

**MOKIHINUI HYDRO PROPOSAL
CONSENT APPLICATIONS
REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS OF SOCIAL
IMPACTS**

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report provides a review of the assessment of environmental effects (AEE) provided by Meridian Energy Ltd (Meridian) in support of resource consent applications as outlined in appendix A of the Statutory Assessment Report. These consent applications are to take, use and discharge water for hydroelectricity generation, along with associated construction and maintenance related consents which are part of the Mokihinui Hydro Proposal (MHP).

The Mokihinui Hydro Proposal includes a dam located on the Mokihinui River approximately 3 km upstream from the township of Seddonville and 11 km upstream from the river mouth, a new lake upstream of the dam extending to just below the Mokihinui Forks Ecological Area, a new transmission line to carry electricity from the power station to the existing Inangahua-Waimangaroa transmission line at Cedar Creek, and a new substation at Cedar Creek.

This report will provide the decision-makers with information and advice related to the effects of the proposed activities on social wellbeing.

1.2 Qualifications

My name is Dianne Buchan. I am the Managing Director of Corydon Consultants Ltd, a small Wellington-based company specialising in social and economic research and impact assessment. My qualifications are Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) from Auckland University, Master of Public Policy from Victoria University, Wellington. I have twenty-five years professional experience as a specialist in social impact assessment and community consultation. I specialise in planning and resource management related matters. I have been an Accredited RMA Hearings Commissioner since 2005 and am a member of the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI), the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) and the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

1.3 Scope of Report

This report is prepared under the provisions of Section 42A of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA). To carry out this review of the consent application I have considered the relevant sections of the AEE submitted by Meridian, and the following technical appendices:

- The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) prepared by Taylor Baines & Associates and the Section 92 response
- The Recreation and Tourism Assessment of Effects prepared by Rob Greenaway & Associates and the section 92 response

I have also taken into account issues raised by submitters in relation to the effects on community wellbeing including traffic, noise, flood risk, housing of workforce, and recreation.

In addition I carried out a site visit on the Wednesday 5th March 2008 including a helicopter tour of the dam site and down to the mouth of the Mokihinui river mouth. During my visit, to further inform me on the application I met with the following to hear their views about the proposal and the consultation process undertaken by the applicant and its agents.

- Susan Cook at the Rough and Tumble Lodge
- Terry Heiler a part-time resident with a home on the riverbank
- Gay Sweeney, a member of the Mokihinui Community Consultation Group and owner of a Bed and Breakfast accommodation facility on the Main Road at Ngakawau

I also met with a group of thirteen residents from Seddonville and Mokihinui who had managed to organise the meeting within a few days of hearing through the local network about my impending visit. This meeting was held at the Seddonville Pub.

Since my visit I have had a phone call from Wayne Mulholland a local resident whose farm and farming operations are affected by the proposed road widening and construction traffic. In addition to concerns about the effects on his farming business, he was concerned about the quality of the consultation and negotiation conducted by Meridian with him. I note that Mr Mulholland is a submitter and his concerns seem little changed from those expressed to me in March.

I have also received two phone calls from Terry Heiler expressing concern about the lack of information on the impacts of the project on the river environment and also about the quality of the consultation.

I have also had several phone and email communications with James Baines about the social impact assessment including the process by which it was undertaken (particularly the absence of the assessment in the initial AEE), and the matters included in the Section 92 request.

In preparing this report I consulted a range of specialist publications. These are listed in the references.

The review has only considered the information that has been made available to date. It is possible that my conclusions may be altered in response to further investigation and / or new information that becomes available prior to or at the hearing of the applications.

2.0 Community Submissions

2.1 points raised during field visit

Perceived Benefits of the project

- More viable camping grounds, better facilities (if worker accommodation provided there and facility left for community)
- More tourists
- More tourism activity – but also some concern that project will damage the very qualities that people value about the area

- More commercial activity
- Lower priced electricity – possibly
- Guaranteed electricity supply
- Improved recreational facilities
- Two-lane road through Seddonville

Perceived negative effects of the project

- Erosion of sea-front – considered number one issue by those who attended the group meeting
- Slips in the valley due to loss of vegetation and fluctuating river levels
- Speedboats on the lake – disruption to fishing and noise pollution “would permeate whole valley”
- Noise from heavy vehicles – need for restrictions on the use of power brakes near houses
- Damage to houses from vibration caused by heavy vehicles
- Road widening taking land used for farming
- Impact of fluctuating river levels on whitebaiting
- Danger from traffic – pedestrians, local traffic, horses
- Hours of traffic operation – sleep disturbance, potentially damaging to visitor accommodation which trades on the restful environment of the area
- Dust from traffic – some concern about flyash
- Concerns about the changes to the river bed.

