BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL

UNDER THE	Resource Management Act 1991
IN THE MATTER OF	the Proposed Kaipara District Plan

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF SHAUN BROWN ON BEHALF OF NORTHPOWER

HEARING STREAM 11 - SITES AND AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE TO MĀORI

Engineering

13 April 2026

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 My full name is Shaun Brown. I am the General Manager - Engineering and Delivery at Northpower Limited (**Northpower**). I have held this role for one and a half years and have worked for Northpower for a total of eleven years.

1.2 I am part of the electricity network leadership team at Northpower with a focus on engineering and delivery. I lead a team of twenty-eight staff in Northpower's electricity network business. We are responsible for planning, delivery and completion of maintenance work on Northpower's electricity network to ensure the ongoing safety and quality of critical electricity services.

1.3 Prior to my current role, I have held the roles at Northpower of Distribution Engineering Manager (2023-2024), Distribution Engineering Lead (2021-2023), Engineering Delivery Lead (2019 - 2021), Distribution Engineer (2017 – 2019), Project Manager (2016 – 2017) and Graduate Engineer (2015 – 2016).

1.4 In 2015, I obtained a BE(Hons) in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the University of Canterbury.

1.5 I am a professional member of the Electrical Engineers Association.

1.6 To date, my industry experience has been in relation to electrical engineering, construction and project management. I have:

(a) project managed a wide range of planned and unplanned asset replacements and installations;

(b) created and updated Northpower's technical and operational standards which determine minimum universal standards of performance and design across Northpower's network;

(c) designed a wide range of distribution network configurations;

(d) provided after hours on call engineering support to contractors performing emergency and urgent (unplanned fault response) services; and

(e) led the delivery of Northpower's Asset Management Plan including maintenance and capital projects.

1.7 I therefore have a strong understanding of what is required to plan, operate, fix and work on an electricity network, from both a technical and practical perspective.

Code of conduct

1.8 Although this is not an Environment Court proceeding, I have read and am familiar with the Environment Court's Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023, and agree to comply with it. My qualifications and expertise are set out above. Other than where I state that I am relying on the advice of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

2 SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 My evidence addresses the submission (#283) and further submission (#FS82) by Northpower on the Proposed Kaipara District Plan (**PDP**), as relevant to Hearing Stream 11 on Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori (**SASM**), and in particular Northpower's request for amendments in the SASM chapter that:

(a) provide for the ongoing operation, maintenance, repair and upgrading of infrastructure within sites and areas of significance to Māori; and

(b) allow the suitable provision of new infrastructure where there is an operational and functional need within sites and areas of significance to Māori.

3 NORTHPOWER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH TANGATA WHENUA IN THE KAIPARA DISTRICT

3.1 As a 100% locally owned company, community is at our core. We recognise that tangata whenua and their cultural, spiritual, and

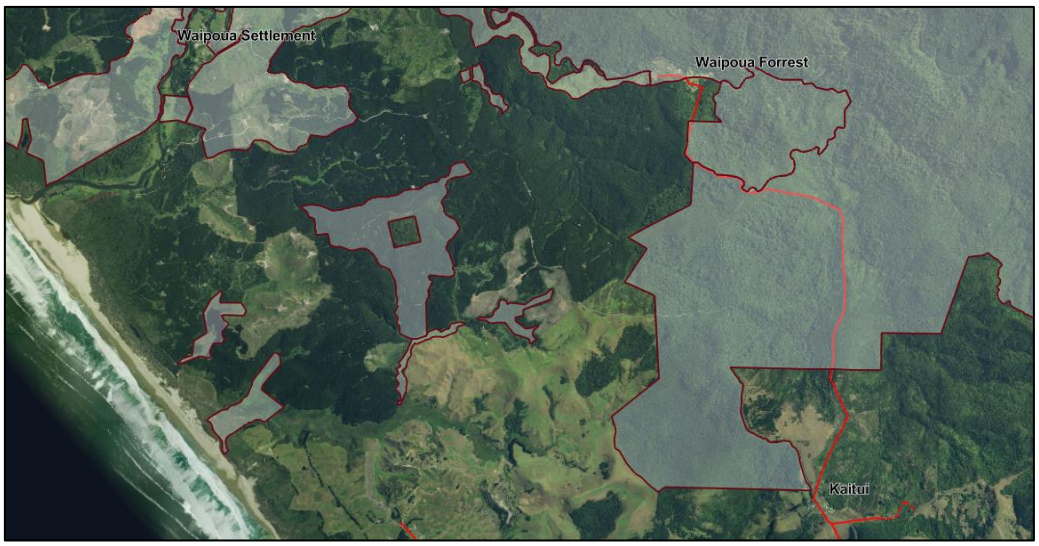
historical values tied to the Kaipara district are an important part of that community. The provision for sites and areas of significance to Māori within the SASM chapter support that importance.

3.2 At Northpower, we are conscious of our need to consult and work with local hapū when we are planning network growth. We have a dedicated Kaitakawaenga / Iwi Relationship Lead, Te Ao Rosieur who provides us with guidance and support with our iwi consultation and cooperation.

4 ENABLING ONGOING OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, REPAIR AND UPGRADING OF INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN SASM

4.1 Sites and areas of significance to Māori can be large and therefore, affect many of our existing network assets that supply our customers, varying from a few homes to larger communities and townships. I also understand that Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust has sought to include 17 new sites, which if granted would increase the number of our assets affected by the SASM rules.

