

Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

Foxton Solar Farm Application [FTAA-2510-1121]

Genesis Energy Limited

Horowhenua District Council (HDC) Response to Panel Convenor

Second document

17 April 2026

1. This memorandum is in relation to the proposed Foxton Solar Farm [FTAA-2810-1121], located between Wall and Motuiti Roads, approximately 5 kms north east of Foxton and east of SH 1, which is filed under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024.
2. HDC has been involved in this project through pre-application discussions with Genesis Energy and the circulation of various materials including viewing a full draft of the application.
3. HDC is continuing to engage with the applicant post lodgement of the application.
4. HDC will be attending a site visit with the applicant and Horizons on 28 April 2026. Mr Auckram undertook a site visit to both Wall and Motuiti Roads on 17 April 2026. Mr Auckram noted the following:
  - The subject site is largely a flat, rural landscape with grass paddocks. It is interspersed with larger stands of mature trees in some areas. There are also rural farm buildings and dwellings spread throughout the area but the dominant impression is of an open, flat rural landscape with rows of mature trees spread about;
  - There are variations in the topography largely caused by east to west running sand dunes, some up to 10 metres high. These were more visible from Wall Road than they were from Motuiti Road. From Wall Road they were more visible, from Motuiti Road the impression was more of a flat, farming landscape;
  - In one area of the site, there are large electricity pylons that run in a line generally from north to south across the paddocks. There are large irrigation spreaders on parts of the land as well.
5. HDC and the applicant have an agreement in place regarding the matter of payment of costs, with agreement regarding invoicing the applicant for any time which cannot be invoiced directly to the EPA.
6. HDC is in the process of reviewing the proposed draft conditions included in the application. It is anticipated that further discussions will occur and an updated set of conditions provided

– if there are any outstanding areas of disagreement then these will be highlighted and the reasons identified.

- There are two conditions that Mr Auckram has highlighted to Genesis. Mr Auckram is comfortable with the conditions, whilst noting there is a reliance on management plans, but that is common practice on larger consents. The two conditions are as follows:
- Condition A15... 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence... in relation to certification of management plans... after receiving Council’s comments... it says the consent holder must consider... but that is all... so what if the Council makes suggestions... based on the wording, the consent holder considers them and if they don’t like them, can ignore them... this sounds like a NoR (Notice of Requirement) process. In the unlikely event of disagreement, should there be an independent person appointed by Council’s Planning Manager and the consent holder to make a decision that is binding on both parties?
- In response to the above, Genesis have said that activities can’t commence until the management plan(s) are certified by Council so there would have to be agreement reached. Genesis have said they are happy to think about wording for appointment of an independent reviewer in the event of a stalemate, which can certainly be useful.
- B22 (l) refers to a maintenance plan and a period of 5 years for what looks like intensive care for the planting. I think the second part of the condition could be written more clearly to make it obvious... eg,

“Beyond the initial 5 year maintenance period, any plants within the boundary planting that die or are diseased must be replaced by the consent holder... etc.”

7. HDC is comfortable with the proposed timeframe in Schedule 1 and support the alternative timeframe put forward by Genesis.
8. HDC is comfortable that the legal, evidentiary and factual complexity of the application is able to be understood.

Overall, the application is comprehensive and covers all of the potential issues that a consent of this type needs to cover. There are no further reports that would be required and management plans aside, there is enough technical information for assessment purposes.

9. HDC have no issues that have arisen during pre or post lodgment consultation and engagement. There are no outstanding issues that need resolving. With respect to the different issues, I comment as follows:

- Noise/Acoustic

The application includes an acoustic assessment. This shows that the application will comply with the District Plan noise limits and associated conditions of consent require

this. In relation to the BESS, there are additional measures in place for noise mitigation should a BESS be constructed and associated conditions of consent. In general, I would note that the RMA is not a zero effects piece of legislation and in relation to noise, there is likely to be some noise, but within the acceptable threshold set in the District Plan. I would also note that solar generation will be during the day when people are out working or farm machinery is typically operating.

- Glare

I note from the glare assessment that there are limited times when glare could be a factor, and that is at the same time when sun could be in your eyes while driving. However, once the landscaping reaches 4 metres, any glare from the solar farm will be eliminated. In many areas, the height of the perimeter vegetation will be higher.

- Earthworks

This is also covered by Horizons. A standard earthworks and sediment control plan is proposed. The application was forwarded to Council's technical teams and their response was that they are comfortable with the application and proposed conditions to deal with any potential effects.

- Geotechnical

The application was forwarded to Council's technical teams and their response was that they are comfortable with the application and proposed conditions to deal with any potential effects.

