

11 May 2026

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Kia ora [REDACTED]

Official information Request: Wastewater questions - clarification

I am writing to you in response to your request received 17 April for the clarification relating to the LGOIMA response we sent to regarding the purchase of land for the purposes of wastewater irrigation.

We have assessed your request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). I have received information to provide the following response (in [blue text](#)) to your queries (in *italics*):

- 1. In particular, I would like clarification on the use of a 15-minute averaging period for wind speed cut-offs. Wind conditions can change rapidly, and gusts capable of carrying spray drift can occur well within that timeframe. This raises concern that drift could occur before the system is shut down. Can you please confirm whether any shorter averaging periods or real-time gust-based shutoff controls are in place or have been considered?*

RESPONSE

The current (2016) consent conditions for the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant specify wind-speed cut-off thresholds that apply to the existing irrigation-to-ground operation adjacent to the oxidation pond. This would also have applied at Pain Farm had irrigation proceeded at that location.

The applicable wind-speed shut-off criteria are:

- Sustained at 7.5m/s for 15 minutes towards a dwelling within 300m; and
- If wind exceeds 12 m/s

These are not averages and the 12 m/s is a gust-based cutoff. The wind-speed standards are derived from the South Wairarapa District Plan (2012) and apply when irrigation occurs 25m away from a property boundary. As previously indicated, they were considered appropriate for use at Pain Farm and are now proposed to be applied at the new site located north of Pain Farm.

By way of context, the nearest residential property facade to the proposed Pain Farm irrigation area would have been approximately 85m away and downwind of the prevailing wind. In contrast, for the currently proposed irrigation area, the nearest residential property is approximately 350m to the south, while properties downwind of the prevailing wind are approximately 1,200m from the irrigation area.

The adoption of shorter averaging periods or additional real-time gust-based controls has not been considered as necessary. This is because the existing wind-speed thresholds are derived from the District Plan and these were deemed suitable for management of spray drift and odour effects from irrigation of treated wastewater to land at Pain Farm. The proposed irrigation to land use, at Pain Farm, has separation distances which were significantly smaller than the now proposed irrigation site (to land located to the north of Pain Farm). The new proposed site provides separation distances of approximately 360m or greater from residential property façades.

2. *I also note the statement that the proposed measures will thanks “ensure that there is no spray drift and odours beyond” the site boundary. Given the variability of wind conditions, this appears to be a strong claim. Could you please provide the basis for this conclusion, including whether any site-specific modelling or assessment of drift under local wind conditions has been undertaken?*

RESPONSE

The full statement from the letter is: ‘Planting is proposed between the irrigation area and properties to the southeast, which will reinforce these measures and further ensure that there is no spray drift and odours beyond the boundary of the irrigation area.’

As explained in the preceding answer, setbacks and wind speed thresholds are considered to be adequate measures on their own for managing these types of effects. The setback of the irrigation area from a property boundary stipulated in the conditions is 25 metres; however, in this case, the irrigation area is typically set back 200 metres or more from the nearest residential property boundaries.

Accordingly, the phrase “further ensure” refers to the proposed planting between the irrigation area and residential property boundaries, which will enhance and reinforce the management of spray drift.

3. *A key concern for me is the potential impact on neighbouring properties’ drinking water. In this area all households rely on rainwater collected from roof catchments. Any spray drift settling on roofs could therefore directly affect potable water supplies. I would appreciate detail on how this risk has been specifically assessed and mitigated.*

RESPONSE

Refer to preceding response. Accordingly, no further or detailed consideration of roof collection systems has been undertaken.

4. *In this context, could you also please confirm whether public health authorities have been consulted as part of this assessment, and if so, what their position is regarding the potential risk to roof-collected drinking water?*

RESPONSE

Public health authorities have not been specifically consulted as part of this assessment. This is because public health authorities supported the previous 2016 consenting process that proposed discharge of treated wastewater to Pain Farm, with public health risk concerns being appropriately managed through the proposed irrigation controls.

5. *In addition, while planting buffers are proposed, these will take time to establish before they are effective. What interim measures will be in place to protect neighbouring properties during this establishment period?*

RESPONSE

The proposed planting is not needed to specifically manage spray drift effects; this is managed through buffer distances and wind speed cut offs (as described above). The planting has been offered to reinforce those measures, in response to requests that this be provided.

6. *Finally, I would appreciate clarification on what monitoring, compliance, and response measures will be implemented if spray drift is observed beyond the boundary.*

RESPONSE

The current 2016 consent conditions for the Martinborough Wastewater Treatment Plant require that a 'Discharge to Land Management Plan' be prepared. This plan needs to include monitoring requirements and response measures and will be provided to Greater Wellington Regional Council for certification. They will also then, as regulator, check for compliance and will be able to take enforcement action to ensure compliance.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. If this request is selected it will be published at <https://swdc.govt.nz/lgoima-proactive-release/>, with your personal information removed.

You have a right to request a review by the Ombudsman on this response. Further information about this process can be found on <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/what-ombudsman-can-help/complaints-about-government-agencies/how-make-complaint> or email info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Nāku noa, nā



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