

Proposed Lower Hutt District Plan

Hearing Stream 6 – Renewable Energy (REG) and Three Waters (THW)

Hearing Summary Statement

Cristal Bennett

1. My name is Cristal Bennett. I am Pou Whakamahere Kaupapa Here and have been engaged by Hutt City Council as the reporting officer for the Renewable Energy Generation (REG) and Three Waters (THW) topics in the Proposed District Plan - Infrastructure hearing. I understand that my evidence has been taken as read.
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Overview

2. The REG and THW chapters provide clear objectives, policies and rules, while continuing to operate alongside the underlying zoning framework.
 3. Both the REG and THW chapters operate alongside the PDP zone provisions and provide REG and THW-specific objectives, policies and rules that apply across the district.
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Renewable Electricity Generation (REG):

Overview

4. The REG chapter is a standalone chapter for renewable electricity generation activities. The focus of the chapter is to give effect to higher order direction for renewable electricity generation. In particular, the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation.
5. This continues the overall approach of the ODP, which also has a standalone chapter for renewable electricity generation (Chapter 14L).
6. The chapter splits renewable electricity generation into clear tiers:
 - **Small-Scale & Community-Scale (REG-R3 to REG-R6):** Highly enabled. Home rooftop solar, small freestanding solar arrays, and limited roof-mounted or freestanding wind turbines are granted Permitted Activity status, provided they meet height, noise, and boundary limits.
 - **Large-Scale (REG-R7):** Requires a Discretionary Activity consent to allow the Council to broadly evaluate full visual, noise, and environmental impacts.

7. **Investigation Activities (REG-R2):** Explicitly permits temporary infrastructure, like meteorological masts, to assess whether a site is viable for future renewable energy use.

The Plan Stop exemption and withdrawn chapters

8. A major theme for the REG chapter is the impact of central government planning changes that occurred in 2025 and early 2026. In 2025, new Plan Stop requirements were introduced to the Resource Management Act. However, in early 2026 the Minister for Resource Management Reforms approved an exemption for most of Lower Hutt's Proposed District Plan, including most of the infrastructure chapter. However, as chapters regarding Ecosystems and Indigenous Biodiversity (ECO), Natural Character (NATC), and Natural Features and Landscapes (NFL) were withdrawn, the REG chapter can no longer reference those specific overlays or maps.
9. Submissions trying to include stricter environmental protections (like blocking turbines near bird breeding grounds or outstanding landscapes) are outside the scope of the Plan Stop exemption. Those issues will instead default to being managed under the equivalent provisions of the Operative District Plan (ODP) particularly heritage and certain natural environment matters.
10. Relevant provisions of the ODP include:
 - Rules relating to renewable energy generation activities for buildings and sites listed in Appendix Heritage 1 and 2 of the ODP,
 - A matter of discretion on the effects on historic heritage,
 - A matter of discretion on effects on natural character,
 - Assessment criteria for discretionary activities in relation to public access, landscape values and natural features, ecological impacts and impacts on archaeological and historic features and sites of significance to tangata whenua, and
 - Supporting policies.
11. Chapter 14E of the ODP, on Significant Natural, Cultural and Archaeological Resources, is also relevant, and will need to be retained. This is the ODP's closest equivalent to the Natural Environment and Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori chapter of the PDP.
12. Under Chapter 14E, resource consent is required for any activity or site development works within the boundaries of any Significant Natural Resource, Significant Cultural Resource, or Significant Archaeological Resource identified and mapped in the ODP. However, this is limited somewhat by the extent of the areas identified. In addition, for Significant Natural Resources, this rule only has

effect for public land and SNR9, which relates to identified parts of the coastal environment.

Conclusion

13. I recommend retaining the core REG chapter framework with targeted mechanical amendments. The PDP places substantially greater weight on recognising the benefits of renewable electricity generation, climate change mitigation, resilience and energy security, while still requiring adverse effects to be managed through a more detailed objectives, policies and rules framework.
14. Due to the plan stop exemption, Council must address the heritage, and natural environment matters with the relevant parts of the ODP. The ODP Chapter 14L, together with other district-wide chapters of the ODP manages the effects of renewable energy generation.
15. This satisfies the RMA and the amended National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (2025) by actively lowering barriers to decarbonisation, while relying on existing operative rules to manage environmental effects that are no longer addressed by the PDP.

Three Waters (THW)

Overview

16. The Three Waters chapter is a district-wide chapter addressing drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. The chapter provides for the operation, maintenance, upgrading and development of infrastructure necessary to support existing communities and future growth including provisions that support network functionality, resilience, servicing capacity and the management of stormwater-related effects.
17. The chapter primarily addresses:
 - Ensuring development is adequately serviced,
 - Infrastructure capacity,
 - Hydraulic neutrality, and
 - Water sensitive designparticularly through applying regional standards to new development (which effectively replace the out of date standards in the Subdivision chapter of the ODP).
18. Under the ODP, three waters matters are addressed through a range of utility, subdivision and engineering provisions. The PDP consolidates and updates these provisions into a dedicated chapter, creating a clearer planning framework

and stronger integration between servicing capacity and development outcomes.

19. With regard to the submission point of Tiaki Wai requesting an objective on the Waiwhetū Aquifer, I acknowledge the importance of the Waiwhetū Aquifer as a significant drinking water source for the Wellington region, including its role in supporting public water supply and its sensitivity to contamination and saltwater intrusion. However, the direct management of water takes, aquifer recharge, freshwater quality, saline intrusion and monitoring sits primarily within the regional council's freshwater and water allocation functions rather than the district plan's land use framework. On that basis, the PDP can appropriately recognise and manage relevant land use and infrastructure effects through the existing Three Waters provisions without creating a separate aquifer-specific objective.

20. The Three Waters chapter is unaffected by the Plan Stop requirements.

Conclusion

16. I am happy to answer any questions the hearing panel may have in relation to my evidence.

Cristal Bennett

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