- Stormwater and Flood risk

The application was forwarded to Council's technical teams and their response was that they are comfortable with the application and proposed conditions to deal with any potential effects.

- Landscape

The application proposes significant perimeter planting that will provide suitable visual mitigation of the solar farm. Whilst this will take several years to reach its desired height, in my experience this is common for landscaping associated with a resource consent or even for District Plan permitted activity compliance. When a development is first built it looks bare and stark, but the landscaping eventually matures and achieves its intended purpose.

- Consultation

In relation to Iwi consultation, Council sought comments from its in-house iwi advisor. She has said the following:

It looks as though the correct parties have been included. There is no mention of Te Tumatakahuki, however, Ngati Rakau, Ngati Turanga and Ngati Te Au were included, and these hapu are all members of Te Tumatakahuki. With the names of the hapu representatives having been redacted, I can't say whether these details are correct. Our approach here at Council, when engaging Te Tumatakahuki is to contact Shayne Royal (Chair of Te Tumatakahuki) and copy in Neville Heihei (Te Tumatakahuki Navigator).

I understand that as part of the Fast Track process, our iwi/hapu partners will be engaged with directly by the EPA, however as part of being a good partner, we should also reach out to them purely to advise them that this has come in and answer any questions they may have.

Consistent with Council's usual approach and the guidance provided by our in-house iwi advisor, we have contacted Shayne Royal, Chair of Te Tumatakahuki, and copied in Neville Heihei, Te Tumatakahuki Navigator, to advise them of the application and ask whether they require any further information. We have also made the applicant aware of this relationship and engagement approach.

- Transport/Traffic

The application was forwarded to Council's technical teams and their response was that they are comfortable with the application and proposed conditions to deal with any potential effects.

- Economic

I accept the conclusions reached in the economic assessment.

- Contaminated Land

Several HAIL sites have been identified on the site and the NESCS applies to the land. However no consent is required under the NESCS.

- Archaeological

No archaeological sites are shown in the District Plan in this location and the archaeological report says no sites are known to be present and it is unlikely any will be exposed during development works. A standard condition covers the eventuality of any being discovered.

10. HDC and Horizons have been working together to provide two agreed names for the panel recommendation. HDC considers that panel members would ideally cover legal, planning and Māori views. HDC does not consider that more than four panel members are necessary.
11. HDC is willing to engage directly with the panel as necessary.
12. HDC assesses that the solar farm may have localized effects that are of concern to immediate neighbours and iwi. HDC takes comfort in the fast track process providing an opportunity for immediate neighbours and iwi to highlight their concerns to the panel.
13. HDC confirms attendance at the Convenors Conference on Tuesday 21 April, and will be represented by Craig Auckram, Senior Planner and Jin Humphreys, Planning Manager.
14. Overall I agree with the applicant in that the proposal is suitable for the proposed location and any potential adverse effects are at an appropriate level and/or can be mitigated for the following reasons:
  - Any potential adverse effects can be appropriately mitigated;
  - The Rural Zone is a working environment with machinery that makes noise on a daily basis;
  - The solar farm operation is busiest when the sun is shining, which is also when people in the rural area are working;
  - The noise from the solar farm will meet appropriate District Plan standards;
  - The landscaping will take time to reach it's desired height for visual mitigation purposes, however this is a common RMA approach with landscaping;
  - Council's technical experts are comfortable with the proposal and conditions;
  - Glare will be minimal when the sun would be in your eyes while driving anyway and once the landscaping reaches 4 metres high it will be eliminated;
  - Consultation has been undertaken with iwi and neighbours.
15. There are no objectives or policies in particular to focus on from District Plan but I would note the following District Plan provisions that may not have been addressed.
  - Under Appendices and Maps;
    - 4.1 APP – Rural Environment Landscape Assessment;
    - 4.4 APP – Schedules, 4.4E, Rural Subdivision and Development Design Guide;
    - 4.5 APP – Assessment Criteria for land use consents in the Rural Zone, S7 General, Assessment Criteria for consents in all zones, S38 Noise, S45 Vehicle Access, S49 Network Utilities and Wind Monitoring Masts, S51 Natural Hazards;
    - 4.7 APP – General Provisions.

I note that while these may not have been addressed in the application, I do not think that they raise any issues that have not already been addressed.

Overall, I consider that the regional and national benefits of the proposal outweigh any potential adverse effects.

If you have any questions regarding this statement, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Craig Auckram', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Craig Auckram

**SENIOR PLANNER**

**HOROWHENUA DISTRICT COUNCIL**

17 April 2026.