Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

24 August 2026

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm (**Project**) FTAA-2606-1255

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details

Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.

Organisation name (if relevant)	Transpower New Zealand Limited (**Transpower**)		
***First name**	Andy		
***Last name**	Eccleshall		
Postal address	PO Box 21-154, Edgeware, Christchurch 8143		
***Contact phone number**	s9(2)(a)	**Alternative**	
***Email**	s9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application

Transpower has been identified as "any other person" for the purpose of section 17(5) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about the Project, and its potential impact on National Grid assets.

The project is to construct, operate and maintain the Western Bays Solar Farm and battery storage system (the Project). Transpower is familiar with the three components of the project, being the Solar Farm, Transmission Line Corridor and Grid Injection Point (GIP).

Transpower has a positive and constructive working relationship with Meridian Energy and supports the development of new generation and storage capacity. Transpower has and continues to work with the applicant on the concept and design of the GIP.

Transpower seeks to remain involved in the regulatory approvals process to provide support and any useful guidance where it may be appropriate.

Transpower's attention is focused on the protection of the operating integrity of the Bunnythorpe - Whakamaru A & B 220kV lines during construction and connection of the GIP.

Key considerations

Ensuring compliance with NZECP 34

Proposed structures, roading, alterations to ground level and construction activity must comply with the mandatory separation distances specified in the New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances (NZECP 34).

Maintaining Suitable Access

Transpower require access to the National Grid and line support structures during construction.

Enabling Appropriate Planting

Landscape and amenity planting needs to avoid negative impacts on the operation of the National Grid by balancing screening / amenity needs with operational requirements, while avoiding the need for ongoing vegetation trimming maintenance.

Final comments

Transpower expects that these matters will be addressed as part of the substantive application, and subject to condition of any approval granted.

Transpower would appreciate the opportunity to comment on the substantive application, to provide further advice and ensure the above interests are addressed.

From: Rachel Helme
To: Antonia Croft
Subject: RE: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm
Date: Friday, 16 October 2026 12:39:37 pm
Attachments: image001.png

Hi,
I confirm that there are no competing application/s that have been lodged with the Council.

Sorry, I didn't realise we had to provide a comment to confirm that.

Kind regards,
Rachel

From: Antonia Croft <s 9(2)(a) >
Sent: Friday, 16 October 2026 11:15 am
To: Rachel Helmes 9(2)(a)
Cc: Referral <referral@fasttrack.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm

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[UNCLASSIFIED]

Good morning Rachel,

Thank you for confirming no general comments on this application, however can we please have a response to the following at a minimum, ideally before close of business today:

Under section 17(3) of the Act, a relevant local authority **must** provide comments advising on the following matters:

1. *Any applications that have been lodged with the Council that would be a competing application or applications if a substantive application for the project were lodged. If no such applications exist, please provide written confirmation.*

Regards

Antonia Croft
Advisor
Fast Track (E) | Delivery
Mobile:s9(2)
Email:s9(2)(a)

Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions & Transport
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[UNCLASSIFIED]

From: Rachel Helmes9(2)(a) >
Sent: Friday, 16 October 2026 10:59 am
To: Antonia Crofts9(2)(a) >
Subject: RE: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm

Hi Antonia,
Thanks for your email. TDC has reviewed the Western Bays Solar Farm application and doesn't have any comments.
Thanks for your help

Nga mihi,

Rachel

Rachel Helme Resource Consents Planner Technical Specialist

Taupō District Council • 46 Horomatangi Street, Taupō 3330
Private Bag 2005 • Taupō Mail Centre • Taupō 3352 • New Zealand
Ds9(2) T +64 7 376 0899 Es
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My office hours are Monday-Friday 9am – 3pm.

From: Antonia Crofts9(2)(a) >
Sent: Friday, 16 October 2026 9:28 am
To: Rachel Helme <s9(2)(a) >; Julie Gardynes9(2)(a) z>
Cc: Referral <referral@fasttrack.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm

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[UNCLASSIFIED]

Good morning Rachel and Julie,

Just letting you know if you experience any issues using the portal to provide your comments for the Western Bays Solar Farm application you are welcome to email these to me directly.

