

Central Government “Plan Stop” Direction

Whangarei District Council Briefing

14 August 2025

What we will cover today

- Overview of Plan Stop announcement
- Impact on current District Plan work programme
- Next steps and new delegation for exemption applications

Plan Stop announcement

- Intended to prevent “unnecessary” RMA plan changes and allow councils to focus on preparing for the new resource management system.
- Announced on 16 July 2025.
- Will be introduced through an amendment to the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Bill.
- Expected to be passed into law in August 2025.
- No opportunity for submissions on legislative change.

Plan Stop implications

What will stop?

- Notification of new plan or regional policy statement reviews, changes or variations.
- Proposed plans or plan changes that are already notified but haven't reached the hearings stage.

What won't stop?

- Proposed plans that have a hearing date scheduled within 5 days of enactment or have already commenced or concluded hearings.
- Work that councils do before notifying a plan change.
- Monitoring that councils are required to undertake under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Automatic exemptions

- Private plan changes
- Proposed plans related to natural hazards
- Proposed plans required to uphold Treaty settlement obligations
- Plan changes which are directed by the Minister as a proposal of national significance
- Changes to implement new national direction where this is required to occur before 31 December 2027
- Intensification streamlined planning processes

Draft exemption application criteria

- better enables the local authority to provide three waters services
- rectifies provisions that have had unintended consequences, are unworkable, or have led to inefficient outcomes
- responds to changes made to the Resource Management Act 1991
- better enables climate change to be managed
- supports the transition of high risk land so as to better manage the risk of erosion
- enables any relevant Treaty of Waitangi settlement Act or deed of settlement to be upheld
- enables a response to be made to a recommendation from the Environment Court
- Any other reason that the Minister considers appropriate

Current plan changes that can continue

- Plan Change 1 (Natural Hazards) - Currently at appeal stage.
- Plan Change 3 (Rosvall Sawmill) - Private plan change. Submission period closed, awaiting Applicant decision on timing for hearing.
- Plan Change 5 (422 Marsden Point Road) - Private plan change. To be notified by November 2025.

Current plan reviews that are not automatically exempt



Plan Changes 4A, 4B, and 4C

(Temporary Activities, Cross
Boundary Matters,
Contaminated Land, and
Minor Improvements)



Matters of Importance to Hapū



Renewable Energy and Network Utilities



Ecosystems and Biodiversity



Public Access

Current plan reviews that may meet exemption criteria



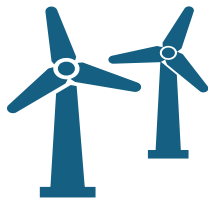
Plan Changes 4A, 4B, and 4C

- rectifies provisions that have had unintended consequences, are unworkable, or have led to inefficient outcomes



Matters of Importance to Hapū

- rectifies provisions that have had unintended consequences, are unworkable, or have led to inefficient outcomes
- enables a response to be made to a recommendation from the Environment Court



Renewable Energy and Network Utilities

- rectifies provisions that have had unintended consequences, are unworkable, or have led to inefficient outcomes
- better enables climate change to be managed

Rationale for applying for exemptions

- In absence of an exemption, there will be no opportunity/ option to fix inefficient and outdated provisions in District Plan that cause uncertainty, delay and cost in the resource consenting system. This would remain through the transition into new RM system, possibly for the next 3 – 5 years.
- Having an exemption would give the incoming Council the opportunity/ option to progress work already completed and anticipated by the community.
- Seeking an exemption for work currently being undertaken in partnership with hapū would assist to manage any risk to Council's relationship with hapū.
- Having an exemption, provides an opportunity for the transition to new RM system to be more efficient for Council.

Next steps and delegation for exemption applications

- Plan Stop likely to come into effect in August or September. Exemption applications more likely to be successful if they are made soon.
- A new delegation to enable exemption to plan stop to be sought from Central Government is required - exemption applications would be a new process under the Resource Management Act.
- Any new delegation would enable an exemption application to be made; it would not change the current delegated decision making for notification of a proposed plan change.
- If exemptions were granted by the Minister then the plan changes would be brought back to the new Council in early 2026 for their consideration and decision making on whether or not to notify.