

**IN THE MATTER OF** the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER OF** Private Plan Change 95 Pencarrow Estate  
Pongakawa to the Western Bay of Plenty  
District Plan

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF KEVIN & ANDREA MARSH**

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**Introduction**

1. Our full names are Kevin Alexander and Andrea Dawn Marsh. We are joined in presenting this evidence, and supported by our son Logan Alexander Marsh.
2. We are a farming family, with two sons and a daughter, and we have spent our entire married life on our farm, purchasing the original farm in 1971, taking possession on our return from our honeymoon, in our mid 20's.
3. Kevin has always farmed, and taken on extra contracting work such as drain cleaning, silorating, an AB run which enabled us to get our first purchase of herd and farm, independent of family finance, but with support from Rural Bank. He has always been involved in community organisations locally then regionally and nationally, including President of Te Puke A & P Assn (Life Member), Fish & Game (Life Member), Federated Farmers, Councillor of WBOPDC from 2001 till 2022, Kelloggs Scholar in 1990, current Chair of Pongakawa Hall Committee since 1986, and current Chair of Bledisloe Park Board.

4. Andrea is a teacher, and supplemented our farming finances with teaching at our local school, as a relief teacher, and full time, sharing F2 teaching with the Principal Ross Purcell, for over 10 years, until 1997, while providing support on the farm, rearing calves, milking when necessary and generally filling in the gaps. As well as the responsibilities around admin, compliance and general accounting, while growing our family of three. We all helped, with our kids generally being involved in day to day farming duties. Andrea also became involved in community activities providing leadership with Plunket, Federated Farmers Rural Education, School Trustees - Primary and Secondary, moving into tertiary education in 1991, serving as Chair of Bay of Plenty Polytechnic Council for 17 years, being national president of the overarching polytechnic body ITPNZ in 2004. She was awarded the Suffrage Centennial Medal in 1993 for her services to rural education and was Te Puke Citizen of the Year in 1987. She was a Kelloggs Scholar in 1992, and completed the Certificate in Company Direction with Institute of Directors, in 2000, and was a director of Housing New Zealand from 1998 till 2001. Andrea went on to form her own business "Andrea Marsh Education Solutions", and began providing professional support for schools having difficulties with governance, and was appointed to schools at risk as Limited Statutory Manager by the Ministry of Education to a number of primary and secondary schools in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato.
5. While being committed to our life on the land, we have also been fortunate to enjoy involvement in off farm activities which have provided much enjoyment, as well as furthering our knowledge and understanding of life outside of the farm gate.
6. We are the private plan change applicants for Plan Change 95.
7. The purpose of our statement is to provide some evidence about our association with the Plan Change 95 land, Pongakawa, and our long term aspirations. Our vision is a quality, rural residential community in the heart of the Te Puke region, future proofed for future generations, meeting the need

for housing in a booming horticultural area, 4 minutes to the Tauranga Eastern Link, 15 minutes to Te Puke town centre, 25 minutes to the Rotorua Lakes, 10 minutes to Maketu and Pukehina beaches, close to Rangiuru Industrial Park, equidistant to Whakatane, Rotorua and Tauranga; a truly aspirational location.

## **Background**

8. We bought our initial farm in 1971. We have bought additional land over the years, in 1974, 1986, and 2013, to add to our landholdings. We have been active members of our Pongakawa, Te Puke and regional communities, which has been most enjoyable and rewarding.
9. Our farming philosophy has always been to look after our animals, and our land. We have never overstocked, and have been mindful of the life within the soil, and being restrained from over-use of chemicals and over fertilising our land.
10. In the 1990's we began separating solids from liquids from our cowshed effluent, providing food for an army of worms, with the resulting vermicast in demand, on farms and orchards. We attended courses run by international experts and established a small business "Pencarrow Vermicast" - in Nature's footsteps, which ran until the fright of PSA, when we abandoned our business due to over-expectations around the cures and eradication of PSA. We continued the application of vermicast on our farm and gardens, with our land and maize crops benefitting from improved microbial activity in the soil, and enhancing the productivity of our crops and pasture. We were before our time, as regenerating farming practices have only reached prominence in the last 10-15 years on the national landscape.
11. We have always maintained a responsibility to caretake our land, right across our farm, a kahikatea stand is impressive, and our ponds protected with flaxes and native plantings, enhancing whitebait spawning areas within our ponds,

which we vigorously protect. Our last planting of natives runs alongside the S.H. 2 boundary and Wharere Canal, with plantings going along the river bank until our boundary outlet to Wharere Stream. We enjoy the native birds, kereru and tui, which are often seen around our home, as well as ducks nesting close by.

