



Hastings District Council pleads not guilty to Havelock North gastro charges

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One of Havelock North's town water supply bores at the centre of the water contamination gastro crisis.

Claims of poor water network maintenance will be put before a judge after Hastings District Council pleaded not guilty to charges laid in the wake of the Havelock North gastro crisis.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council has taken the district council to court for alleged offences uncovered in investigations into the contamination of Havelock North's drinking water, which left an estimated 5500 people sick.

In court on Friday, not guilty pleas were entered on behalf of the district council to two charges of unlawful taking of water.

The matter will now go to a judge-alone trial scheduled for the new year.

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After filing the charges last month, the regional council said it found evidence of a breach of the conditions of the district council's resource consent relating to its water take. It accused the district council of failing to meet maintenance conditions in the consent.

At the time Hastings Mayor Lawrence Yule said it was disappointing the charges were laid ahead of the start of a Government inquiry into the water contamination which was initially due to begin hearing evidence in November.

The district council asked for a delay in the inquiry while the prosecution was dealt with.

The inquiry will convene in Hastings on Monday to consider the district council's plans to re-open a Havelock North water bore that was previously closed due to contamination concerns so it can deal with peak summer water demands.

However, the inquiry will not begin hearing evidence on the gastro crisis until late January.

the judge alone trial for the prosecution is expected to begin on January 16.

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