

Online submission

This is a submission that was made online via the Council's website.

Submitter No.	S46
Submitter Name	Kate Kennedy
Submitter first name	Kate
Submitter middle name	Mary
Submitter surname	Kennedy
Submitter is contact	Yes
Email	444kate@gmail.com
Wish to be heard	Yes
Joint presentation	Yes
Trade competition	I could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission.
Directly affected	N/A
Withhold contact details?	No

Submission points

Plan section	Provision	Support/oppose	Reasons	Decision sought
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Mineral
Extraction
Zone

Mineral
Extraction
Zone

Oppose

For the proposed Mineral
Extraction Zone on the
Barrytown Flats to be
rezoned General Rural in line
with the rest of the Flats.

I am writing to urge the committee to remove the Mineral Extraction Zone from the Barrytown Flats, and rezone it to General Rural. My submission discusses the all-round incompatibility of the large-scale mineral sands extraction and processing that attracts the interest of mining companies in this area, with the peaceful rural lifestyle enjoyed by residents and sensitive ecological areas on the Flats.

Various iterations of mineral sands mining operations have been proposed on the Barrytown Flats over the years. In declining the most recent application in February 2022, the commissioners noted that:

"There were several sensitive waterbodies around the site, including wetlands, swamps, creeks and springs, and the commissioners had concerns that the applicants did not offer them sufficient protection...In particular, the commissioners were concerned about the "cumulative adverse effects" on the tāiko or Westland petrel population from increased vehicle movements along SH6."
(<https://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/west-coast/127759462/west-coast-mineral-sand-mine-rejected-partly-over-fears-for-westland-petrel-colony>)

The economy of the Barrytown Flats is a combination of farming, micro-scale gold mining, and businesses engaged in eco-tourism and the nature economy. The residents enjoy a quiet pastoral lifestyle that is second to none.

Internationally, the mineral extractive industries are reckoning with the concept of a social licence to operate, which is now being seen in many countries to be as important as legal licensing.

"Social licence requires the acceptance of the people who live and work near, or are affected by, a mining project...Social licence is an ongoing process to be maintained prior to, during and post mining operations. It is more about doing the 'right thing' than meeting minimum regulatory compliance"
(https://www.bdo.global/getattachment/Insights/Global-Industries/Natural-Resources/Social-Licence-to-Operate-in-Mining/BDO_Social-Licence-to-Operate_2020.pdf.aspx?lang=en-GB)

It's fair to say that the prospect of mineral sands mining in the proposed Barrytown Flats zone has almost no social license within the community, with residents alarmed at the scale and intrusiveness of the proposals, and the threat to their businesses, health and lifestyle.

Documents included with submission

None

The fact that Tiga Minerals is now applying for additional exploration permits across a much larger region of the Barrytown Flats (Grey Star Tues 6 Sept 2022) makes a mockery of their statement in that same article that they "hope to work with the community...for the betterment of all concerned". They have not asked the residents, the plans get bigger and more destructive, the community does not want them operating, and these plans are top down, not driven by the community in any way. This is a continuing and escalating stress for the community, which has now only become worse. More permits, more exploration, and ultimately the mineral extraction itself is completely incompatible with the health and wellbeing of the Flats, the people, the wildlife and the ecology.

It's important to note that proceeding with forcing mineral extraction upon the Barrytown community is in direct contravention of the West Coast's own economic strategy Te Whanaketanga 2050.

The plan states that "We are vulnerable to extreme weather events, sea-level rise and disruptions due to natural disasters" (Te Whanaketanga Tai Poutini West Coast Economic Strategy 2050 p.6). So siting mineral extraction operations on low lying, receding shoreline with a high water table with an existing vulnerability to saltwater incursion is short-term thinking in direct contradiction to a global trend to move infrastructure away from such areas. Indeed, the report hints at this when it states "Te Whanaketanga focuses us on a generational shift in our economy rather than short term or siloed thinking" (Ibid, p.4).

"Active guardianship of our taonga and giving back to nature...We care for our people and place leaving our environment in a better state than we inherited it." (Ibid pp9-10) The lagoons and wetlands, freshwater streams, drinking water, all the life-sustaining functions of the Flats region is, I would argue, a taonga that far supercedes the economic returns of, for example \$200 a tonne of garnet. vast amounts of sand will need to be quarried to make these ventures worthwhile. The BarrytownJV (now Tiga) mining application aimed to dig to a depth of 15 metres across it's site. That is not protecting taonga. That is exploiting the natural environment, running roughshod over the objections of neighbours, and inviting destruction of freshwater resources.

