NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY

Council Briefing

13 July 2022
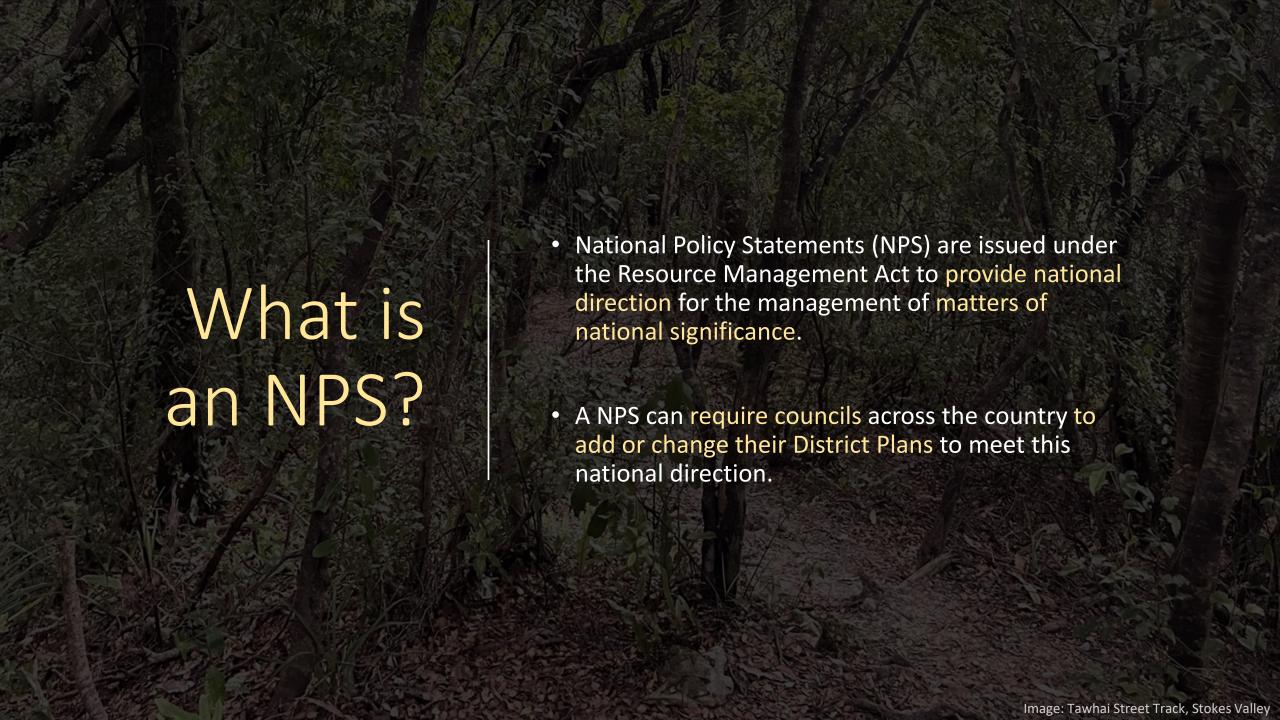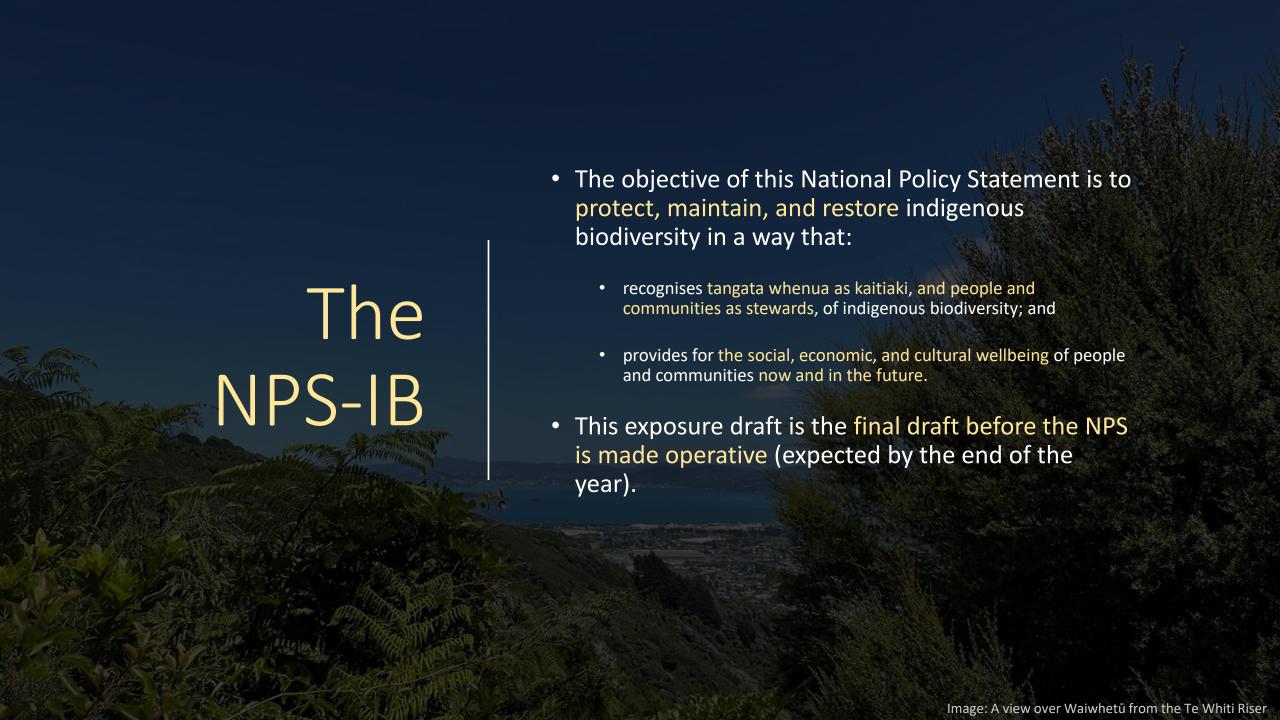
Image: A kakariri on Matiu/Somes Island

