

Summary Statement – Jane Macleod, Planning

18 February 2026

My name is Jane Macleod and I have provided planning evidence in relation to the Director-General of Conservation's submission and further submission on Proposed Private Plan Change 85. My evidence focuses on the potential ecological effects of the plan change, and the planning context relevant to those effects.

The plan change site is next to Mangawhai Estuary, which is recognised as a Significant Bird Area in the Northland Regional Plan. The site itself contains two areas that are assessed as meeting Significant Natural Area criteria, meaning that they have significant ecological values. One of these areas is also identified as an area of High Natural Character in the Northland Regional Policy Statement.

The plan change proposes a range of measures that will protect or enhance biodiversity values, including requirements for: a ban on the keeping of cats and mustelids as pets; protection of existing wetlands and areas of indigenous vegetation; new indigenous planting and protection of that planting; weed and pest control; setbacks of various activities from ecological features; and restrictions on indigenous vegetation clearance.

However, based on the evidence provided by ecological experts, I consider that four key changes to the proposal are necessary to appropriately manage effects on biodiversity and natural character values, and I consider that these changes are required by the relevant higher order planning framework. These changes are:

1. A ban on the keeping of dogs as pets within the plan change area, to avoid increasing the risk of disturbance to TAR bird species from dogs
2. Removal of proposals for the construction of public walkways in ecologically sensitive areas that would cause disturbance to TAR bird species and would diminish the ecological and natural character values within the site
3. Amendments to provisions applying within the site's natural inland wetlands, so that they do not conflict with regulations in the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater
4. Retention of Rural zoning for land protected by a conservation covenant, part of which is within a proposed SNA, rather than rezoning this land to Rural Lifestyle.

As set out in my evidence, I consider that the parts of the higher order planning framework that are particularly relevant in supporting these recommended changes are:

- The requirements of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS) in relation to biodiversity and natural character in the coastal environment, noting that these have been given effect to in both the RPS and the Northland Regional Plan.
- The requirements of the NPS for Indigenous Biodiversity in relation to both wetlands and specified highly mobile fauna, which include the tara iti, bittern, fernbird and banded rail.
- The requirements of the NES Freshwater in relation to activities in and near wetlands.

In my view, the four key changes recommended in my evidence are necessary to give effect to these higher order documents.

I also recommend other, more minor, changes that I consider will help to ensure that provisions achieve the objectives of the plan change in an effective and efficient way. These include:

- Amendments to the proposed standard for the upgrade of Insley Street Causeway
- Amendments to provisions relating to weed and pest management, and
- Other minor changes to biodiversity-related provisions.

I'd like to respond to one point that came up in rebuttal evidence, in relation to the keeping of dogs:

My evidence recommends that subdivision activities in the plan change area are subject to a performance standard that requires a covenant to be registered on all sites, stating that no dogs will be kept on those sites.

In her rebuttal evidence Ms O'Connor queried whether I was requesting a "total ban" on dogs, but my recommendation would not affect any dogs already living on existing sites within the plan change area. In addition, I consider that it would be appropriate to exclude guide dogs, and other dogs that have been trained to provide support to people with disabilities, from the ban required by the covenants. This could be done without increasing the risk to wildlife, provided that the exclusion was drafted carefully and only applied in limited circumstances, to highly trained dogs.