12. We had the opportunity to purchase the land immediately opposite our home block, which is incidentally the subject of this Plan Change 95 application, about 2 years after we began in 1974, which in hindsight was too soon; and then a further 20 ha just before the economic crash in the late 80's. Andrea went seriously back to teaching full time, for us to keep our heads above water. Our final purchase of land was 1 June 2013, with 20 ha across from the Arawa paper road, when payout crashed from over \$7 per kg to under \$3. Timing hasn't been our friend.
  
13. We planted two paddocks, 3 ha in citrus, in the PC block, with family picking, packing, and delivering to local and regional purchasers, which was time consuming as a family. We introduced fully automatic frost protection, with Regional Council consent, and on frosty days it was like fairyland. However an account for transport to market for our fruit exceeded the return, and Kevin used his digger to dig, then burn, all but 5 trees, while Andrea was teaching one day. We had a small ½ ha of organic kiwifruit, beautiful fruit, but were unable to meet the stringent market requirements of spray, so that was abandoned. Again, before our time. While other farmers were diversifying into substantial kiwifruit operations, we chose not to, in consideration of our neighbouring houses as the requirement for regular spraying and of our neighbours receiving spray drift would have impacted severely on health and welfare of others.

## Farming operations

14. We have been dairying for 53 years, alongside which we have run beef cattle, with very few calves meeting the bobby calf end of life. The cowshed is located near to the boundary of the proposed plan change area, and the effluent ponds are located within the plan change area. Therefore, if the plan change is confirmed, we will be retiring the farm from dairying – mainly because we would need to relocate the cowshed and the effluent ponds, and this would be at significant cost.
15. We will instead retain the balance land and use it for drystock farming.
16. We grow all our own supplements for our stock with a small and limited reliance on imported food, 10 tonne palm kernel per year, only if required. Our cowshed effluent is sprayed on pasture with our slurry tank, providing valuable fertiliser, increasing the health of our land and reducing pond storage requirements. Our stocking rate has been maintained at 2 cows per ha as sustainable, and minimises reliance on imported food, ensuring our cows maintain consistency with the national average of 360kg / year milk solids. An updated version of Agfirst Financial Survey data from July had a breakeven payout within the season at \$8.55/kg MS- a \$0.31/ kg MS surplus. In July, that budget had a 39c loss.
17. This was first stated by Pita Alexander, a well-respected and leading agricultural accountant. Most farms are not as productive as public perception maintains.
18. With Fonterra's forecast of \$8.55 per kg per m/s for this current season, dairy farmers can expect to have .31c surplus as long as payout levels are sustained around \$9.00, and depending on the debt levels individual farmers carry.

## Project Goals and Vision, Engagement

19. During Kevin's time as a WBOPDC councillor, Kevin promoted the following issues with the recognition of other councillors' support, particularly Councillor Sue Matthews, with the absolute commitment to making our Ward, but specifically Pongakawa, a better place:
- Kevin promoted, and fought for town supply water to Pongakawa from Maniatutu Road as many residents of Arawa Road and SH2 were drinking contaminated and rusty water, lobbied for Council support and residents' acceptance of annual costs until paid off, achieving an extension up to Pongakawa School, with Pongakawa Hall Committee paying installation costs, and installing pipeline from S.H.2 to school as volunteers, as the school bore was not satisfactory.
  - Established street lighting for Arawa Road, and at S.H.2 lighting at entrance to Arawa Road.
  - Reminded Council staff of DIF funding contributions put aside from Penelope Place subdivision, to ensure improvements including widening Arawa Road and footpath to Penelope Place fund, as agreed in subdivision conditions.
  - Advocated for Pongakawa School to have an extension of Domain land for extra space and sportsgrounds.
  - Extended Domain Wetlands surrounding the native reserve, using our digger for the first pond.
  - Chaired Pongakawa Domain & Hall Committee since 1986, when bank balance was \$200.00 The Hall Committee now owns 2 rental properties, which the Hall operates and maintains.
  - The Hall Committee supports local organisations such as Pongakawa Action Centre, and Pongakawa Heritage Trust with significant donations, and the Hall Committee now has total assets of \$3,143,146.00.