Other concerns expressed in field interviews

- Lack of a policy from the Buller District Council on Outstanding Landscapes – been waiting at least 3 years
- Need for independent peer review of science behind coastal erosion and river sediment studies
- Quality of the consultation process – meetings held at times many people (shift workers and part-time residents) can't attend; no public meetings to ensure everyone is getting same information

2.2 Issues Raised by Submitters

The following issues were raised by submitters in relation to the effects of Construction Activities:

Noise

Sources of noise impacts noted in submissions included construction traffic and machinery operating at the site, the latter being disruptive to local residents as well as to wildlife. Submitters referred to the particular typography (sic) of the area and the still weather which results in noise travelling long distances.

Traffic impacts

This included danger to other road users, danger to children walking to the bus-stops, disturbance to current land-use operations, danger to stock, potential loss of roadside parking as a result of road widening and vibration effects on roadside buildings from heavy traffic. A local farmer was concerned that impatient drivers having to wait while stock is moved across the road would put both stock and staff at risk.

Housing of workforce

This matter was raised in the SIA which was not available during the submissions process. The SIA outlined three scenarios for housing the workforce. One of these options was to construct a facility to house single workers in the local community. One submitter has suggested this for a portion of the workers and that the facility be located in the Seddonville Domain and donated to the Domain Board at the end of the project as holiday accommodation.

Loss of heritage

Submitters noted several features of historic importance along the Pack Track that would be lost as a result of construction and inundation. Submitters referred to the “significant early history associated with the goldfields”. Specific features noted included specialised stonewalling downstream of Rough and Tumble, the Rough and Tumble bridge remnants, two plaques at the Rough and Tumble confluence, remains of the vessel “Lawrence” in the tidal reaches of the Mokihinui Beach, the old goldfields themselves. One submitter refers to the “spirit of the track”, used by Maori and then miners, which cannot be replaced.

The following issues were raised by submitters in relation to the effects of operational activities.

Threat to human life as a result of dam break

Geological instability and the danger this might pose to the stability of the dam was raised by at least 14 submitters. The risk of a landslide pushing a wave of water over the dam and down the valley was noted by one submitter. The Green Party Aoraki was concerned about the lack of an assessment of dam safety and emergency action plans in the event of a break. Another asked that measures be put in place to meet the needs of construction workers in the event of flood or earthquake as Seddonville gets cut off in a peak flood and therefore if provision is not made, locals will have to feed and house the workforce. Several submitters referred to the stress imposed on local residents who would be living below the dam. One submitter states “there is no tolerable risk when lives are at stake.”

Health impacts from transmission lines

At least three submitters have raised concerns about the health effects of living in close proximity to transmission-lines. One asks that the lines passing his property be buried.

Noise

Noise from motorised boats on the dam and from helicopters would be disruptive to local residents, trampers and wildlife. Submitters referred to the particular topography of the area and the still weather which results in noise travelling long distances. At least three submitters said they would support the project if motorised boats were not allowed upstream of the dam and helicopter access was limited.

Changes to recreational experience

Issues raised included:

- The visual impact from the Charming Creek Walkway due to transmission lines
- Effects on the tramping experience as a result of noise from power boats on the lake
- Loss of current characteristics of the river environment for kayaking. Twenty-one submitters expressed concern at the loss of a “unique” kayaking facility catering for all levels. Submitters included the NZ Rafting Association, Te Maharoa Club, the Tai Putiri Polytechnic and the West Coast Conservation Board. Some submitters claimed the Mokihinui to be the best class 3 and 4 grade river in the country.

Two submitters were concerned about the threat to children swimming in the river as a result of flow variations. One claimed the river is one of the social centres of the community with its swimming holes and picnic spaces.

Erosion of residential properties in Mokihinui

Eight submitters have raised this issue. The West Coast Green Party has covered this issue in depth in Appendix 7 to their submission. The NIWA report (Appendix 4 in the AEE) recommends the relocation of houses in Mokihinui to address this impact.

