 30 year spatial plan (Tairāwhiti 2050).</p> <p>We support the process of completing a regional biodiversity strategy, as well as making nationally consistent efforts towards improving biodiversity. However, the proposed timeframes of doing this are unachievable for Tairāwhiti. As well as identifying SNA's, we will also have the essential freshwater provisions coming into effect during this time period, as well as our BAU where we are undertaking a full review of our planning documents.</p>	<p>If the Ministry for the Environment retains these provisions, we recommend that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the timeframe to complete this strategy be extended to 2030 to allow for sufficient time for meaningful consultation with tangata whenua and the community</li> </ul>
29	3.19 Assessment of environmental effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider strengthening</li> </ul>	<p>We support this provision, but we think subprovision 2(d) could be strengthened to delete the words “where relevant”</p>	<p>We recommend that these provisions are amended to delete the words “where relevant”.</p>
30	3.20 Monitoring by regional councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek clarification</li> <li>Recommend resourcing</li> </ul>	<p>We support the overarching intent of 3.20 as we recognise the need for a monitoring plan in order to implement the objectives of the proposed NPS-IB.</p> <p>However we recognise the capacity constraints that already exist within our own organisation. Our regional monitoring team is small, and its time is currently dominated by monitoring forestry and water consents. Due to the scale of the forestry and horticulture industries in our region, this is likely to continue. Additional monitoring requirements will have flow on effects, and will require additional resourcing, or the prioritisation of monitoring staff away from some of the activities with significant environmental impacts locally.</p>	<p>We require clarity from the Ministry for the Environment as to what support the government proposes for tangata whenua and councils to implement section 3.20</p>
32	Appendix 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek amendments</li> <li>Support</li> </ul>	<p>We seek amendments to Appendix 1 to include a Mātauranga Māori approach as an entirely viable alternative to the western ecological perspective set out in Appendix 1. To inform the framework for this approach, we suggest that the following articles be referenced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harmsworth GR, Awatere S 2013. Indigenous Māori knowledge and perspectives of ecosystems. In Dymond JR ed. Ecosystem services in New Zealand – conditions and trends. Manaaki Whenua Press, Lincoln, New Zealand.</li> <li>Harmsworth GR 2004. The role of Biodiversity in Māori Advancement: A Research Framework. He Pukenga Kōrero Raumati, Volume 8, Number 1.</li> </ul> <p>We support the other criteria to identify significant natural areas in order to make them nationally consistent, comparable and robust.</p>	<p>We seek the inclusion of a Mātauranga Māori approach as an alternative (not additional to) to Appendix 1.</p>