Indigenous Biodiversity management so far:

- Council undertook a SNA assessment as part of Plan Change 46: Ecosites and Landscapes in 2018.

- In November 2018 Council decided not to notify the Plan Change.

- Following this, Council has worked with a small biodiversity landowner interest group and administered a Biodiversity Fund as part of its non-regulatory approach to biodiversity management.

- Council is currently required to identify and manage these areas under the Regional Policy Statement.

- Council requested work on SNAs be put on hold until the NPS-IB was released.

- Council submitted on the previous draft in March 2020 and MfE have made some significant changes since.

What is an NPS?

- National Policy Statements (NPS) are issued under the Resource Management Act to provide national direction for the management of matters of national significance.

- A NPS can require councils across the country to add or change their District Plans to meet this national direction.

Image: Tawhai Street Track, Stokes Valley

The NPS-IB

- The objective of this National Policy Statement is to protect, maintain, and restore indigenous biodiversity in a way that:

  - recognises tangata whenua as kaitiaki, and people and communities as stewards, of indigenous biodiversity; and

  - provides for the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of people and communities now and in the future.

- This exposure draft is the final draft before the NPS is made operative (expected by the end of the year).
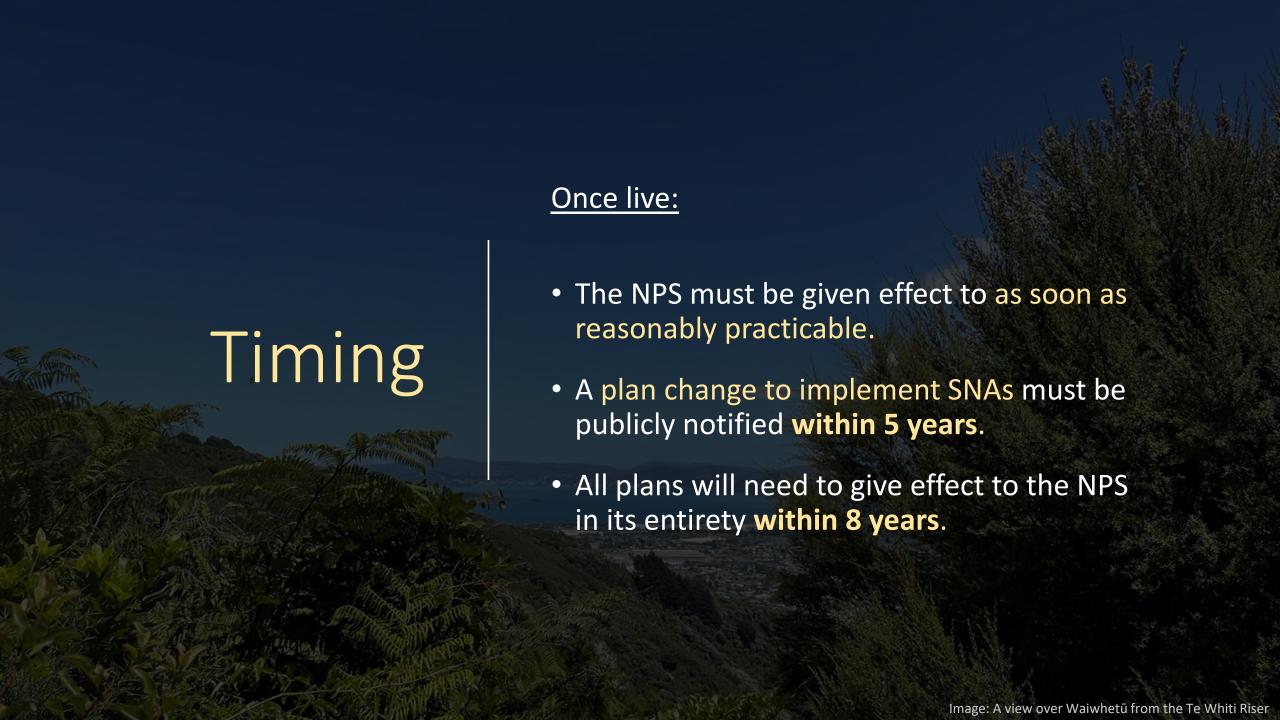
Image: A view over Waiwhetū from the Te Whiti Riser