Inadequate consultation and information

Five submitters have stated concerns about the quality of the consultation undertaken by the applicant. Three others have expressed concern about the adequacy of the information provided with the application. One submitter said that the unavailability of the SIA as part of the AEE made it hard for locals to comment on social considerations. . Another submitter pointed out that information days do not constitute consultation.¹

Suggested conditions of consent include provision for the establishment of a Community Liaison Group to monitor impacts and the effectiveness of mitigation strategies. The applicant’s response to the S92 request makes it clear that the company intends to continue the consultation process throughout the life of the project.

¹ In response to these comments and concerns expressed during my field visit, I had a telephone conversation with James Baines of Taylor Baines and Associates about how the consultation was conducted. He advised that the consultation was not part of the SIA process but was instead undertaken by Meridian project staff although he had attended some meetings.

3.0 Assessment of Effects

3.1 Introduction

I have reviewed the assessment of effects on the local communities and have taken into account the mitigation proposed by Meridian. This is discussed below, with a focus on the key issues:

3.2 Review of Assessment of Effects

I have reviewed only those aspects of the proposed project that affect community wellbeing and which do not fit more neatly within the expertise of other experts. The concerns raised by submitters that I have left for others to comment on are:

- effects on quality of recreational experience including the impact of power boats on current ambiance,
- effects on heritage,
- health impacts of transmission lines and
- effects of erosion on coastal properties
- effects of coastal erosion on residential properties.

3.2.1 Traffic

The peak daily number of heavy commercial vehicle (HCV) movements to and from the site is estimated at 65. This peak is estimated to last for a period of about three months. For 11 months of the construction period the number of HCV trips per day is estimated at no less than 20, with 10 of those months being consecutive. In addition about 60 light vehicles for the transport of workers to and from the site is estimated per day.

Four social effects have been cited by submitters as a result of the significant increase in traffic volumes through residential areas and particularly overweight vehicles. These effects are noise, vibration, danger to residents and disruption to farming operations. The SIA also identifies dust as a potential effect resulting from passing vehicles.

Noise

The potential impacts of noise and vibration from land transport on individuals and communities range from annoyance, to exacerbation of stress-related health disorders and sleep disturbance. Sleep disturbance from noise can have negative effects on physical and mental well-being, including increased blood pressure and heart rate, reduced concentration, fatigue and depressed mood.

Noise impacts are not simply a result of decibel levels. The level of impact on individuals is also determined by other factors such as duration of the noise, frequency, time of day, personal preferences, and whether the individual concerned has control of that sound or not. The effects of noise on people and communities are also determined by the sensitivity of the receiving environment surrounding these transport corridors. According to local submitters, the sensitivity of the Mokihinui Valley to noise is relatively high.

The SIA covers this issue and cites a recommendation from URS that traffic movements be restricted to particular hours. Residents have asked for additional protection. The SIA lists additional mitigation measures (p.51). I have incorporated these in the mitigation measures listed in section 3.2.2.

Vibration

In addition to the impacts on people, vibration from heavy vehicles can cause damage to property reducing the value of that property. Homes are the major source of investment for most households and the value able to be realised from that investment affects people's financial security and their options for moving elsewhere. Potentially reduced property values as a result of vibration damage (or reduced amenity values from being near a construction road) are likely to have an adverse effect on the owners of any properties affected in this way but will particularly affect the retired and the elderly, especially if they have no other source of income than superannuation.

This effect is noted in the SIA but no specific mitigation measures are proposed. I have suggested a mitigation measure in section 3.2.2.

Danger to residents

This aspect is well covered and I concur with the assessment and mitigation proposed by the applicant's social impact assessor on pages 51 and 52 of his report.

Disruption to farming operations

This aspect is covered well and I concur with the assessment of effects set out in the SIA. The submission from the farmer concerned (W. Mulholland) suggests that the applicant has not agreed to undertake measures to address this issue as part of the project design.

3.2.2 Mitigation of traffic impacts

I concur with Draft Consent Conditions 16 to 20 with the following additions:

- Condition 20: The Plan shall be prepared in consultation with Transit New Zealand and the residents of Seddonville and Mokohinu and submitted ..etc.
- The Plan shall detail ... the following:

Insert new e) "Provisions to minimise disruption and risk to road users within the settlement of Seddonville and along the State Highway 67".

Procedures for liaison etc then becomes f)

Additional recommended conditions:

- To reduce the amount of traffic generated by workers commuting locally, the consent holder will ensure that contractors provide worker bus services to and from the site.
- The consent holder will establish a set of protocols for drivers of construction vehicles, in consultation with local residents, and establish a formal complaints procedure to receive and respond to complaints related to construction traffic.

