

SUBMISSION ON TAIRAWHITI 2050 DRAFT SPATIAL PLAN FOR THE GISBORNE REGION

October 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Aggregate and Quarry Association (AQA) is the industry body representing Construction Material companies which produce an estimated 40 million tonnes of aggregate and quarried materials consumed in New Zealand each year.

Funded by its members, the AQA has a mandate to increase understanding of the need for aggregates to New Zealanders, improve our industry and users' technical knowledge of aggregates, and assist in developing a highly skilled workforce within a safe and sustainable work environment.

Background

New Zealand relies heavily on locally sourced aggregate resources for infrastructure repair following disasters, for road and rail transport corridors, major projects and for affordable housing development, all of which are essential for the social, economic and cultural well-being of communities.

It is therefore vital that local aggregate resources throughout the country are identified, understood and effectively managed. Quarrying is a high value and temporary land use, with site restoration a critical element to ensure that land is available for future generations. In many cases, site restoration can result in the delivery of valuable new habitats, contributing towards national biodiversity targets and wider 'net gain' ambitions.

We make the following submissions in relation to the draft proposed spatial plan for the Gisborne Region.

Challenge 1: Community Resilience and Prosperity

Economy

We note that you reference primary production as being "based around Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry". This definition of "primary production" is inconsistent with the National Planning Standards introduced by the Government and gazetted in April 2019.

Quarrying is a primary production activity under the National Planning Standards definition of primary production and therefore is a highly productive use of land.

In order to retain consistent definitions across planning documents, and avoid confusion and potential conflict, the 2019 National Planning Standards definition of primary

production should be used, and quarrying included.

In the case of quarrying, the value of preserving land for primary production is not difficult to quantify by council. Unlike agriculture or other forms of primary production, a comparison of land-use outcomes in financial terms for quarrying will favour primary production activities over other land uses.

Challenge 3: Creating Connected and Safe Communities

The Gisborne Region needs a secure supply of high-quality aggregate materials to meet the eight outcomes of Tairāwhiti 2050. With Gisborne City alone to increase in population by 4,000 over the next 25 years, over 1,300 additional homes will be needed each requiring an average of 250 tonnes of aggregate (325,000 tonnes). In addition, significant quantities of aggregate will be required for infrastructure growth and maintenance.

In order to do this, it is critical that planning is enabling; quarry resources are protected to supply vital construction materials; and quarry land is returned as an asset to the community on completion of quarrying.

Strategic Directions

Outcome 2: Resilient communities

In order to build resilience into infrastructure, the economy and communities, Council needs to confirm the available sources of aggregate and sand throughout the region, including aggregate quality, accessibility, and proximity to markets so that those sources identified as critical for the region's future growth, are protected and appropriate provision is made for their development to meet future demand for aggregates.

We are happy to assist Council in this work as we consider it imperative that Council protect key resource areas and enable their development, in order to both protect existing quarries from encroachment of non-compatible land uses such as housing, reduce reverse sensitivity potential and to enable the expansion of these resources and development of new greenfield resources.

Planning needs to be enabling so that resource consents are quicker to obtain and less costly. Even where appropriate planning zones and controls exist, the time and cost for obtaining consents to a quarry can be significant. In the event of a favourable decision, it is often more than 3 to 5 years from commencement of the consenting process before many quarries will ever sell their first tonne of aggregate. This timeframe does not always allow for the industry to respond quickly to demands placed on it by large infrastructure projects and building growth, meaning that aggregates are often sourced from further away at significant cost.

Outcome 5: We take sustainability seriously

We acknowledge the importance of the circular economy in the aggregates sector and generally, maximising the use and reuse of the same resources for as long as possible. However, while increased recycling and resource efficiency will have some impact, the technology is nowhere near ready to fully replace the need for extraction of natural aggregates.

For a “circular economy” to work, the purpose needs to be established first and then must be supported by incentives for customers and suppliers to re-use or recycle products. Currently there is little incentive for recycling and re-use due to the cost of processing these products relative to natural products and the reluctance of customers to specify and/or allow the use of recycled products. These customers include central and local government who are both significant users of aggregates and sand.

We do not have accurate data on construction waste in New Zealand and general statements of the scale of construction waste mask weaknesses in understanding of the composition of the total waste stream. Such perceptions are simplifying what is ultimately a complex situation. More consistent and comprehensive data collection and monitoring of waste streams and resource use is needed.

Outcome 7: Diverse Economy

We support the Council moving towards higher value industries and economic diversification and consider that quarrying should be considered in such an economy.

Quarry materials are not universally available and can only be sourced from where they are located; without planning to provide for adequate access to resources at workable locations, there is the real risk of losing access to such proximate resources, greatly increasing the costs of building and infrastructure development and maintenance.

Currently, the cost of a tonne of aggregate doubles when it has to travel 30 kilometres from a quarry, with additional costs for each extra kilometre thereafter. By ensuring quarries are close to their markets, transport costs, transport congestion and carbon emissions are significantly reduced.

Outcome 8: Delivering for Māori

Whenua Māori (Māori land) is highly valued by Māori for a range of reasons, including its productive value for a variety of primary production activities.

Māori have significant interests in the resource sector and in retaining access for historical, cultural and economic reasons.

Archaeological evidence of early Māori tools, weapons and ornaments demonstrate Māori have been extracting mineral resources since 1400 AD, within 150 years of Māori settlement. Former quarries have been identified where blocks of adzite and obsidian were excavated, and fragments trimmed to a convenient size.

In addition, many Māori work and have business interests in the aggregates sector. The percentage of Māori employed in mining and quarrying is much higher / almost twice as high as the equivalent figure for the population as a whole.