4.2 For example, there are large areas of land in the Waipoua Forest and Waipoua Settlement that are subject to the SASM overlay under the PDP. As shown in the image below, our network runs through those areas and a range of assets, including 54 Poles, 2 Pole Mounted transformers and 4.5km of Overhead Conductors, will be subject to the overlay provisions.



Key: PDP Sites and Areas of Significance to Maori

Northpower Network

4.3 To ensure supply, we need to continue to operate our existing assets, which throughout their lifespan will also require repair, maintenance, and upgrading:

(a) Operation: Generally, our assets operate independently with no onsite intervention. However, we may be required to access the asset to manage work/activities on the network (e.g. de-energisation, isolation, safety checks). This often involves accessing the asset using a vehicle.

(b) Repair: This covers fault work and is responsive. It can encompass a range of activities such as repairing lines, replacing structures and associated hardware and cable repair.

(c) Maintenance: This covers our inspections (preventative maintenance) and planned asset restoration (corrective maintenance). This can involve replacement and repair of all assets such as poles, transformers, cross-arms and cables.

(d) Upgrading: As part of our corrective maintenance processes, the repair and/or replacement of our assets will meet modern standards and materials, which may result in an upgrade of the asset (i.e. increasing the capacity, efficiency, safety, security and/or resilience of the existing infrastructure). This is required as part of our safety obligations, including to meet our certification requirements under ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 55001 and NZS 7901.

4.4 The above activities are routine and necessary for us to provide a safe and resilient supply of electricity and, where applicable, fibre to communities that are often remote and vulnerable. Therefore, I support the new permitted activity rule for these activities as proposed in David Badham's evidence.

5 ENABLING NEW INFRASTRUCTURE WHERE THERE IS AN OPERATIONAL AND FUNCTIONAL NEED WITHIN SASM

5.1 Northpower is strategic and careful about how we expand our network to meet the growing demand of the Kaipara district. As discussed above, when we are considering options for expansion, we consult with

landowners and affected parties, including relevant hapū, before determining the best available route.

5.2 On the smaller scale, where we install new assets in response to the electricity (and where relevant, fibre) needs of a new development, we do not have the same control or discretion over where we put our assets. Where a development is within a SASM, we will likely have an operational and functional need to install new assets within that site or area to meet the needs of that development. This may also be the case where a development is surrounded by a SASM and our only way to service that development is to go through that SASM. The assets that we would install in those scenarios are generally small-scale assets such as poles, overhead lines and transformers.

5.3 Despite often having few options for asset location when we are responding to growth, Northpower recognises that there are special matters that should be considered for new infrastructure within SASM due to the importance of the land, including the effects on cultural or historical values. Therefore, I support the proposed new Restricted Discretionary rule for new infrastructure within scheduled sites or areas as set out in Mr Badham's evidence.

5.4 In terms of managing effects on cultural or historical values, I understand that a key concern for SASM is ground disturbance that may modify or damage unrecorded archaeological and cultural values. Where we are installing new assets in SASM, we can minimise disturbance by using above-ground assets (rather than underground cabling and ground mounted transformers, for example). The earthworks involved in installing above-ground assets are minimal and will not extend much further than the footprint of the asset. For example, the hole drilled to install a pole will be no greater than 600-1200mm in diameter (1200mm holes are rare and typically used in poor soil conditions). The only unavoidable below ground asset is an earth bank, which is installed alongside all pole mounted transformers, pole mounted switchgear and where an underground network and overhead network connect. Earth banks are critical to allow protection devices to operate when there is a fault (i.e. by earthing the electricity), to maintain safe voltages in customers' premises and to prevent

damage to network equipment. They comprise of a number of 1.8m long copper pins with a diameter of 13mm, rammed vertically into the ground and connected with a bare copper conductor.

6 PROVIDING FOR UPGRADES IN POLICY SASM-P3

6.1 Northpower's submission included a request to amend clause 5 of SASM-P3 to provide for maintenance, operation, repair and "*upgrading*" of existing infrastructure. In the Section 42A Report, Sarah Horton has recommended accepting the inclusion of upgrading but adding the proviso that it is "within the existing footprint".

6.2 Upgrades to Northpower's assets will adopt new technologies and methods. This is best industry practice that ensures our network is safe and efficient. Therefore, I have concerns with limiting upgrades to the existing footprint of an asset because when an upgrade occurs using modern technologies the materials will change and there will generally be a change in footprint. For example:

(a) Replacing an old pole with its modern equivalent, using modern materials, will result in a slightly different width at the base (i.e. 375mm x 188mm to 430mm x 240mm). Also, when overhead lines are modernised their thickness and weight are increased, so the strength of the pole often needs to be increased, which sometimes requires two poles bolted together.

(b) Transformers (pole mounted or ground mounted) are also generally bigger due to modern materials.

(c) Ring main units are now required under safety standards to have arc venting (to cool arc energy and prevent people being burnt), which increases the height and width compared to older ring main units.

6.3 Therefore, I support Mr Badham's proposed approach of allowing infrastructure upgrades to occur outside of the existing footprint where necessary to achieve the intended functional and operational outcomes.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 For the above reasons, I support Northpower's proposed new objectives, policies and rules for Infrastructure provision within the SASM chapter, as is further outlined in the planning evidence of Mr Badham. These will enable Northpower to continue to provide a safe and resilient electricity supply to the Kaipara district.

SHAUN BROWN
13 April 2026