"Our strengths in protecting and restoring the natural environment are an opportunity to build a light footprint niche economy on the Coast that develops, incubates, and shares knowledge on conservation and biodiversity restoration...Actions - Develop an International Conservation and Biodiversity Restoration Centre of Excellence" (Ibid p.15). The existing Barrytown Flats economy already operates with a light footprint on a sensitive area. A conservation centre of excellence already exists there, in the form of Conservation Volunteers which has a large native plant nursery and ecological restoration site, developed over many years. The potential impact of dust residue, heavy traffic and noise pollution would have a profound impact on this significant business. Surely it makes more sense to develop and invest in an economy that is already meeting the needs of locals, is consistent with the aspirations of the economic strategy, and protects the wellbeing of the place and it's people.

Sustainable tourism businesses feel under threat, because should full-scale mineral extraction proceed, this area will no longer be attractive to tourists. Community disintegration is occurring as people sell or leave to escape the uncertainty and possible noise, dust, vibration and disruption. Some residents have had difficulty selling homes as nobody wants to buy near a potential industrial area. People come to a place like this for the nature, the peace and quiet. Indeed, there's a perception in the community that Grey District Council has encouraged residential development in the area. To now pave the way for significant industry alongside those residents is false advertising at least.

The heavy traffic generated by the scale of mineral extraction proposals alone gives reason to encourage protection of the general rural zoning of the Flats. The Coast Road is one of the world's finest scenic drives, and is also tight and unstable in parts. The addition of increased volumes of heavy vehicles is incompatible with the existing condition of the road.

There are concerning implications for the ecology and hydrology of this coastal ecosystem should mineral extraction proceed. Mineral sands mining requires the excavation of significant tonnes of sand, which logically invites seawater incursion into the groundwater and the land, especially if we look at projected sea level rises and increased storm surges in the foreseeable future. Such incursion would be irreparably harmful to the pockets of wetlands and lagoons along the foreshore and on the Flats. These sites provide vital food, flightpaths and breeding grounds for a number of threatened species such as the taiko. The sites would be easily disturbed by the activity of industrial machinery, water extraction, and potential seepage and leaching of byproduct toxins through tailings and settling ponds into the surrounding environment. Salt water incursion will also destroy the grass required for grazing stock.

It also needs to be mentioned that some of the minerals in the extraction zone have a radioactive quality to them, for example thorium and monazite which are extracted as part of the mining process either for their own value, or as byproduct of the search for other minerals. These elements become concentrated in the process through gravity or magnetism, and overseas are often dispersed with the tailings. Given that not only are the Flats a delicate ecological area, but that families live on the properties on either side of the proposed MEZ - hang their washing, eat from their gardens, farm livestock, drink water from streams etc. - it would seem highly imprudent to disturb, concentrate and refine such minerals next to residential properties, even with a buffer zone.

The Flats are notorious for strong prevailing winds from north, west and south, so the prospect of significant quantities of dust settling anywhere along the Flats should be of significant concern. The residue dust from ilmenite mining is said to resemble a talcum powder-like consistency. It is not hard to conclude that this would be very undesirable to have settling over the area and getting into the lagoon, the groundwater, and any of the ten streams that criss-cross the proposed MEZ. Not to mention the effect that would have on humans and livestock in the vicinity.

Because of its Nuclear Free status, New Zealand has been slow to develop legislation governing the extraction of radioactive minerals. There is very little protection under existing legislation for any neighbours of such ventures. Therefore it reinforces the logic that the MEZ on the Barrytown Flats is incompatible with its current character, population, economy and ecology and should be zoned as General Rural.

Many of the families who live on the Barrytown Flats make their livings from the land and ecology of the area. Native plant nurseries, ecotourism operators, tourist accommodation, dairy farms and animal-oriented lifestyle blocks sit appropriately within the confines of this landscape, and leave a relatively small footprint. It is not right to force them to co-exist with mineral extraction in this particular area.

The TTPP plan in its current form limits a mine site to 3 hectares, but places no prohibition on how many 3 hectare blocks adjacent to each other can be mined. This leaves the whole area unprotected and forces significant industry on an unwilling rural community. This must be addressed.

You can't, and shouldn't be forced to put a price on peace and quiet. I've spent time in Barrytown, and it is hard to imagine the peace and beauty of the place being disturbed by the dusty roar of spiral separators, excavation machinery, and heavy traffic movements. It's a brutal thing to do to this environment and the people that care for it, and changing the zoning to a protective setting is the best way to draw a line under this activity and give the residents back their peace of mind. Community wellbeing should be at the heart of what the Te Tai O Poutini Plan is about. Protect Barrytown Flats with a General Rural zoning applied consistently across the Barrytown Flats.