Regards

Antonia Croft
Advisor
Fast Track (E) | Delivery
Email: s 9(2)(a)



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[UNCLASSIFIED]

From: Antonia Croft
Sent: Monday, 28 September 2026 11:07 am
To: 'Rachel Helme s9(2)(a) >
Cc: Referral <referral@fasttrack.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm

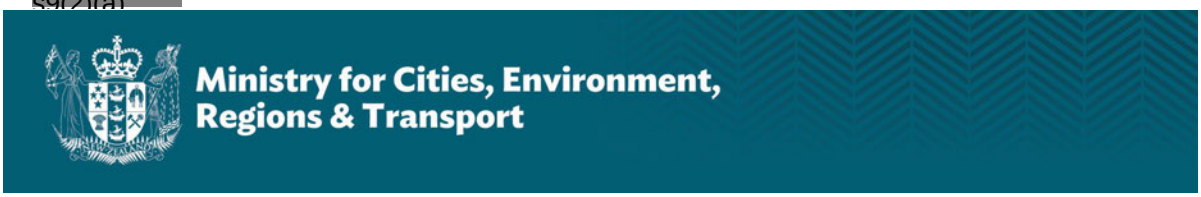
Good morning Rachel,

Thank you for confirming receipt of the information.

If you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me

Regards

Antonia Croft
Advisor
Fast Track (E) | Delivery
Mobile: s9(2)
Email: s9(2)(a)



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From: Rachel Helme s9(2)(a) >
Sent: Friday, 25 September 2026 9:09 am
To: Antonia Croft <s9(2)(a)
Subject: Fast track applications - Western bays solar farm

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Hi Antonia,
Thank you for your service request regarding a fast track application for the Western bays solar farm. Julie Gardnyne will be the contact for TDC. Julie advises that she received an email yesterday (the 23rd of September) on this fast track application – thank you.

Julie's details are below:
Julie Gardyne Chief Executive – Tumu Whakarae

Taupō District Council • 30 Tongariro Street, Taupō 3330
Private Bag 2005 • Taupō Mail Centre • Taupō 3352 • New Zealand
T s M s 9(2)(a) E s
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Please let me know if you need anything further. Thanks

Nga mihi,

Rachel

Rachel Helme Resource Consents Planner Technical Specialist

Taupō District Council • 46 Horomatangi Street, Taupō 3330
Private Bag 2005 • Taupō Mail Centre • Taupō 3352 • New Zealand
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Any views expressed are those of the sender only unless expressly stated to be those of Taupō District Council.

Invitation to provide written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

You have been invited to provide written comments to the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) on an application to refer a project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process.

Please upload comments directly via the portal by completing this template.

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

Written comments must be received by MfE, on behalf of the Minister for Infrastructure, no later than the due date.

Important information

Your personal information will be held by MfE and be used in relation to the project application and process. You have the right to access and correct personal information held by MfE.

A copy of your comments, including all personal information, will be provided to the Minister and the applicant.

If you are a corporate entity making comments on this application, your full contact details will be publicly available.

For individuals, your name will be publicly available, but your contact details (phone number, address, and email) will not be publicly available.

A copy of your comments will also be published on the Fast-track website. If you believe any of the information you have provided is confidential or sensitive and should be withheld from publication, please highlight the information concerned and provide an explanation to support your request for withholding it. Your comment and explanation will be decided by the Ministry on whether to withhold the information from publication.

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All information held by MfE is subject to the Official Information Act 1982.

More information on the fast-track approvals process and providing comments can be found at Process overview | Fast-track website

Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details

Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.

Organisation name (if relevant)	Waikato Regional Council		
***First name**	Miffy		
***Last name**	Foley		
Postal address	Private Bag 3038 Waikato Mail Centre Hamilton 3240		
***Contact phone number**	s9(2)(a)	**Alternative**	
***Email**	s9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application

Waikato Regional Council (WRC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on this application referral under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act).

The comments outlined below are grouped into three sections and respond to the following matters:

- Matters under section 17(3)(a) of the Act that a local authority must provide comment on (**PART A**);
- An invitation for WRC to consider if the "project may involve an ineligible activity (as defined in section 5 of the Act)" and if "any of the reasons to decline (under section 21(5) of the Act) a referral application may be applicable to this application" (**PART B**);
- Additional comments, under section 17(3)(b) of the Act, relevant to the proposal (**PART C**).

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PART A – SECTION 17(3)(a)

Are there any applications that have been lodged with the Council that would be a competing application or applications if a substantive application for the project were lodged?

As of the date of this response, WRC is not aware of any competing applications.

