



FTAA-2603-1191: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Waiinu Energy Project

Date submitted:	15 April 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-00888	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

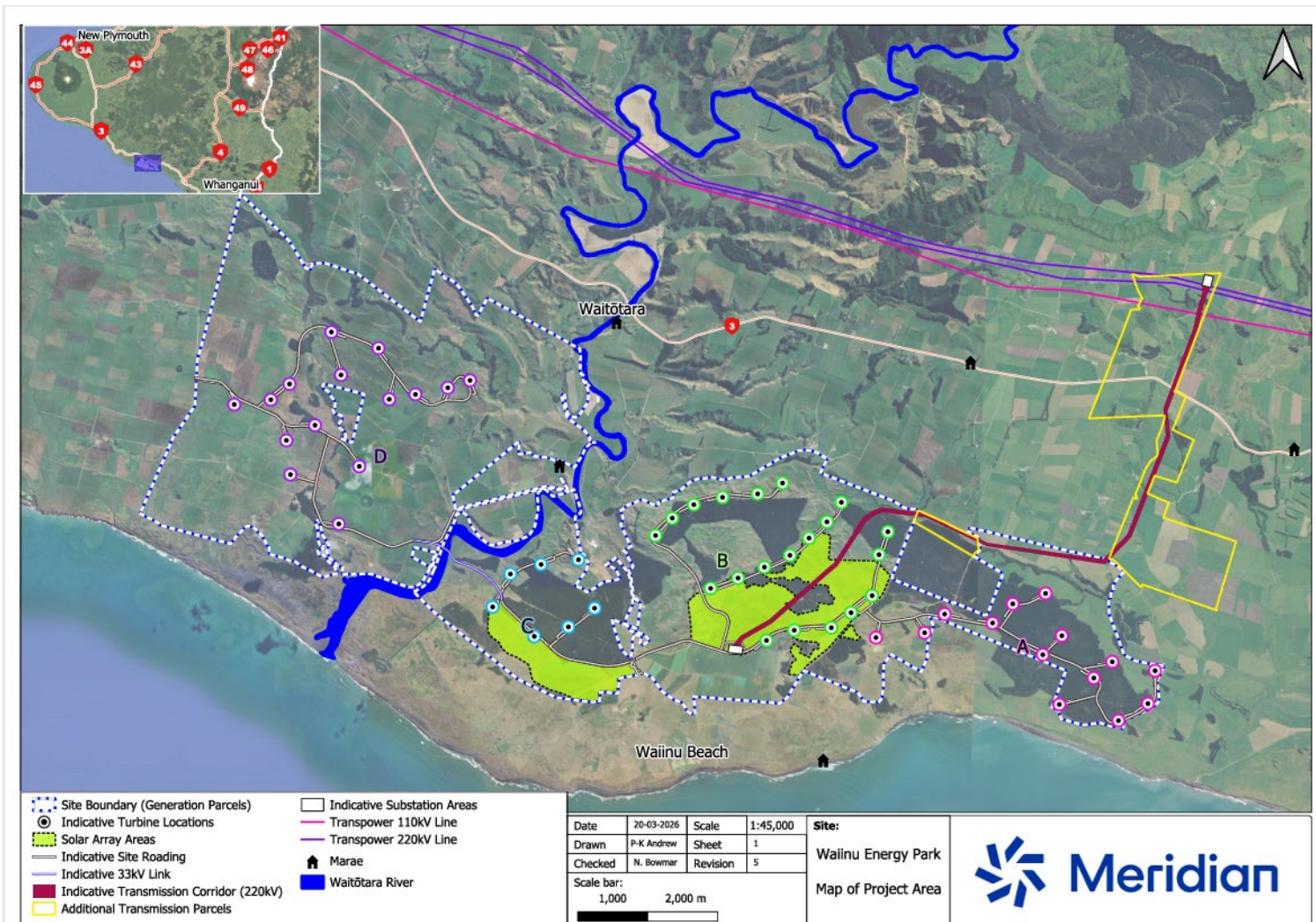
	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	22 April 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Send email to Ministers to invite written comments
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for Waiinu Energy Project (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	Helen Willis		
Acting Manager	Ben Bunting	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Acting General Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location



Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Meridian Energy Limited (the applicant) to refer the Waiinu Energy Project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. As the referral application was lodged on or after 31 March 2026, the provisions of the Fast-track Approvals Amendment Act 2025 are fully in force. This includes the amended time frame for receiving comments under section 17 from invited parties, which is **15 working days (previously 20 working days)**.
3. 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 inform your final decision on whether to refer the project.
4. The project is an integrated renewable energy development located across the boundary of two regions, Taranaki and Manawatū-Whanganui (with the majority in Taranaki), near the township of Waitōtara.