The key actions required from Council

Council must:

- Actively involve tangata whenua in identifying a local approach to giving effect to Te Rito o te Harakeke (the whakataukī that informs the base principles of the NPS).

- Actively involve tangata whenua in the processes including decision making processes and when making changes to the plan that relate to indigenous biodiversity.

- Council must undertake a district wide assessment to identify areas of significant indigenous vegetation or significant habitat for indigenous fauna that qualify as SNAs.

- Local authorities must also take steps to maintain indigenous biodiversity in areas outside of SNAs, including in identified highly mobile fauna areas.

Image: Tawhai Street Track, Stokes Valley

How SNAs must be managed

- Activities within an SNA are required to be avoided if they have an adverse effect on any part of the SNA ecosystem, extent or function.

- The effects of any other activities must be managed by applying the effects management hierarchy.

- There are some exceptions, such as for Māori Land and Nationally or regionally significant infrastructure.

- There is also an allowance for a single dwelling on a vacant allotment where there is no option but to build within an SNA.

- For these exceptions, instead of avoidance, the effects must be managed using the effects management hierarchy.

Image: Belmont Regional Park

Timing

Once live:

- The NPS must be given effect to as soon as reasonably practicable.

- A plan change to implement SNAs must be publicly notified **within 5 years.**

- All plans will need to give effect to the NPS in its entirety **within 8 years.**

Image: A view over Waiwhetū from the Te Whiti Riser

New support measures

Funding has been secured from Budget 22 to enable central government support. These measures include:

- Guidance and examples of best practice

- Direct support to involve iwi/Māori in NPS-IB processes

- Increasing council biodiversity funds to support indigenous biodiversity on private land

- Direct support to assist councils with SNA identification and mapping

- Pilots of new biodiversity incentives and exploration of further measures.

Image: Tawhai Street Track, Stokes Valley

Biodiversity incentive pilots

1. Funding a regional biodiversity coordinator to better support communities to achieve biodiversity outcomes.

2. Developing and implementing a digital platform that connects resources (funding, information and support) and the users of those resources.

3. Establishing an innovation fund that supports alternative approaches for funding biodiversity action.

Image: Te Awa Kairangi from Puke Ariki Traverse, Belmont Regional Park

Proposed submission points

Areas of support

1. The primary objectives of the NPS, including:

   - Maintaining indigenous biodiversity

   - Providing direction on the identification and protection of SNAs

   - The collaborative approach of working with tangata whenua and landowners

2. The proposed implementation support measures that have been set out in the draft NPS-IB Implementation Plan.

3. The removal of separate high and medium SNA classifications.

4. Clarification that regional councils are to map specified highly mobile fauna areas.

5. Adding further exceptions to requirements about managing adverse effects on SNAs.

Image: A skink on Matiu/Somes Island

Proposed submission points

Areas of concern

1. The inability to use property boundaries as SNA boundaries.

2. The requirement to add new SNAs identified through a resource consent process in the next plan change.

3. The level of restriction on activities within SNAs.

4. Allowance for a single dwelling on a site does not include ongoing maintenance.

Image: Stokes Valley from the ECNZ Track

Proposed submission points

Areas of concern

5. The general rules to protect biodiversity outside of SNAs are overly restrictive.

6. Funding to support engagement with tangata whenua may be insufficient.

7. The funding allocated is low compared to what it's expected to deliver, and allocation is unclear.

8. Additional support for Council biodiversity funding needs adequate administration support.

Image: A Tuatara on Matiu/Somes Island