- In accordance with the recommendation from URS, no truck movements will take place between the hours of 10pm and 7am and as much as possible, to minimise the disruption to the residents of Seddonville, truck movements outside of those times are to be concentrated between the hours of 8.30 am and 3.30pm. I understand that this is the timing sought by the Mokihinui Community Consultation Group and is designed to coincide with the time children will be at school.
- An assessment of every building likely to be affected by vibration from HCVs is to be undertaken before trucking operations begin. This will identify all existing structural damage to the building and enable damage from construction traffic to be readily identified. The consent holder will undertake a written agreement with building owners in the affected area to make good any damage resulting from vibration from construction traffic and road widening.

3.2.3 Construction Noise

In addition to noise from construction-related traffic, there will be noise from helicopters, bulldozing and blasting. Several submitters referred to the particular quietness of the valley and the way this, and the topography of the valley, tends to accentuate and carry noise.

As noted above, noise is a cause of stress and, at high levels, can lead to ill-health. At the least, the noise during the construction phase is likely to result in a reduction in the quality of life for people in the Seddonville and to a lesser extent Mokihinui.

3.2.4 Mitigation of Construction Noise

I concur with the Draft Consent Conditions 58 – 61 but these will not be sufficient to reduce the level of effect on the wellbeing of local residents to one which is “minor or less than minor”. I suggest that the applicant gives further thought to this matter prior to the hearing.

3.2.5 Effects on Local Housing Market

DamWatch estimate the total workforce required at 310 including professional staff with a further 45 people required as vehicle drivers. DamWatch estimates that between 50% and 70% of the skilled or semi-skilled labour requirements will be recruited from the West Coast region. On the basis of discussions with a range of key informants the social impact assessor has reduced that to between 30% and 50% (i.e between 90 and 150). Local residents I interviewed were sceptical about the number of West Coast residents that would be available to work on the project given the tight labour market. Based on the figures used in the social impact report between 205 and 265 workers can be expected to come from outside the district and therefore require some form of accommodation. Based on past experience the social impact assessment estimates that half of these will be single while the others will be accompanied by partners and children creating a peak population increase of between 390 and 500.

The SIA assumes that between 100 and 130 (at peak) unaccompanied shift workers will be housed in full-board accommodation (hostels or similar facilities) provided near the worksite while those with partners and families will either buy or rent existing houses within the commuting area. This will require 100-130 houses at the peak.

It is likely the district will experience an influx of people in search of jobs on the project who may be unsuccessful but will nevertheless choose to stay. This is a common occurrence on major projects. The numbers in this category are likely to be much less than the 25% over and above requirements commonly experienced in the days of the Think Big projects when unemployment levels were high, but still need to be taken into account. The applicant does not include this factor in the calculations of existing houses available for rent or sale.

It is difficult to ascertain the number of houses that will be available for sale or rent at the time of the project. If the number is not as great as the applicant has estimated, the influx of project related migrants over a relatively short period is likely to put considerable pressure on the availability of accommodation in the district and the price of housing. Those worst affected will be local people on lower incomes who cannot compete in the housing market with those on construction wages. It will be important for the housing situation to be closely monitored and that the consent-holder has a contingency plan for the provision of additional housing over and above that available on the local market should that be required.

The applicant's response to the S92 request states that Meridian is committed to providing dedicated workforce accommodation "along the lines discussed in the SIA report". This includes the provision of hostel accommodation for single workers. This accommodation should be provided near the construction site to reduce the amount of commuting time for shift workers and reduce the amount of construction traffic on the State highway.

Providing accommodation facilities which build on the holiday accommodation currently in the communities that will be most detrimentally affected will provide a compensation mechanism, as well as enabling these communities to maximise the benefits from any increase in visitor numbers that result from any future more accessible tracks and other recreational facilities.

3.2.6 Mitigation of Housing Market Impacts

It is recommended that the conditions should cover the following important social aspects in relation to housing:

- The consent holder will provide dedicated workforce accommodation for all single workers within the Seddonville and Mokihinui communities.
- The consent holder will consult with the Seddonville and Mokihinui Domain Boards to decide how many housing units and other facilities can be accommodated within the existing camping grounds.

- These units and facilities will, subject to the approval of the Domain Boards, be handed over to the Domain Boards as part of the community's compensation package at the end of the project.²
- The consent holder in consultation with the BDC and other housing-related agencies, will monitor the housing market throughout the construction period to ensure demand does not exceed supply and that construction workers are not distorting market prices for houses to the detriment of local residents.
- In the event that the monitoring indicates that demand is likely to exceed supply, the consent holder will make provision for the supply of additional housing.

