

# Questions and Answers on Changes to Consenting

## December 2025

*Disclaimer: Always seek independent planning advice for your own situation. This is an overview of Government changes, not advice for individual circumstances.*

While there have been frequent recent announcements about changes to the planning system, these changes won't happen all at once. There is a transition period where the Resource Management Act (RMA) still applies, while the new system is being implemented.

In that transition period, there will be some changes to how councils process consents. The intent is to give everyone time to adjust to the new system. An amendment to the RMA has been passed this week to address resource consents that will expire before the RMA replacement bills become law.

HortNZ has analysed the proposed rules for current, expiring and new resource consents. The attached questions and answers explain how the transition works and what it means for consent holders.

It is important to note that the new system is not yet law, and the details of that system may change as the bills progress through Parliament and public submissions are considered. We recommend that you seek planning advice if you have a consent that is due to expire soon.

## Questions and Answers

What is happening overall?	The Planning Bill and Natural Environment Bill have been introduced to replace the RMA. These bills need to work their way through the legislative process before they become the law. The government have signalled that these bills should be enacted by mid-2026.
What is the short-term fix for expiring consents?	The Resource Management (Duration of Consents) Amendment Bill has been passed to address resource consents that will expire before the new system becomes law. This change means:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource consents that would otherwise expire before 31 December 2027 are automatically extended until that date;</li> <li>• Recently expired resource consents (where an application for a replacement consent has been made, but not yet determined) are deemed to be reinstated and extended until 31 December 2027;</li> <li>• The extension does not apply if it would push a water-related consent beyond 35 years.</li> </ul> <p>At the next expiry date, the consents will be assessed under the new legislation (or its transitional provisions).</p>
What does this mean for water permits?	<p>If your expiring consent relates to water, then your consent will be extended to either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 December 2027 or</li> <li>• the date that is 35 years after the date the consent commenced, whichever is earlier.</li> </ul> <p>If your consent is for a 35-year duration and expires on or before the enactment of the new legislation, you will not be automatically extended and will have to progress with an application under the RMA to renew the consent.</p>
What is the transition period?	The transition period is the changeover phase between the current RMA and the new planning system. During this time, the RMA continues to apply (with some changes).
When does the transition period start?	The transition period starts one calendar month after the new Planning Bill is signed into law.
When does the transition period end?	The government decides when the transition ends, but it must be a date later than 31 December 2027. It may occur nationally or region by region and must be signalled with at least six weeks' notice.
Are there new consenting rules that apply during the transition?	Yes, there will be an amended RMA consent process. However, the bills are still progressing through Parliament and will be subject to consultation and possible change, so the final consenting rules may change before they take effect.

What does this mean for consent applications lodged <b><u>before</u></b> the transition period starts?	<p>If you lodge a consent application before the transition starts, it will be assessed entirely under the current RMA rules, no matter how long it takes to decide. The council cannot switch to the amended RMA rules set out under the Planning Act or Natural Environment Act part way through.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the consent is granted before the transition starts, it remains an RMA consent.</li> <li>• If it is granted after the transition ends, it is automatically treated as a consent under the new law, without any re-assessment or new conditions.</li> </ul>
What does this mean for consent applications lodged <b><u>during</u></b> the transition period?	During the transition period, consent applications are assessed under the amended RMA process.
What happens to existing consents that <b><u>are not</u></b> expiring during the transition period?	Existing consents automatically carry over into the new system, with the same terms and conditions.
What happens to consents <b><u>that are</u></b> expiring during the transition period?	If your consent is due to expire during the transition period, it is automatically extended to two years after the transition ends with the same terms and conditions. Councils have three months to update your consent expiry date to reflect this extension.
If my consent is extended during the transitional period, can I still apply for a longer consent renewal?	Yes. The two-year extension is a temporary measure and does not limit the length of a replacement (renewal) consent. You can still apply for a full new consent term, and you can choose to pause processing, so the renewal is decided once the new planning system and plans are settled. Note: wastewater consents are exempt.