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**Media Release**

**For: Transparent Hawkes Bay Inc.**

**“Call In” No Surprise**

The Ruataniwha Dam “call in” announced today by the Minister for Environment is no surprise, says Transparent Hawke’s Bay Chair, Pauline Elliott. As a project of ‘national significance’ it will now be referred to a Board of Inquiry appointed by the Minister under the Environment Protection Agency.

Progress to date plus the Board of Inquiry process will have cost regional ratepayers $6m+ and taxpayers a further $3m+. It has consumed the energies and resources of Hawke’s Bay Regional Council and its Investment Company for at least two years.

“So far the serious concerns of the Mayors of Hastings and Napier, business leaders, Iwi leaders, environmental groups and submitters have gone unheeded. At no time have the people of Hawke’s Bay had an opportunity to understand exactly what is involved here, or to understand the level of risk for ratepayers”.

The ‘call in’ means that the environmental impacts of this massive, multi-million dollar project will be assessed by a Wellington appointed Board of Inquiry, and must be determined within nine months from date of public notification.

A ‘special consultative process’ will follow, and the Regional Council says it will be early next year before the public will have answers to questions around financial viability, market demand (farmer support), and whether it can attract the required investor support. So, without knowing if the scheme is financially viable, our Regional Council has committed more than $9m to the scheme to this point.

“In ignoring calls for less haste and greater transparency, the Regional Council’s decision to push ahead has squandered the last remnants of public confidence. The Council is on notice that future consultation will demand a robustness not yet seen anywhere in the process to date”

Transparent Hawke’s Bay will be hosting an information evening at the Clive Community Hall on Tuesday 25th June, 7pm, to inform the public on how they can engage with the Board of Inquiry and any subsequent consultation process that follows.

ENDS

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