

HEARING SUMMARY – DR LEIGH BULL – AVIFAUNA

1. My role in the Project has been to provide expert advice in relation to avifauna.

My key conclusions/findings are:

2. The main adverse effects of the East West Link (EWL) project on avifauna values include intertidal habitat loss from reclamation, construction of bridge and boardwalk structures, as well as the effective loss of habitat associated with the placement of boardwalk in the CMA. Although the loss of habitat is an adverse effect, there is other available habitat within the Mangere Inlet and the Manukau Harbour. As a result, I consider it very unlikely there will be an adverse effect on the population of any bird species from the EWL.
3. As outlined in both the ecology and reclamation Joint Witness Statements (JWS), there was a high level of agreement between myself and Dr Tim Lovegrove (Auckland Council Avifauna Expert) in regards to the level of effects of the proposal on avifauna.
4. Mitigation and offset measures are therefore required due to the adverse effects on the avifauna values. The EWL ecology and wider project team worked collaboratively to develop an integrated suite of proposed measures to avoid, mitigate and off-set effects on ecology. Furthermore, I have worked closely with the Department of Conservation (DOC) to further develop adequate measures to mitigate and offset the effects on the avifauna values which are now to be included in the suite of mitigation responses and conditions.
5. During the ecology conferencing, all experts agreed on the integrated ecosystem approach to effects, mitigation and offsets that have been proposed for the project (Paragraph 11(a) of the Ecology JWS).

Issues outstanding as between you and other experts:

6. Dr Lovegrove raised concerns (EIC Paragraph 3.3(e)) that aspects of the mitigation / offset package are uncertain since the success is reliant on third-parties. This is relevant to the offset measure that provides resources to the Department of Conservation to create a wildlife sanctuary on existing high tide roosts in the wider Manukau and engaging with the owners of industrial buildings which are currently used as high tide roosts around the Mangere Inlet to inform building owners of the value of the species using their roof tops and to discuss maintaining the roofs as roost sites).

Outline your position on those issues

7. Additional consent conditions have been drafted to provide certainty of the mitigation / offset measures that are reliant on third-parties; these were discussed in the rebuttal evidence of Ms Lesley Hopkins and included within the latest version of the Proposed Conditions.
8. In regards to avifauna, I explained the proposed measures in my EIC and the link from the affected ecological values to the values that will be enhanced through the proposed offsets. I acknowledge that the values are not exactly like-for-like, but it is very difficult to identify offsets for loss of foraging habitat.

9. Since finalising my rebuttal evidence I have also had further discussions with officers from the Department of Conservation regarding the proposed offset measure (Condition EM.14C) to offer to the Department a contribution towards its management programmes at South Island shorebird breeding sites. The most appropriate programme would be predator control on Wrybill breeding grounds, either a new conservation site at upper and /or lower Waimakariri River or an existing site in the upper or lower Rakaia River. Approximately 20% of the global population of Wrybill utilise the Mangere Inlet and will be one of the species affected by the EWL; it is therefore appropriate that the offset measure addresses this species, but will also provide benefits for other braided river birds. I consider that the minimum term of pest control operation should cover the construction phase for the reclamation (2-3 years) and up to 5 years post-construction.
10. In the event that it is not possible to obtain wildlife sanctuary status for protection of existing high tide roosts in the wider Manukau, as described in Condition EM.14A, I consider it would be appropriate to extend the time period for this pest control operation.

Conclusion

11. Overall, I consider that the integrated approach that has been taken to the ecological mitigation and offsets required for the EWL, I consider that the adverse ecological effects in their entirety can be adequately addressed, including in regards to avifauna.