6 September 2012

Hawke’s Bay Regional Council

Dear Chairman Wilson and Councillors

As members of the Ruataniwha Water Storage Stakeholders Group, we are writing to inform you of our extreme disappointment with the “Tukituki Choices” public consultation document.

Our concerns are threefold.

First at the 27 July Stakeholders meeting, during remarks made by Andrew Newman, Tom Belford requested that a draft of this document be circulated to all members of the Group – as the parties most intimately familiar with the issues and concerns that such a document should fairly present – for comment prior to its being finalized and released. Debbie Hewitt (Chairperson) and Graeme Hansen (Project Manager) agreed that this would occur. That advance circulation unfortunately did not occur.

We consider that a serious breach of trust, which accounts in part for shortcomings in the document that render it deceptive as a public consultation tool.

Second, very significant issues of science, and assumptions and conclusions associated with that science, remain in dispute. These are considered serious enough that HBRC has agreed to a ‘science caucusing’ on those issues.

However, in the meantime, HBRC has elected to incorporate its view of the issues in the “Tukituki Choices” document, significantly biasing the presentation, if not in fact misrepresenting key matters, such as the extent of environmental protection actually provided in differing scenarios, the extent of mitigation measures required to deal effectively with ecological concerns, the cost of such measures, and therefore the underlying economics of the project.

Third, anticipating the previous point, it was also requested (at the 17 August meeting of the Land Use Intensification Working Group) that the “Tukituki Choices” document at least present the fact that environmental representatives were still challenging several of the key science-grounded aspects of the work HBRC has undertaken, so that the public would be clearly informed about those concerns.

That request unfortunately was ignored.

Given these concerns, we consider that “Tukituki Choices” is fatally flawed as a public consultation document. It is biased, inaccurate on key points, silent about key issues still under review (and their significance), and therefore misleading.

All of these concerns were reiterated at the 31 August meeting of the Stakeholders Group, and dismissed.

Under the circumstances, we have no recourse but to make our views known to the public by releasing this letter to the media.

Kind regards,

John Cheyne (Te Taiao Hawkes Bay Environment Forum)

Grenville Christie (Central Hawkes Bay Branch Forest and Bird)

Vaughan Cooper (Hastings-Havelock Branch Forest and Bird)

Pete McIntosh (Fish and Game Hawkes Bay Region)

Tom Belford (Lower Tukituki representative)

Members of the Ruataniwha Water Storage Stakeholders Group

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