

Port of Tauranga lodges fast-track application for Stella Passage development

Port of Tauranga today announced it has lodged an application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 for its proposed development of Stella Passage.

The project 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 reclamation of land behind the new wharves and dredging.

Port of Tauranga Chief Executive, Leonard Sampson, said the project is of regional and national significance.

"The Stella Passage development will allow Port of Tauranga to maximise the efficient use of existing infrastructure by increasing berth capacity," he said. "It is vital to future economic growth and meeting the needs of New Zealand importers and exporters."

The project has been included in regional policies and plans for Te Awanui Tauranga Harbour since 2003. Preparation of a resource consent application began in 2018.

The Port unsuccessfully applied for consent under the Covid-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020. Government Ministers instead recommended the application be referred directly to the Environment Court.

In May 2021, Port of Tauranga made a resource consent application to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council and requested direct referral to the Court. A Court hearing was held in February and March 2023.



In response to tangata whenua concerns raised during the hearing, the Port reduced the scale of the project, in particular the size of the southern Mount Maunganui reclamation, wharf extensions and dredging.

The Environment Court released an interim decision in December 2023 indicating consent would be granted for the first stage of the Sulphur Point extension, subject to further work and consultation with tangata whenua over a nine-month period.

The Court issued a second interim decision in December 2024, granting consent subject to conditions being agreed with Bay of Plenty Regional Council. The decision noted that, from a Western science perspective, the physical effects of the proposal are expected to be minor in the short-term and negligible in the long-term.

However, that decision was appealed by three parties.

Given the urgency of the project, Port of Tauranga has applied to put the Court process on hold and pursue an application under the new Fast-track Approvals Act. It has spent the past three months undertaking further consultation with tangata whenua parties.

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