



te kaunihera ā-rohe o
matamata-piako
district council

12 February 2026

Committee Secretariat
Environment Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Email: en.legislation@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the proposed Natural Environment Bill and Planning Bill ('the Bills'). Please find attached, at Appendix 1 & 2, Matamata-Piako District Council's (MPDC) submission.

The Council supports the overall intention to replace the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and the intent to simplify the resource management system. MPDC acknowledges this proposal will change the way in which territorial authorities operate, however MPDC still wants to achieve the best possible outcome for our rural district while protecting the matters that are important to our community. MPDC are part of the Future Proof partnership and seek to maintain enduring relationships across the region at this time of change. The Waikato Mayoral forum, of which our MPDC Mayor is a part, have developed key messages on the Bills, which are broadly supported by MPDC and are attached to this submission. The mayoral forum messaging covers a range of reform areas, not just the Bills. MPDC supports the concern regarding the current level of proposed change in the local government sector, believing that it must be appropriately coordinated to prevent duplication and excessive costs.

MPDC has raised a range of concerns in their submission and highlights the following matters as requiring particular attention.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi. Both bills propose a markedly different approach to the consideration of the Treaty, and to the provisions that relate to Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreements. Most notably, a provision for new agreements is not included in either Bill. MPDC is concerned that the application of a streamlining process to existing arrangements will not be able to give full regard to settlements developed under the RMA and seeks, subject to matters raised in the submission, that the status quo be maintained with Cl8 from the RMA being reinstated in the proposed Bills. MPDC is also concerned that the provisions will disproportionately affect iwi who have not settled.

Regulatory relief. Both Bills propose a new regulatory relief system to provide property owners with a possible range of relief if their properties are subject to a specified rule, such as an historic heritage site or a wāhi tapu. MPDC is opposed to this proposal. It increases risk and liability for the council. This approach is also proposed at a time when there is a proposal to cap rates. For MPDC this significant piece of work would involve, with retrospective investigations, consultation with 204 owners in relation to its 152 scheduled historic heritage items, 1700 owners for the 78 scheduled wāhi tapu sites, and over 130 owners for the 130 scheduled trees. MPDC supports the approach of the Taituarā submission in that the regulatory relief proposal is removed from the Bills or if retained significantly amended to reduce its risk and complexity.

Timing of production of plans and strategies. Another focus of the MPDC submission is the tight timeframes proposed for a myriad of matters such as the reconsideration of treaty agreements within two years of the commencement of the Act, the development national direction in a timely manner to inform spatial planning, the development of regulatory relief proposals and the development of land use plans, and associated hearing and decision timeframes. While MPDC appreciates a focus on timeliness is important, there is a concern that the production of such complex pieces of work, particularly at the time of reform in the local government sector has the potential to compromise the quality and integration of these important processes. The submission suggests where timeframes could be amended to produce enhanced outcomes.

Integration between the Bills. MPDC does not contest the decision to separate planning, and environmental matters into the separate Bills, however, it considers the proposition that effects generated under one Bill cannot be considered under the other Bill is not only unrealistic, but it also does not provide for the best planning or environmental outcomes. MPDC seeks amendments to improve options where matters overlap and joint consideration should occur.

Spatial planning. MPDC supports a mandatory spatial planning process and the integration benefits this will bring the district and the region. The submission emphasises the importance of related processes, such as the development of national policy statements occurring in a timely fashion to enable the spatial plan to give full effect to national direction. The submission also raises concerns regarding the timing for producing spatial plans in relation to the production of other local government documents such as long-term plans, amidst a local government restructure.

Rural environment. MPDC is concerned that while the Goals of the Planning Bill seek to create well-functioning urban and rural areas, there is no further recognition of the rural environment within the Bill. The rural economy of the Matamata-Piako district makes a significant contribution to both the regional and national economies and its effective management is critical to the ongoing success of the district. MPDC has sought greater recognition of the rural environment and how it fits into the new planning regime.

Permitted activities. The bid to streamline planning processes is proposed to be achieved through an increase in permitted activities. While some permitted activities are as they are currently known, other permitted activities are required to be registered, have conditions and be subject to monitoring. MPDC seeks, to avoid misunderstanding, that these complex permitted activities are called controlled activities.

This submission (Appendices 1 & 2) will be endorsed at the next council meeting in early March. While MPDC does not wish to be heard, we look forward to the next steps in the development of the Bills and welcome the opportunity to comment on any issues raised in this submission.

Should you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact Fiona Hill, Team Leader, RMA Policy in the first instance, on fhill@mpdc.govt.nz.

Yours faithfully



Manaja Te Wiata
Chief Executive Officer
Matamata-Piako District Council