

PNCC Landscape Values and Planning Provisions: Te Mata Landscape Assessment

The submissions to draft provisions would appear to focus on three issues.

A misunderstanding as to why a landscape is classified as ‘outstanding’. The submitter assumes the judgement is made on purely visual grounds from beyond the landscape looking towards it. With this understanding the submitter questions why significance is attributed to deep gullies and the vegetation associated with waterways that cannot be seen. The criteria for evaluation clearly require an assessment of more than ‘visual amenity’.

Waterways may also be attributed significance for values additional to ‘landscape Values’.

Land use constraints as a result of an ‘outstanding’ overlay. My understanding is that ‘existing uses’ are able to continue. They may attract rather more interest however. Some areas of plantation forestry are included within the overlay. I see no reason why this use should not continue. However, I would expect to see the retention of any existing indigenous vegetation, especially associated with waterways.

The exclusion of the Te Mata ridgeline. A submission from Alison Mildon makes the case for the inclusion of Te Mata (and the associated ridgeline) as an outstanding feature or landscape. Mr Bent makes a similar request.

There are two questions to address:

1. Is Te Mata within “the series of highest ridges and highest hilltops along the full extent of the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges”,
2. Does Te Mata satisfy sufficient of the criteria to qualify as an Outstanding Natural Landscape or Feature?

1. The series of highest ridges and highest hilltops along the full extent of the Ruahine and Tararua Ranges.

In the various wind farm cases there has been discussion around what constitutes *highest ridges and highest hilltops*. While there may be a series of overlapping ridges and hilltops it has generally been accepted that the focus of concern is the integrity of the ranges as a

defining features of the city. It might also be argued that the focus is on the highest ridges and hilltops seen from both sides of the ranges.

When hearing appeals to the One Plan the Environment Court was persuaded that the whole length of the Tararua Ranges should be treated as an Outstanding Natural Feature, in spite of the ridgeline at the northern end already being developed as a series of wind farms. Their decision was made on the grounds that the integrity and coherence of the ranges as a whole should be protected and that the cumulative effects of turbines was a particular concern.

The highest identified points along the ranges moving from the Manawatu Gorge south are:

432 m immediately above the Gorge at the end of North Range Road.

544 m high point named Tarakamuku (immediately above Aokautere Forest.)

400m a high point immediately south of Pahiatua Track named Ramiha.

528 m – **562** m – **522** m; a series of high points moving south.

767 m- Awarua; the highest peak in PNC.

The Kahuterawa River cuts deeply into the ranges to separate off the land mass to the west which includes the Te Mata ridgeline. This distinctive ridgeline includes a series of high points;

451 m Te Mata

482 m immediately to the south

528 m (above Millricks Line)

673 m Kaihinu, a very significant feature immediately south of the PNC boundary.

At the northern end of the Tararua Ranges there is essentially one distinctive ridgeline, of a similar altitude to Te Mata. The altitude of the central spine increases moving south and the ranges broaden to become a series of ridges and hilltops, for the most part higher to the east and distinctly visible from both sides of the ranges. Te Mata is located on the outer western hills, set on a distinctive ridgeline that is separated from the main ranges at the northern end by the deeply incised Kahuterawa Stream.

While Te Mata is not, in my opinion, seen as part of the main ranges it is never the less visually significant and of a sufficient altitude to constitute a landmark feature as seen from a number of places. The appended photographs illustrate this.

1. Is Te Mata an outstanding natural feature or landscape?

The attributes to be assessed in order to establish the significance of a landscape or feature are set out below. My opinion on each is provided.