Are there any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) could apply, if the project were to be applied for as a resource consent under the RMA?

WRC can confirm that as of the date of this response, there are no competing applications or existing resource consents to which section 124C(1)(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) would apply if the approvals sought were to be applied for as a resource consent under that Act. Further, WRC can confirm that 165ZI of the RMA does not apply because the proposed project is not located in the common marine and coastal area in accordance with the Waikato Regional Coastal Plan (proposed or operative).

PART B – SECTION 5 and 21(5)

Does the project involve an ineligible activity (as defined in section 5 of the Act)?

WRC does not consider that the proposal involves an ineligible activity.

Are any of the reasons to decline (under section 21(5) of the Act) a referral application applicable?

WRC does not consider that any of the reasons to decline a referral application are applicable.

PART C – SECTION A17(3)(b)

In addition to the above comments, we highlight the following points for consideration. These must be addressed in any subsequent substantive application to enable a more detailed review.

Waikato Regional Policy Statement

High class soils and highly productive land

We note that a Land Use Capability Assessment (LUC) was not provided as part of the application.

Much of the proposed site is located on LUC class 3 land. Some primary production activity (sheep grazing) is proposed as part of the development, which WRC supports.

Under the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (WRPS), LUC classes 3e1 and 3e5 are defined as 'high class soils'. Similarly, the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) classifies LUC class 3 as 'highly productive land'. While recent amendments provide an exemption for LUC class 3, this is subject to a resource consent application for subdivisions, use or development (clause 3.5(7)(b)(iii)).

In addition, clause 3.9(2)(j) is relevant in relation to specified infrastructure. This clause requires that any use or development on highly productive land demonstrates a *functional or operational* need to be located on that land.

Ecology

Wetlands

The Ecological Assessment identifies three small wetlands and concludes they are of negligible ecological value. Any substantive application should provide further information outlining the basis for this conclusion. Any substantive application should also include:

- Further details on the change in water flow into the wetlands.
- Details of appropriate sediment and erosion controls to protect the wetlands during development.
- Details of fencing or other methods to ensure stock do not enter the wetlands.

Indigenous biodiversity

The site is largely modified grazed pasture with areas of shelterbelts. While little indigenous vegetation remains, this vegetation still provides habitat for indigenous fauna. Indigenous vegetation adjoining SNA 062 in the southeastern corner of the site should be retained and enhanced.

Any substantive application should include:

- Bat management plan.
- Bird management plan.
- Lizard incidental discovery plan. If indigenous vegetation in the southeast corner is impacted, a lizard management plan should be provided.
- Vegetation clearance and establishment plan, including wetland management where appropriate.
- Pest and weed management plan.

As noted in the Ecological Assessment, solar panels may pose a collision risk to birds and bats. Post-installation carcass monitoring is recommended to detect and quantify any fatalities. Monitoring requirements should be included in the bird and bat managements plans, and recommended as a condition of consent.

Contaminated land

The application refers to a Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI), Detailed Site Investigation (DSI), and Contaminated Soils Management and Remediation Plan. However, it is noted that these documents were not included as part of the referral application.

The application acknowledges the presence of HAIL related activities and identifies 28 contamination features, and notes that three contaminated soil areas will require remediation and management.

Any substantive application should include:

- The investigations and plan mentioned above.
- Identification and mapping of contaminated areas and HAIL features.

- Assessment of potential effects on groundwater, surface water and receiving environments.
- Proposed remediation and contaminated soil management measures.
- Procedures for handling stockpiling, transporting and disposing of contaminated material.
- Erosion, sediment and dust controls associated with contaminated soil disturbance.
- Validation and verification procedures to demonstrate remediation outcomes where remediation is proposed.

Waikato Regional Plan

We generally agree with the consents identified by the applicant, required by WRC under the RMA. We make the following comments to clarify these matters and assist decision-making.

The below matters will need to be further addressed and/or closed out via the applicant's assessment of environmental effects (AEE), should the application proceed to the substantive stage.

Earthworks

We agree that earthworks are unlikely to trigger the requirement for land use consent for earthworks. The applicant intends to undertake earthworks in accordance with an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP). WRC supports this approach to minimize the potential for sediment runoff from exposed surfaces.

Cleanfilling

We understand cleanfill may be imported to the site for access tracking and possible levelling and contouring. If volumes exceed the WRP Rule 5.2.5.4 volume limit of 2,500 cubic metres per annum, consent will be required under Rule 5.2.5.5 as a controlled activity.