3.2.7 Health Services

Meridian's response to the S92 request concerning the ability of the local health service providers to cope with the anticipated population increase during the construction period noted that additional resources would be required "if a decline in service levels to existing residents is to be avoided." The report quotes a DHB representative as stating that the primary care services in northern Buller are currently at the limit of their capacity and it can take up to 6 months to recruit an additional locum GP. The DHB has requested that Meridian signal well in advance the likely scale and timing of incoming workforce numbers so that it can develop appropriate strategies to increase resources and access additional funding if necessary.

The SIA S92 response notes that the applicant has indicated its intention to continue the practice adopted by ECNZ and NZED of hiring on-site nursing staff during project construction.

3.2.8 Mitigation of Impacts on Health Services

It is recommended that the conditions should cover the following important social aspects in relation to health services.

- The consent holder will provide regular reports throughout the planning and construction phase to the Buller DHB. These reports should include an initial programme and up-dates on the level of construction activity and workforce numbers, decisions about the location and type of the worker accommodation, the on-site OSH provisions and emergency evacuation provisions.
- The consent holder will employ on-site nursing staff to meet the general health needs of the workforce as well as a quick response to injuries resulting from accidents.

3.2.9 Fear of Dam Break

Fifteen submitters have expressed concern about the risk of a dam break or overflow. The SIA report notes the importance of resolving this issue because of the potential for personal anxieties to affect health and lead to a population decline in Seddonville (and presumably a decline in land values).

² It is assumed that the Seddonville and Mokihinui Domain Boards wish their camping facilities to be upgraded and expanded and that they will have the capacity and/or a contribution from the applicant to administer a much enlarged facility at the end of the construction period.

In 1997 the NATO Science for Stability Program funded a study on managing dam risk. The study found that risk perception involves people's beliefs, attitudes and feelings, as well as the wider social or cultural values and dispositions people adopt toward dam hazards and benefits. Engineers are trained to work with objective safety evaluation based on a quantitative analysis, and more educated town dwellers tend not to worry about the dam because they trust the expertise behind its design. However typically, local residents don't easily accept a new uncertain risk that is imposed on them by others unless they perceive a direct benefit as a result. Examples of this would be farmers who are provided with access to irrigation as a result of the dam or those who benefit from recreational opportunities provided by the dam. Some will engage in risk denial as a way of coping with an unavoidable situation.

Residents living below a large dam can experience ongoing anxiety and fear and tend to have a greater awareness of the consequences of a break or accident than people living further away. The NATO study also found that judgments of local residents about dam safety are based on confidence in dam engineering and the particular characteristics of the dam, with older dams for example being considered more trustworthy than newer ones, because they have been "proven" safe. From this it can be assumed that anxiety levels will be highest among residents in Seddonville and Mokihinui and most prevalent in the first years following the completion of a dam but feelings of anxiety may reduce over time.

The study concluded that people's fears need to be taken seriously because no dam can be guaranteed safe in all situations. The study emphasised the importance of having dam monitoring systems, emergency planning (including a risk communication strategy) and effective warning and response systems. These systems need to be developed in consultation with the affected communities and include public education and training that is "sensitive to the characteristics and feelings of the population at risk along the valley".

Guidance from the Ministry for the Environment reiterates the need to consider the effect that the construction and operation of dams may have on community health. The guidance identifies the range of risks that can arise from dams including the effect of floods or dam collapse on communities and the fear of these events. The guidance states that "*the fear of the imagined or unknown is usually greater than that of the realised project*".

The Ministry recommends mitigation measures to reduce people's fear and anxiety such as taking people to similar completed dams. It also recommends actions that will build on people's trust in the structure and operating procedures, such as the development and implementation of an emergency action plan, regular monitoring and evaluation of dam safety data, and regular visual investigations of the dam and associated structures. The guidelines recommend that these be enforced through conditions of consent and should refer to accepted industry guidelines (such as the NZSOLD Dam Safety Guidelines, Nov 2000).