<p>(a) Natural science factors</p>	<p>These factors relate to the geological, ecological, topographical and natural process components of the natural feature or landscape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative: the combination of natural components that form the feature or landscape strongly typifies the character of an area. • Research and education: all or parts of the feature or landscape are important for natural science research and education. • Rarity: the feature or landscape is unique or rare within the district or Region, and few comparable examples exist. • Ecosystem functioning: the presence of healthy ecosystems is clearly evident in the feature or landscape. 	<p>Te Mata is located on a ridgeline that is very representative of the outer western hills in terms of both landform and land cover. The western hills are for the most clear of woody vegetation and grazed.</p> <p>Te Mata is not distinguished as having any particular research or education values.</p> <p>Te Mata is not unique or rare in the context of natural science. There are significant ridges and hilltops of a similar character along the outer western side of the ranges (many of which have been recognized for their amenity values.)</p> <p>Te Mata has no distinguishing ecological function.</p>
<p>(b) Aesthetic values</p>	<p>The aesthetic values of a feature or landscape may be associated with:</p> <p>(i) Coherence: the patterns of <i>land</i>[^] cover and <i>land</i>[^] use are largely in harmony with the underlying natural pattern of landform and there are no, or few, discordant elements of <i>land</i>[^] cover or <i>land</i>[^] use.</p> <p>(ii) Vividness: the feature or landscape is visually striking, widely recognised within the local and wider community, and may be regarded as iconic.</p> <p>(iii) Naturalness: the feature or landscape appears largely unmodified by human activity and the patterns of landform and <i>land</i>[^] cover are an expression of natural processes and intact healthy ecosystems.</p> <p>(iv) Memorability: the natural feature or landscape makes such an impact on the senses that it becomes unforgettable.</p>	<p>The Te Mata ridgeline is an integral part of the outer ranges and land use patterns are entirely consistent with the wider setting. The hills and western faces of the ranges are largely open pasture so that the landform is revealed.</p> <p>In the immediate area of Te Mata there are no discordant elements.</p> <p>While Te Mata is a distinctive feature and is well recognised within the local community, for the wider community it is the ridgeline as a whole that is visually important. The Tararua Ranges are a prominent feature from both SH 56 and SH57 and those who live in associated areas.</p> <p>The landscape associated with Te Mata is highly modified. While the landform has not been modified the Indigenous vegetation has been removed and pasture established.</p> <p>Te Mata is a very important landmark for those who recognize it. As a feature it is not, in my opinion, 'unforgettable'.</p>
<p>(c) Expressiveness (legibility)</p>	<p>The feature or landscape clearly shows the formative natural processes or historic influences that led to its existing character.</p>	<p>The Te Mata ridgeline is a distinctive feature clearly shaped by wind and water. The deeply incised Kahuterawa Stream has sculpted steep faces on the western side and on the eastern side water has cut deep ravines down slopes rising steeply off the planes.</p>
<p>(d) Transient values</p>	<p>The consistent and noticeable occurrence of transient natural events, such as daily or seasonal changes in weather, vegetation or wildlife movement, contributes to the</p>	<p>While there is no notable wildlife movement the seasonal and daily changes in the light and its quality does draw attention to the ranges, the front faces above the planes in particular. The</p>

	character of the feature or landscape.	changes in the light are very significant for locals who appreciate the diversity in quality and whose attention is always being drawn to the hills.
(e) Shared and recognised values	The feature or landscape is widely known and is highly valued for its contribution to local identity within its immediate and wider community.	While important to the local community, for the wider community the feature is absorbed into a broader vista. The feature is however a very significant attribute within this broader vista so that any adverse effects on Te Mata would have wider implications.
(f) Cultural and spiritual values for tangata whenua^	Māori values inherent in the feature or landscape add to the feature or landscape being recognised as a special place.	While recognizing the significance of the Tararua Ranges as a whole to <i>tangata whenua</i> I am unaware of any particular significance being attributed to Te Mata.
(g) Historical Heritage values	ly held and substantially influences and adds attaches to the natural feature or landscape. <u>structures that are present and add to the ng of the feature or landscape.</u> ^{LNF5}	As far as I am aware the feature and associated ridgeline has no particular historical or heritage value.

The ridgeline is associated with a very culturally developed setting.

The ridgeline does however have high visual amenity values, not just in itself but in its associations with:

- The face of the hill as seen from the state highway(s)
- The Kahuterawa Valley immediately below to the east
- As seen from the north (the city and approaching the Kahuterawa Valley.)

The highpoint of Te Mata and the associated ridgeline above Kahuterawa Valley effectively provides a 'buffer' between the area currently occupied by turbines (or having consented but not built turbines) and the area to have been occupied by the Motorimu Wind Farm. This separation is important.

In my opinion there could be a case to prohibit turbines in an area to be defined on the basis of very high amenity associated with providing a buffer.