Dewatering

Given the location and soil types, we consider that trenching for cable installation is unlikely to intersect groundwater and therefore is unlikely to require resource consent.

Ground water take

There is an existing bore (72_10233) on the farm property with a water take authorised by consent AUTH14134101.01, used for dairy shed purposes. The technical assessment for AUTH141341.01.01 in 2020 did not raise any concerns regarding bore interference risk, stream depletion risk or the cumulative level of allocation for the relevant hydraulically connected Waikato River main stem catchments. With this being the case, it can be assumed a new groundwater take via 72_10233 with the same or similar limits and for a duration that is longer than the December 2030 expiry for AUTH141341.01.01 should likely not pose any concerns in terms of those matters.

The application does not specify maximum daily and annual volumes that will be required to construct and operate the solar farm. We note that other solar farm proposals have provided assessments of water requirement volumes to support groundwater take applications, which consider daily and seasonal water requirement variability during both the solar farm construction period and operation period. This information is very helpful for application evaluation by WRC,

and we recommend a similar approach for this project to ensure the water requirements being sought result in efficient allocation of water resources.

Stormwater management

The land is described as generally flat, free-draining, pumice land currently under pasture and used for dairy farming. There are grassed swales that convey surface runoff from the property in heavy rain fall events presumably to adjacent unnamed tributaries, including a tributary of the Kotukutuku Stream. Rainfall runoff from solar panels and tracking should not increase the potential for erosion of the pumice soils and tributary gully heads.

Potential discharge of contaminants

Providing the substation/transformers are appropriately bunded and intercepted, the requirement for stormwater consent under the WRP for these utilities is unlikely to be triggered.

Acid sulphate soils

The Waikato maps acid sulfate soil layer confirms that there is a negligible probability of the occurrence of acid sulfate soils within the property.

Land Improvement Agreement

It is noted that the site is subject to a Land Improvement Agreement (LIA). As required by the LIA, WRC (Taupō office) should be consulted with regarding any proposed tree removal and replanting and this consultation should be supplied as part of the substantive application.

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR ANY SUBSTANTIVE APPLICATION

WRC requests the following information as part of any substantive application, should it be referred:

a. Assessment against the NPS-HPL.
b. Detailed Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA).
c. Bat Management Plan.
d. Bird Management Plan.
e. Lizard Incidental Discovery Plan, and a Lizard Management Plan, if required.
f. Vegetation Clearance and Establishment Plan.
g. Pest and Weed Management Plan.
h. Preliminary Site Investigation (PSI).
i. Detailed Site Investigation (DSI).
j. Contaminated Soils Management and Remediation Plan.
k. Details of consultation with WRC (Taupo Office) given the existence of a Land Improvement Agreement (LIA) on the subject site.
l. Whilst WRC has undertaken a preliminary assessment of potential consent requirements, confirmation is required to detail the exact consents sought for each activity.

Insert Fast-track logo

m. Conditions of consent commensurate with the level of effects of each activity for which consent is sought.

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

Managers signoff



AnaMaria d'Aubert Date 28 August 2026

Outlook

FW: Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

From Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Date Fri 21/08/2026 10:33 AM
To FTAreferrals <FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz>

From: Paul Goldsmith (MIN) <P.Goldsmith@ministers.govt.nz>
Sent: Friday, 21 August 2026 9:57 am
To: Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

No comment from ACH.

Thank you,

Office of Hon Paul Goldsmith
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage | Minister of Justice
Minister for Media and Communications | Minister for Pacific Peoples
Minister for Defence | Minister for GCSB and NZSIS
Minister for Space | Minister for Veterans
Minister for Public Service and Digitising Government | Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Email p.goldsmith@ministers.govt.nz | www.beehive.govt.nz
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

---

From: Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2026 9:11 am
To: Nicola Willis (MIN) <N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz>; Shane Jones (MIN) <S.Jones@ministers.govt.nz>; Nicola Grigg (MIN) <N.Grigg@ministers.govt.nz>; Tama Potaka (MIN) <T.Potaka@ministers.govt.nz>; Paul Goldsmith (MIN) <P.Goldsmith@ministers.govt.nz>; Simeon Brown (MIN) <S.Brown@ministers.govt.nz>; Simon Watts (MIN) <S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz>
Cc: FTAreferrals <ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz>
Subject: Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

To:

- Minister for Economic Growth
- Minister for Regional Development
- Minister for the Environment
- Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti
- Minister for Māori Development

- Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Minister for Energy
- Minister of Climate Change

Dear Ministers,

Hon Chris Bishop, the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister), has asked for me to write to you on his behalf.

