



FTAA–2505–1070: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme

Date submitted:	17/06/2025	Tracking #: BRF–6361	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

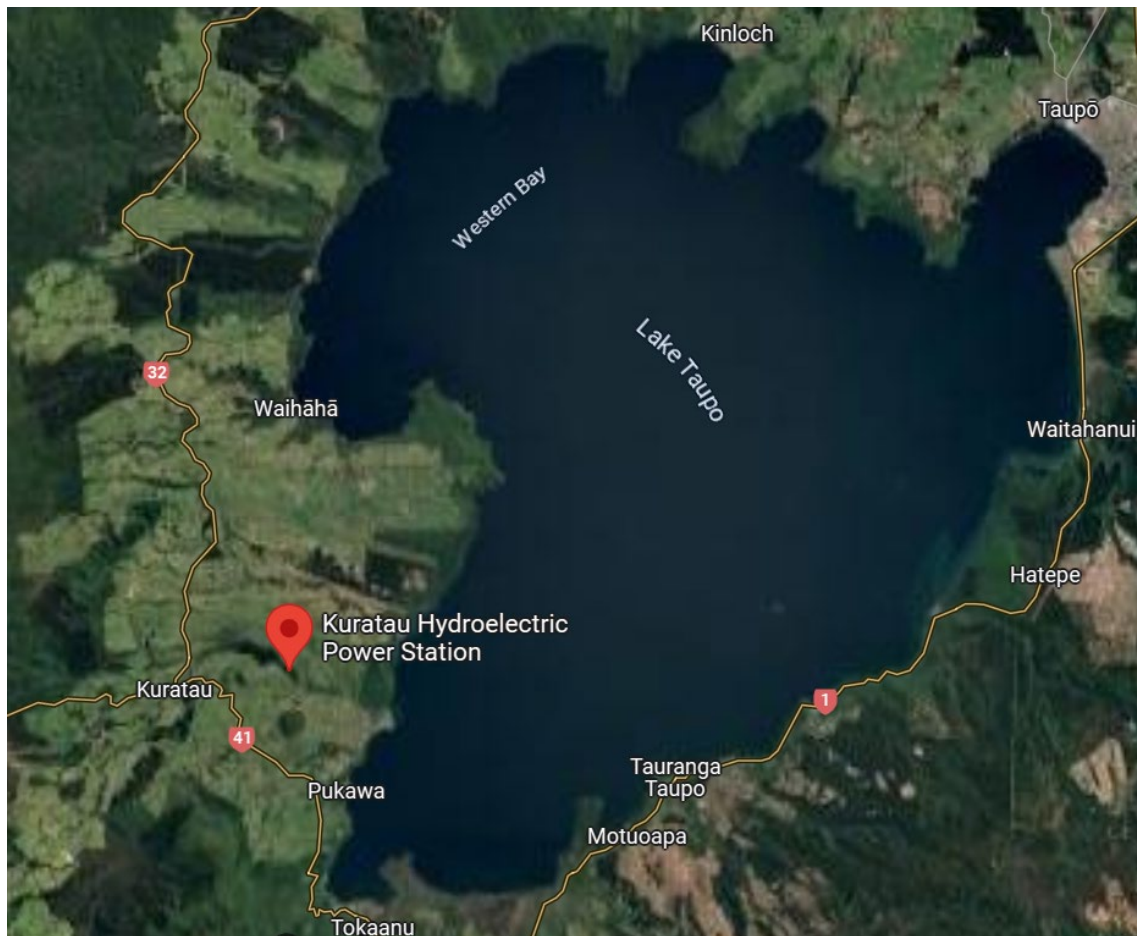
	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	23 June 2025

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to MfE FTAreferalls@mfe.govt.nz Send email to Ministers to invite comment
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme (in File Exchange) 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2))

Ministry for the Environment contacts:

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author(s)	Max Gander-Cooper, Joanne Waitoa		
Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from King Country Energy Limited to refer the Kuratau Hydro Electric Power Scheme project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to support your final decision on whether to refer the project,
2. The project is to renew the consents for the Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme (HEPS) approximately 36 km southwest of Taupō and approximately 2.5 km north-west of Kuratau Village. The Scheme has an installed generation capacity of 6 megaWatts and generates on average 28 gigaWatt-hours per year and currently generates renewable electricity by:
 - a. damming of the Kuratau River with an earth dam to form Lake Kuratau;
 - b. the discharge of water from the Kuratau spillway to the Kuratau River;
 - c. the take and use of water and the discharge of contaminants from the canal to land; and

- d. the discharge of water from the Kuratau power station turbines to the Kuratau River by means of a tailrace.
- 3. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991.
- 4. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
- 5. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
- 6. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being: local authorities, the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers, relevant administering agencies, the owners of Māori land within the project area and identified Māori groups from section 18(2) of the Act. The parties are listed in Attachment 3.
- 7. In addition to the above we recommend that you invite written comments from The Lines Company (local electricity distribution company), Transpower NZ Limited, The Minister for Economic Growth and the Minister for Regional Development as additional parties under section 17(5) of the Act.

Action sought

- 8. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ilana Miller', written in a cursive style.

