



Expert Panel, Haldon Solar project [FTAA-2508-1097]

By email: Substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Lodestone Energy's application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) for the Haldon Solar project.

I am providing these comments in my capacity as Minister for Energy, under section 53(2)(J) of the Act.

I have considered how this project would support the purpose of the Act, i.e. *to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.*

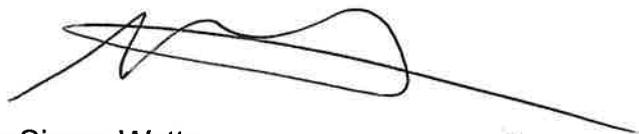
I consider this proposed project has significant national and regional benefits as follows:

- The proposed solar farm and battery storage would make a significant contribution to national electricity supply. The project is expected to generate peak capacity of 220 MW generation, which results in approximately 370 GWh of electricity annually – which would meet the (averaged) energy needs of around 45,000 households.
- The application includes consent for a battery electricity storage system. The coupling of battery storage with solar generation would significantly increase the energy system benefits of the project – enabling storage and more flexible dispatch of electricity.
- More generally, renewable electricity generation of this scale supports multiple outcomes including:
 - contribution to security of energy supply, through increased generation but also diversity of energy generation – the South Island currently does not have much solar generation capacity
 - downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices, which supports more affordable energy for New Zealand firms and households. Affordable energy also has wider flow-on benefits to the wider economy – e.g. by reducing input costs for commercial and industrial energy users
 - contribution to climate change targets, as increasing renewable electricity generation can displace use of fossil fuels in both the

electricity and wider energy systems (e.g. reducing the use of thermal fuels for electricity generation, and supporting increased demand for electricity for sectors such as transport).

I support the Panel's continued consideration of this application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hon Simon Watts
Minister for Energy