The Minister has received an application from Meridian Energy Limited for referral of the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process (application reference FTAA- 2606-1255).

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

Invitation to comment on referral application

I write in accordance with section 17 of the Act to invite you to provide written comments on the referral application. I have provided summary details of the project below.

If you wish to provide written comments, these must be received by **return email** within **15 working days** of receipt of this email, being **31 August 2026**. The Minister is not required to consider information received outside of this time frame. Any comments submitted will contribute to the Minister's decision on whether to accept the referral application and to refer the project.

If you do not wish to provide comments, please let us know as soon as possible so we can proceed with processing the application without delay.

If the Minister decides to accept the application and to refer the project, the Applicant will need to complete any preliminary steps required under the Act and then lodge their substantive application for the approvals needed for the project. An expert panel will be appointed to decide the substantive application.

Process

The application documents are accessible through the Fast-track portal. Please note that application documents may contain commercially sensitivity information and should not be shared widely. If you haven't used the portal before, you can request access by emailing ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz. Once you are registered and have accepted the terms and conditions, you will receive a link to view the documents. Existing users will be able to see application documents via the request when logging into the portal. Should you need for your agency to provide any supplementary information, a nominated person can be provided access to the portal, access can be requested by emailing ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz.

To submit your comments on the application, you can either provide a letter or complete the attached template for written comments and return it by replying to this email, infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz.

Before the due date, if you have any queries about this email or need assistance with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz. Further information is available at https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/.

Important Information

Please note that all comments received from Ministers invited to comment will be subject to the Official Information Act 1982. Comments received will be proactively released at the time the Minister for Infrastructure makes a referral decision, unless the Minister providing comments advises the Minister for Infrastructure's office they are to be withheld, at the time they are submitted.

If a Conflict of Interest is identified by the Minister providing comments at any stage of providing comments, please inform my office and the Cabinet Office immediately. The Cabinet Office will provide

advice and, if appropriate, initiate a request to the Prime Minister to agree to a transfer of the project/portfolio invite to another Minister (a request to transfer a COI from one Minister to another can take 1-7 days).

Project summary

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm
Applicant	Meridian Energy Limited
Location	Kuratau, Waikato
Project description	The project is for the development, operation and maintenance of a solar farm and battery energy storage system occupying approximately 620 hectares. The project includes: a. a solar farm comprising solar photovoltaic panels, inverters and power conversion units, with a generation capacity of up to 420 megawatts (MW); b. a battery energy storage system (BESS), with a storage capacity of approximately 250 MW / 2,000 megawatt-hours (MWh), for the storage and supply of electricity to support grid stability and security of supply; c. a 33 kilovolt (kV) underground electricity network, a 33/220 kV onsite substation, operational facilities, buildings, perimeter fencing and mitigation planting; d. sheep grazing beneath the solar panels; e. a 220 kV double-circuit transmission line approximately 9.7 kilometres long, supported by towers up to 60 metres high, connecting the solar farm substation to the Grid Injection Point; f. a 220 kV Grid Injection Point (GIP) connecting the project to Transpower's Bunnythorpe–Whakamaru A and B 220 kV transmission lines; g. associated construction activities, including earthworks, vegetation clearance, laydown areas, access works, road widening and supporting infrastructure; and h. groundwater take and use from an existing bore during construction and operation

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Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance
Minister for Economic Growth
Minister for Social Investment

