

File ref: 26-BRF-02684 / FTAA-2607-1261

29 September 2026

Christina Walker
Harmony Energy NZ #10 Limited (the applicant)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Emily Buckingham
SLR Consulting New Zealand Limited (the agent)
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Christina and Emily

Section 28 – Notice of Decisions on the referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

This notice of decisions is for a referral application received from Harmony Energy NZ #10 Limited (the applicant) for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act).

Project details

The project involves the construction, operation, and maintenance of an extension to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm. The extension would generate up to 50 megawatts of alternating current (MW AC) renewable electricity.

The project area is approximately 95.6 hectares of rural land at Te Aroha West in the Matamata-Piako District, Waikato Region. The project area is located immediately south of the existing Tauhei Solar Farm and spans three land parcels across two titles. The project area is bounded by Mikkelsen Road to the west, Waihekau Road to the south, and is bisected by O'Donoghue Road.

The project comprises:

- a. approximately 115,000 solar panels and associated electricity infrastructure with an installed capacity of approximately 50 MW AC
- b. underground cabling and associated electricity infrastructure to connect the project to Transpower's Waihou Substation and national grid via either the existing Tauhei Solar Farm or a standalone connection
- c. internal access roads, vehicle crossings, earthworks, dewatering and in-stream works primarily for the installation of culverts
- d. security fencing, lighting, monitoring equipment, operational buildings and other operational infrastructure
- e. temporary construction facilities and associated construction activities

- f. landscaping, ecological restoration and planting, including riparian and wetland restoration works
- g. ongoing agricultural activities, including sheep grazing
- h. other ancillary works required to support the construction, operation and maintenance of the solar farm
- i. minor consequential changes to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm consent as required.

The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project, including wildlife approvals sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigations prior to any substantive application:

- a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), including standard freshwater fisheries activities (culverts) as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Act
- b. a change or cancellation of a resource consent condition that would otherwise be applied for under the RMA as described in section 42(4)(b) of the Act
- c. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act.

Statutory framework for referral applications

The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

The project can only be accepted if the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) is satisfied the criteria in section 22 are met, which includes being satisfied the project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits and referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost effective way than under normal processes, and is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Under section 21(3) of the Act, the Minister must decline a referral application if:

- the Minister is satisfied that the project does not meet the criteria in section 22
- the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity
- the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision.

Additionally, the Minister has the discretion to decline a referral application for any other reason, even if the project meets the criteria outlined in section 22 of the Act.

Decision on referral application

The Minister has decided to accept the referral application under section 21(1)(c) and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process under section 26(2)(a). The Minister is satisfied that the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act, for the reasons detailed below.

Reasons for accepting referral application

The Minister is satisfied the project:

- a. is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits; and

- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process –
 - i. would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes; and
 - ii. is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.

Specifically, the Minister is satisfied the project meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act because:

- a. the project, for an extension to an existing solar farm in the Waikato Region, is an infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits [section 22(1)(a)] because it:
 - i. will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [section 22(2)(a)(ii)] by:
 - providing an additional 50 MW AC of renewable electricity generation connected to the national grid through existing infrastructure at the Tauhei Solar Farm and Waihou substation
 - increasing renewable electricity generation capacity and supporting the resilience and reliability of New Zealand's electricity system
 - generating sufficient electricity to power approximately 15,500 households annually
 - ii. will deliver significant economic benefits [section 22(2)(a)(iv)] by:
 - supporting approximately \$21 million in GDP, \$11 million in wages and salaries, and 117 full-time equivalent years of employment during construction
 - representing a substantial private-sector investment in renewable electricity infrastructure
 - contributing to New Zealand's future electricity supply and supporting economic activity through increased renewable generation capacity
 - iii. will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [section 22(2)(a)(vii)] by:
 - increasing the supply of renewable electricity generation
 - reducing reliance on fossil fuel generation
 - avoiding an estimated 53,000 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions annually compared with gas-fired generation
- b. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate its delivery [section 22(1)(b)(i)], including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes as:
 - the scale and complexity of the project, and the potential for notification, hearings, and appeals under standard approval processes, could result in increased costs and longer approval timeframes
 - appeals under the Act are only to the High Court rather than the Environment Court and are limited to points of law
 - the Act precludes public and limited notification

- c. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)(ii)] because:
- the project is an extension of an existing solar farm with key supporting infrastructure already in place
 - while the project raises a range of technical matters, these are matters that would typically be considered through a resource consent process and do not raise novel issues that would be difficult for an expert panel to assess.

The Minister is satisfied there is no reason they must decline the project under section 21(3) of the Act. The Minister is also satisfied there is no reason to decline the project under section 21(4) and (5) of the Act.

Specified matters for accepted referral application

1. Harmony Energy NZ #10 Limited, who lodged the referral application, as the person who is authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project under section 27(2) of the Act.
2. Under section 27(3)(b)(i) of the Act, a deadline of two years from the date of issue of this letter applies for lodging the substantive application.
3. In relation to a substantive application for the project, pursuant to section 27(3)(b)(iii), the panel must invite comments from Ngaati Whanaunga Incorporated Society and Transpower New Zealand Limited, in addition to those specified in section 53.

Other matters

Under section 28 of the Act, the Secretary for the Environment must also give written notice of decisions made by the Minister on an accepted referral application to the parties specified in Appendix 1 of this letter.

If you have any queries about this notice of decisions, please email referral@fasttrack.govt.nz and include the name of the lead contact – Ashiley Sycamore.

If you have any queries about the substantive process, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 225 537).

Yours sincerely



Max-Gander Cooper

Acting Manager – Fast-track Operations

Appendix 1: Section 28 – Notice of Minister’s decision on accepted referral application

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Section 28(1)(a) – The applicant	Harmony Energy NZ #10 Limited
Section 28(1)(ii) – Anyone invited to comment on the application	
<i>Relevant local authorities</i>	Matamata-Piako District Council Waikato Regional Council
<i>Relevant portfolio Ministers</i>	Minister for the Environment Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti Minister for Māori Development Minister of Conservation Minister for Energy
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	Department of Conservation
<i>The Māori groups under s17(d)</i>	Ngāti Hauā Iwi Trust Te Puāwaitanga o Ngāti Hinerangi Trust Ngāti Tumutumu Trust Ngāti Tara Tokanui Trust Hako Tūpuna Trust Ngāti Maru Rūnanga Trust Ngāti Tamaterā Treaty Settlement Trust Te Whakakitenga o Waikato Pare Hauraki Cultural Redress Trust/Pare Hauraki Whenua Limited Partnership/Pare Hauraki Ngahere Limited Partnership Ngaati Whanaunga Incorporated Society
<i>Any other persons under s17(5)</i>	Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited Minister of Climate Change Minister for Regional Development Minister for Economic Growth
Section 28(2) – Other parties for an accepted referral application	
<i>The Panel Convener</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>Any iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities (other than those that must be notified as identified above) that the Minister considers have an interest in the matter</i>	No additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities have been identified beyond those listed above.
<i>Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)</i>	Including all the information received by the Minister as required by section 28(4).
<i>Relevant administering agencies</i>	As identified above.