

Stella Passage project referred to fast-track consenting process by Minister for Infrastructure

Port of Tauranga Limited (NZX:POT) today advised that the Minister for Infrastructure has accepted its request to refer the Stella Passage development resource consent application to the fast-track consenting process.

The application is the same as the one lodged with the Environmental Protection Authority in April this year as a “listed project” under schedule 2 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

The new application is running in parallel with the Port’s listed project application, which is currently on hold following a judicial review by the High Court. In a decision issued on 27 August, the Court determined that the Environmental Protection Authority should not have accepted the application as the project was not exactly as described in schedule 2 of the Act.

The Government is seeking to rectify the legislative drafting error through the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Bill, currently before the Environment Select Committee. Ministers are hopeful the Bill will be passed into legislation by the end of the year. However, if this proves impossible, the Port hopes to avoid further delays by having an alternative, direct referral application already under way.

Port of Tauranga Chief Executive, Leonard Sampson, said the company needed to expedite the application as quickly as possible.

“We are currently turning away shipping services that want to call at Tauranga, which is negatively impacting the New Zealand economy.”

The Environment Court has already established that the environmental impact from the Stella Passage development will, from a Western science perspective, be minor in the short-term and negligible in the long-term.



However, Port of Tauranga has been unable to reach agreement with opposing iwi and hapū parties on the appropriate level of mitigation for the cultural impacts of the development.

The Stella Passage development is one of regional and national significance and involves extending the Sulphur Point container berth by 385 metres (in two stages) and the Mount Maunganui wharves by 315 metres, by converting existing cargo storage land within the port's current footprint. The project also involves associated dredging for the necessary vessel turning circle along with minor reclamation of land directly behind the new wharves.

For more information, please contact:

Rochelle Lockley

GM Communications

021 865 884

Email rochelle.lockley@port-tauranga.co.nz



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