Ilana Miller
General Manager – Delivery and Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

	Project Name		Applicant		Project Location								
Project details	Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme		King Country Energy Limited		In the Kuratau River catchment approximately 36km southwest of Taupō and approximately 2.5km north-west of Kuratau Village.								
			c/- Holland Beckett										
			The applicant is eligible to apply for resource consents.										
Project description	The project is to renew the consents for the existing Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme approximately 36 km southwest of Taupō and approximately 2.5 km north-west of Kuratau Village. The Scheme has an installed generation capacity of 6 megaWatts and generates on average 28 gigaWatt-hours per year and currently generates renewable electricity by: a. damming of the Kuratau River with an earth dam to form Lake Kuratau; b. the discharge of water from the Kuratau spillway to the Kuratau River; c. the take and use of water and discharge of contaminants from the canal to land; and d. the discharge of water from the Kuratau power station turbines to the Kuratau River by means of a tailrace.												
	The project will require the proposed approvals: a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991.												
Consultation undertaken	As required by s11, the applicant has consulted with:												
	Relevant local authorities		Relevant iwi authorities, hapu and Treaty settlement entities:		Relevant MACA groups		Ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou]		Relevant administering agencies		Holder of land to be exchanged		
	Taupo District Council Waikato Regional Council		Ngāti Tūwharetoa / Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board Ngāti Manunui Ngāti Parekaawa Waihi Pukawa Land Trust Waituhi Kuratau Land Trust		N/A		N/A		Ministry for the Environment		N/A		
Section 22 assessment criteria													
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	The Minister may consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant.												
	Assess the factors that are relevant to the application. How is the factor relevant and is it being met by the project?												
	The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]												
	While the project itself has not been specifically identified as a priority project, the National policy document Electrify NZ notes that re-consenting for existing generation assets has become unnecessarily difficult. The applicant considers referring this re-consenting project for fast-tracking would be consistent with that policy.												
	Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]												
	The Kuratau HEPS is regionally significant infrastructure as it supplies approximately 59-63% of electricity directly to the Waikato Region during morning and evening peaks. Reconsenting will enable the continued functioning of this important source of renewable energy.												
	Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]												
	The applicant considers the project will have significant economic benefits, noting that the benefits identified by the applicant relate primarily to reducing their own costs.												
	Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]												
	The applicant states the ongoing operation of the Kuratau HEPS contributes towards decarbonising New Zealand's economy. It will also contribute to achieving the 90% renewable energy target by 2025 set out in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation and the aspiration to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2030.												
Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]													
As a generator of electricity, the applicant is recognised as a lifeline utility under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 (Schedule 1, Part B). Lifeline utilities play a vital role in recovery from natural hazards, and have statutory duties such as the need to ensure the ability to function to the fullest possible extent, even though this may be at a reduced level, during and after an emergency.													
Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]													
Although the project has not been assessed as causing any ‘significant environmental issues’, it is noted that the Scheme has significance as a generator of renewable electricity, supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.													

	<i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant considers the project is consistent with the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, Waikato Regional Plan, and Ngati Tuwharetoa Environmental Iwi Management Plan.		
referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i> The applicant considers that due to the likelihood of public notification and appeals to the Environment Court, the project will be processed significantly more quickly under the Act than under standard RMA processes. <i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers a substantive application could be lodged in short order. We also note that the project is not outside the scope of what expert panels would be expected to consider under standard RMA processes.		
Minister invites comments	<i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i> a. relevant local authorities: Taupo District Council and Waikato Regional Council b. Minister for the Environment c. Relevant portfolio Ministers: Minister of Energy, Minister of Climate Change d. The Māori groups identified in Attachment 3 e. The owners of Māori land in the project area identified in Appendix 3 (None)	<i>The Minister may also copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person[s17(5)].</i> Minister for Economic Growth – Ministerial request Minister for Regional Development – Ministerial request Chief Executive of The Lines Company – local electricity distribution company as the project is embedded generation and connects directly to this network Chief Executive of Transpower NZ Ltd – administers the national grid	<i>The Minister may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.</i> N/A
Recommendations			Minister's decision
a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities and any relevant Ministers.			Noted
b. Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.			Noted
c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.			Noted
d. Note that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.			Noted
e. Note that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.			Noted
f. Agree to progress the Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme Project to our Stage 2 analysis (invitation to comment and s 18 report stage).			Yes / No
g. Agree to provide the application to, and invite comments from: a. Relevant local authorities: i. Taupo District Council ii. Waikato Regional Council b. Minister for the Environment c. Relevant portfolio Ministers: i. Minister of Energy ii. Minister of Climate Change d. The Māori groups identified in Attachment 3			Yes / No
h. Agree to provide the application to and invite comments from the following additional entities/persons under section 17(5): i. Minister for Economic Growth ii. Minister for Regional Development			Yes / No

iii. Chief Executive of The Lines Company iv. Chief Executive of Transpower NZ Ltd	
i. Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence other than to Ministers	Noted
j. Send email inviting Ministers to comment	Yes / No

Signed:

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Appendix 1:

Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Man Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. Give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. Comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s 17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities,
 - b. the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers
 - c. the relevant administering agencies
 - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area:
 - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

**Appendix 2: Application documents for Kuratau Hydro-Electric Power Scheme
Project: (in File Exchange)**

Appendix 3: List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a))
Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa	Treaty settlement entity – Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018 (s18(2)(a))
Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity - Ngāti Hauā Claims Settlement Act 2014 (s18(2)(a))
Raukawa Settlement Trust	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a); Treaty settlement entity – Raukawa Claims Settlement Act 2014 (s18(2)(a))
Ngāti Manunui	Other Māori Groups with relevant interest (s18(2)(k))
Ngāti Parekaawa	Other Māori Groups with relevant interest (s18(2)(k))
Waihi Pukawa Land Trust	Other Māori Groups with relevant interest (s18(2)(k))
Waituhi Kuratau Land Trust	Other Māori Groups with relevant interest (s18(2)(k))