5. The project includes development and operation of:
 - a. a wind farm with up to 65 turbines (up to 250m high) with associated foundations, crane pads and net masts
 - b. a solar farm comprising approximately 510,000 panels over approximately 350 ha, supported by power conversion units, underground cabling and internal access tracks
 - c. a battery energy storage system for storage and supply of electricity to support grid stability
 - d. supporting infrastructure including a 37.5 km internal road network, substations, a 200 kV transmission line connecting to the national grid, operating and maintenance facilities, and security systems.
6. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
 - b. approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
 - c. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
7. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
8. 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.
9. 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:
 - a. the following relevant local authorities:
 - i. Taranaki Regional Council and South Taranaki District Council for the Taranaki region
 - ii. Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council and Whanganui District Council for the Manawatū-Whanganui region
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. the following other relevant portfolio Ministers:
 - i. Minister of Conservation, as the project includes conservation approvals
 - ii. Minister for Energy, as the project proposes benefits to the energy market
 - iii. Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, as the project includes heritage approvals
 - d. the Department of Conservation and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups.
10. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following as additional persons under section 17(5) of the Act:
 - a. Minister for Regional Development, as the project proposes a significant regional

development

- b. Minister for Economic Growth, as the project proposes significant economic growth
 - c. Minister of Climate Change, as the project proposes significant climate change benefits
 - d. Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, as proposed roading connects to State Highway 3
 - e. Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited, as the project would require connection to the National Grid
 - f. Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority, as the project could adversely affect aviation safety via turbines obstructing aircraft
 - g. Chief Executive of KiwiRail Holdings Limited, as rail transport is potentially proposed for containerised equipment required for the project from CentrePort Wellington.
11. We recommend that under section 20 you request further information from the applicant outlining all existing or proposed lease agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works, including a summary of whether the project or its benefits would be affected should no lease(s) be obtained.

Action sought

12. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature



Ben Bunting
Acting Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Area			
	Waiinu Energy Project	Meridian Energy Limited	<p>The project is located across the boundary of two regions, Taranaki and Manawatū-Whanganui (with the majority in Taranaki), near the township of Waitōtara. The project comprises two main areas separated by the Waitōtara River.</p> <p>There are approximately 90 land parcels associated with the project area, included at Appendix 2.</p>			
Project description	<p>The project is described as an integrated renewable energy development including development and operation of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a wind farm with up to 65 turbines (up to 250m high) with associated foundations, crane pads and net masts a solar farm comprising approximately 510,000 panels over approximately 350 ha, supported by power conversion units, underground cabling and internal access tracks a battery energy storage system for storage and supply of electricity to support grid stability supporting infrastructure including a 37.5 km internal road network, substations, a 200 kV transmission line connecting to the national grid, operating and maintenance facilities, and security systems. <p>The project will require the proposed approvals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 authorisation under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. 					
Notification and/or consultation undertaken	<p>As required by section 11, the applicant has:</p>					
	<p><i>Notified in writing, the relevant local authorities</i></p>	<p><i>Notified in writing, the relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities</i></p>	<p><i>Consulted, the relevant MACA groups</i></p>	<p><i>Consulted, ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou</i></p>	<p><i>Notified in writing, the relevant administering agencies</i></p>	<p><i>Notified in writing, the holder of land to be exchanged</i></p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Taranaki Regional Council and South Taranaki District Council for the Taranaki region Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council and Whanganui District Council for the Manawatū-Whanganui region 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi/Te Kaahui o Rauru 	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Conservation Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga 	<p>N/A</p>
Section 22 assessment criteria						
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	<p><i>The Minister must consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</i> No GPS has been identified as relevant to the application.</p> <p>You <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant:</p> <p><i>Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers the project will deliver nationally significant infrastructure in the form of a renewable energy park expected to generate up to 1,760 GWh of electricity per year. This is equivalent to powering approximately 253,000 households and constitutes approximately 3.7% of current national electricity generation. The applicant considers the project will support existing significant infrastructure by supporting grid stability and flexible generation capacity.</p> <p><i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant considers the project will deliver significant economic benefits in the form of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> capital investment of approximately \$1.5 billion annual operational expenditure of approximately \$28 million peak construction employment of 300 – 350 direct full-time equivalent jobs up to 3,000 employed individuals during construction 15-20 ongoing operational jobs and 40-60 indirect jobs in the region reduced electricity price volatility and lower electricity prices due to increased supply. <p><i>Will support primary industries, including aquaculture [s22(2)(a)(v)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support primary industries through the supply of electricity for agricultural processes and services.</p> <p><i>Will support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum [s22(2)(a)(vi)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support development of natural resources through the supply of electricity for mining, quarrying and related processes.</p> <p><i>Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal greenhouse gas emissions by generating large-scale renewable electricity and contributing to decarbonisation.</p>					