20. Through this involvement, we have constantly been alive to the desire of people to live in this general area. This has driven subdivision activity in Paengaroa, in Penelope Place at the Arawa Road settlement, and earlier informed our decision to subdivide 8 lots off, on the western side of Arawa Road in the late 1990's, interestingly with 6 of the current submitters living on that land, adjacent to our PC application, and once part of our farm. We have welcomed children of Arawa Road having calves for Calf Club, and they were always welcome.
21. Over the same time we became aware of and engaged in an emerging idea for the Western Bay east of Te Puke for hamlets or small villages to service the economic backbone of livestock, dairy farming and horticultural land uses. Through our engagement with officials from Smartgrowth, WBOPDC, Commissioners of TCC, central government officials, hapū and iwi, and stakeholders such as community groups and Pongakawa School.
22. We believe that part of our property, bordering an existing village settlement and very close to the important transport corridor of SH2 and access to existing Pongakawa amenities, commercial uses on SH2, school and other facilities in Pongakawa would be a suitable location for implementation of this hamlet/village/community application.
23. The vast conversions of dairy and dry farming land to horticultural orchards over the last decade in the Pongakawa area has only further added to this idea for our property, being centrally located to this expansion of orchard activity which brings with it increased employee requirements. Similarly, the completion of the Tauranga Eastern Motorway to Paengaroa has also seen an increased desire for living in this area from our observations in the community. This has all occurred in the absence of the investment in social infrastructure (i.e. shop, space for community services such as medical needs) in the Pongakawa residential community.

24. It is with the above in mind that the decision was made to engage in planning processes to enable us to bring this vision to reality in 2021. This commenced with further initial engagement with WBOPDC and BOPRC. We did not understand there to be any fundamental opposition to the proposal from WBOPDC and BOPRC based on that engagement. I further believe there was a degree of support from WBOPDC as they also saw that plan change would build the Pongakawa community.
25. We further understood from meetings with staff and senior Council members that there was a degree of support for the plan change if it included medium density lots, which it does, and was developed to build the Pongakawa community.
26. We accept that residents will have differing views on our plan. Within our plan, we have restrictions for building close to boundaries, and height restrictions. We understand these feelings but it has been known since our 1997 development of the 8 lot rural residential subdivision, with an 8 metre lane between sections 4 and 5 for access or delivery, that there has been the expectation of a further subdivision, some time in the future.

#### **Alternative land uses – dry farm remaining, horticultural**

27. We have also considered other alternative uses of our land in light of increasing costs over the last decade. These include:
  - (a) Horticultural conversion – at approximately \$1m/ha establishment costs and limited time before retirement for a return on such investment, such an investment is not preferred to be undertaken. This may however be the choice of our children or successor farmers of our land.



- (b) Drystock farming – as noted above, we acknowledge we will need to stop dairy farming should development enabled by the plan change progresses. We, in tandem with our children are intent on pivoting the farm to dry farming of beef should the plan change proceed. Over 60ha of farmable land would remain available with the plan change area removed, which is far more manageable a proposition in tandem with the release of the plan change area from the farm.

## Conclusion

28. We believe that Plan Change 95 would round out the Pongakawa settlement by developing the western side of Arawa Road, and introducing the additional bus stop, playground, health hub facilities, and shop facilities to the Pongakawa community, as well as improvement to the access off SH 2 to Arawa Road and Penelope Place. It would also enable housing supply that is required, from our involvement with the community, witnessing increased growth and desire for living in the area, and as evidenced in shortfalls predicted now and in the future for the WBOPDC district. As an aside, during this recent economic downturn, 5 of the 6 houses, relocated, and redeveloped, into Penelope Place have been sold within the last 6 months.
29. We are proud to be Pongakawa people. Our grandchildren are 5<sup>th</sup> generation. We have a lifetime of commitment to, and participation in our community: school, hall, Action Centre, sports and community wellbeing, local government.
30. We have lived on our farm for 53 years, and have long held a vision for a residential development with great community facilities - Pencarrow Estate.
31. We are seeking commercial gain, for the wellbeing of our family, as well as the public good - our legacy - a positive and productive residential community wed to the worth of work with access to positive recreation, with good values and living in a strong, safe, serviced and sustainable way, continuing growth in the

Eastern Corridor of the Western Bay of Plenty, in sync with growth of the wider Bay of Plenty.

32. As a family, we have worked hard to establish our farming way of life, supporting our children as they completed their tertiary qualifications in Education, Medicine and Social Science, and building their lives and families, in ways we are incredibly proud of. Added to that, our family, including our grandchildren, love our land and we anticipate and hope it to be maintained, as a farm, into the future for them, and by them, as our legacy.

Kevin and Andrea Marsh

24 October 2024