The inundation maps provided by the applicant show the extent of inundation under a worst-case scenario. Estimates of water levels in the inundated area put the height at 6 to 12 metres above the biggest natural flood that could occur in the area. The area that would be inundated in a worst-case includes the entire townships of Seddonville and Mokihinui – some 40 permanent households with a similar number of holiday/weekend homes as well as a variety of holiday accommodation from the high quality Rough and Tumble Lodge to camping ground accommodation. The applicant has estimated the number of people who would be at risk at ninety-two but this only includes permanent residents. It is not the ‘worst-case scenario’ which would be a total failure at peak holiday or white-baiting season. The camping grounds in Mokihinui and Seddonville plus the other holiday accommodation facilities in these settlements are able to accommodate a further 480 people in total. Therefore the maximum number of people who would be at risk in the event of a dam break during the peak holiday or whitebait seasons would be in excess of 500. Given the estimated depth of flooding the effect could be catastrophic.

As a social impact assessor I have undertaken a considerable body of work on the impacts of flooding.³ The social effects of a major flood in areas of residential settlement are wide-ranging and long lasting. Where there is loss of life, the event is particularly traumatic, not just for the immediate family but also for all those who have some association with the deceased. Other severe social impacts will result from loss or damage to homes, other personal property (including memorabilia), loss of productive and domestic or companion animals, places of employment, facilities that are part of the fabric of community life, and essential services such as water supplies, sewage treatment systems and roading networks. Disruption of road networks can isolate flood victims and inhibit rescue procedures and in the aftermath, can hinder recovery work and the social and economic functioning of the community. The stress resulting from the disruption and losses caused by flooding can lead to the malfunction of social groups (particularly families), and to short and long-term physical and mental health problems for individuals. Shock, exhaustion, anxiety, grieving and the inability to control one’s situation are all contributing factors to the stress, which individuals, groups and communities experience in the event of a major flood.

The SIA concludes that while perceived risk is an important issue to address, the likelihood of a dam break as a result of earthquake is “extremely small”. Appropriate mitigation is seen as “careful and meaningful explanations”. This response would be inadequate according to the findings of the NATO study.

3.2.10 Mitigation of Fear of Dam Break

In addition to Draft Consent Condition 75, it is recommended that the conditions should cover the following important social aspects in relation to fear of dam break:

- The emergency action plan must be developed in consultation with the BDC and WCRC and the residents of Seddonville and Mokihinui.
- This strategy must include effective warning and response systems.

³ Assessment of the impacts of Cyclone Bola (1989), Hutt River Floodplain Management studies (1991 1992), Waikanae and Otaki Flood Plain Management Reports (1992).

- The consent holder will undertake education and training in emergency response for the local residents prior to the commissioning of the dam. This will be repeated at least annually for the duration of any consents granted.

These measures are likely to provide affected parties with some sense of control over their situation.

3.2.11 Additional Measures for Affected Communities

The adverse impacts, of the hydro project on the communities of Seddonville and to a lesser extent Mokihinui, if it proceeds. will be significant. These communities will experience a range of negative effects (some would be temporary, others such as risk, would be long term).

It is therefore appropriate that, if consents are granted, the applicant seek ways to work with the communities of Seddonville and Mokihinui to maximise the effectiveness of the mitigation measures, to maximise the benefits these communities can gain from the project, and to find ways to compensate for adverse effects that cannot be avoided or entirely mitigated.

3.2.12 Mitigation for Adverse Affects on Local Communities

Community Liaison Group

I concur with the Draft Consent Conditions 27-29 with the addition of the following:

An independent facilitator reporting to the BDC will be appointed to coordinate this Group and ensure concerns are adequately addressed in a timely manner.

Community-Specific Contracts

Contract(s) could be drawn up between the consent holder and the affected communities and the BDC or WCRC, setting out the agreements reached between them on mitigation measures and responsibilities. Matters that could be included in these contract(s) are:

- The facilities to be provided as part of the development, including accommodation units and facilities in the two Domains and new and upgraded recreation facilities.
- Responsibilities for on-going maintenance and management of recreation facilities (this should include the control of weed growth in the proposed lake). It is suggested that the applicant should research how such facilities are provided for and managed on a long-term basis in other areas, and provide information and suggested conditions at the hearing.

4.0 Conclusion

The actual and potential social impacts of the hydro-project on the Seddonville community and, to a lesser extent, Mokihinui, are likely to be significant if consents are granted. In my view it will be difficult to avoid or mitigate them to a level that is minor or less than minor.

Ongoing monitoring together with effective responses to impacts as they emerge, together with quality liaison between the consent holder the local communities and the councils can help manage and reduce the impacts.

Given that the impacts cannot be avoided, ways to create benefits for these communities during the construction and operation phases as compensation should be actively pursued by the consent holder.

5.0 References

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