	<p><i>Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support climate change adaptation through diversification of electricity supply and distribution. The applicant intends the energy park to continue operation during natural hazard events and enhance national energy resilience during disaster recovery. The applicant considers the proposed battery storage capacity will support management of grid capacity constraints and improve system resilience during periods of peak demand or supply shortage. The applicant considers the project will reduce dry-year risk.</p> <p><i>Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]</i> The applicant considers the project addresses significant environmental issues by contributing to emissions reductions and supporting electrification of the economy.</p> <p><i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant considers the project to be consistent with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation b. Relevant regional policy statements and district plans c. New Zealand Energy Strategy d. New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy e. Emissions Reductions Plan. 		
<p>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</p>	<p><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 referring the project would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed more than 18 months faster than under normal processes where resource consents from four separate local authorities and three statutory pathways would be required. This is in addition to the likelihood of notification and appeals under normal processes which could add significant complexity and time constraints.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers referral is unlikely to materially affect efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process as the project is at an advanced stage of development with a comprehensive suite of technical assessments completed or underway. The applicant is also undertaking ongoing engagement with stakeholders and affected parties. The applicant considers this level of readiness will enable an expert panel to assess the project, if referred, without undue delay.</p>		
<p>Minister invites comments</p>	<p><i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. relevant local authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Taranaki Regional Council and South Taranaki District Council for the Taranaki region ii. Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council and Whanganui District Council for the Manawatū-Whanganui region b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development c. other relevant portfolio Ministers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minister of Conservation, as the project includes conservation approvals ii. Minister for Energy, as the project proposes benefits to the energy market iii. Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, as the project includes heritage approvals d. relevant administering agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Department of Conservation ii. Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga e. the Māori groups identified in Appendix 3. 	<p><i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i></p> <p>We recommend you invite comments from the following additional persons, for the specified reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Minister for Regional Development, as the project proposes a significant regional development b. Minister for Economic Growth, as the project proposes significant economic growth c. Minister of Climate Change, as the project proposes significant climate benefits d. Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, as proposed roading connects to State Highway 3 e. Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited, as the project would require connection to the National Grid f. Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority, as the project could adversely affect aviation safety via turbines obstructing aircraft g. Chief Executive of KiwiRail Holdings Limited, as rail transport is potentially proposed for containerised equipment required for the project from CentrePort Wellington. 	<p><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></p> <p>Further information from the applicant outlining all existing or proposed lease agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works, including a summary on whether the project or its benefits would be affected should no lease(s) be obtained.</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>		<p>Minister's decision</p>	
<p>a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the relevant local authorities, the Minister for the Environment, any relevant Ministers, any relevant administering agencies and the Māori groups identified in the list provided.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>b. Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written 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.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	
<p>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.</p>		<p>Noted</p>	

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 Wainuu Energy Project to our Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).	Yes / No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Agree to provide the application to, and invite written comments from: ii. the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taranaki Regional Council and South Taranaki District Council for the Taranaki region - Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council and Whanganui District Council for the Manawatū-Whanganui region iii. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development under section 17(1)(b) iv. the following other relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minister of Conservation - Minister for Energy - Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage v. Department of Conservation and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies under section 17(1)(c) vi. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups under section 17(1)(d) vii. any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
g. Agree to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minister for Regional Development ii. Minister for Economic Growth iii. Minister of Climate Change iv. Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi v. Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited vi. Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority vii. Chief Executive of KiwiRail Holdings Limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
h. Agree to seek further information from the applicant outlining all existing or proposed lease agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works, including a summary on whether the project or its benefits would be affected should no lease(s) be obtained.	Yes / No
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. Agree to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.	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 Mana 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 s17(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, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. any other relevant portfolio Ministers
 - d. the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - f. the owners of Māori land in the project area (if applicable)
 - g. 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 Waiinu Energy Project

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

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Kaahui o Rauru	Iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngaa Rauru Kaitahi Claims Settlement Act 2005)
Paraninihi ki Waitotara Incorporation (for Lots 1,2,3 DP 313663, Block ID 292107, Aotea)	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
The owners of Section 352 Okotuku District, Block ID 292108, Aotea*	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
The owners of Ihupuku G, Block ID 18000, Aotea*	Other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))

*We do not have contact details for the owners of Section 352 Okotuku District or Ihupuku G, Block ID 18000. The former is surrounded by the project area and the latter directly adjoins the project area.