24 AUG 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

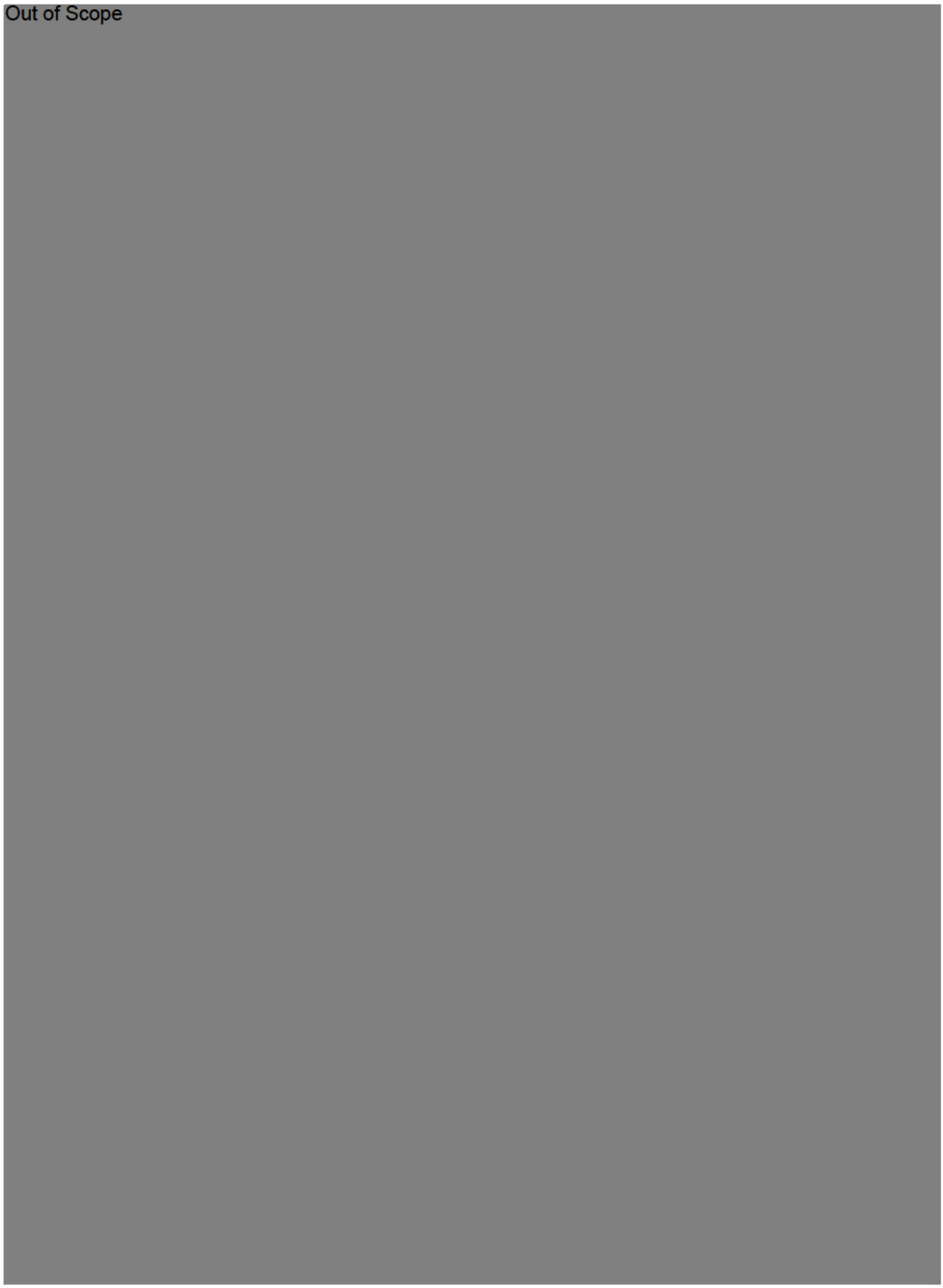
REQ-0037965

Dear Chris

Thank you for the opportunity to comment under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 on the referral applications for Out of Scope Out of Scope Western Bays Solar Farm (FTAA-2606-1255), Out of Scope and Out of Scope

I am providing these comments in my capacity as Minister for Economic Growth. They focus on whether each application is likely to deliver significant economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act, based on the information provided by the applicants. The quantitative estimates below are drawn from economic assessments supplied by the applicants.

Out of Scope



Western Bays Solar Farm, FTAA-2606-1255

The application is for the construction, operation and maintenance of a utility-scale solar farm on the western side of Lake Taupō, at Karangahape Road, Kuratau. The project would provide

up to 420 MW of solar generation across 620 hectares of operational dairy farmland, with photovoltaic panels, battery energy storage systems, an onsite 33/220 kV substation and a double-circuit transmission line and grid injection point connecting to Transpower's Bunnythorpe-Whakamaru lines.

Meridian estimates construction would require $800 million of capital investment. The project would directly support between 60 and a peak of 280 FTE jobs during the approximately five-year construction period. Construction GDP and wages are also not provided.

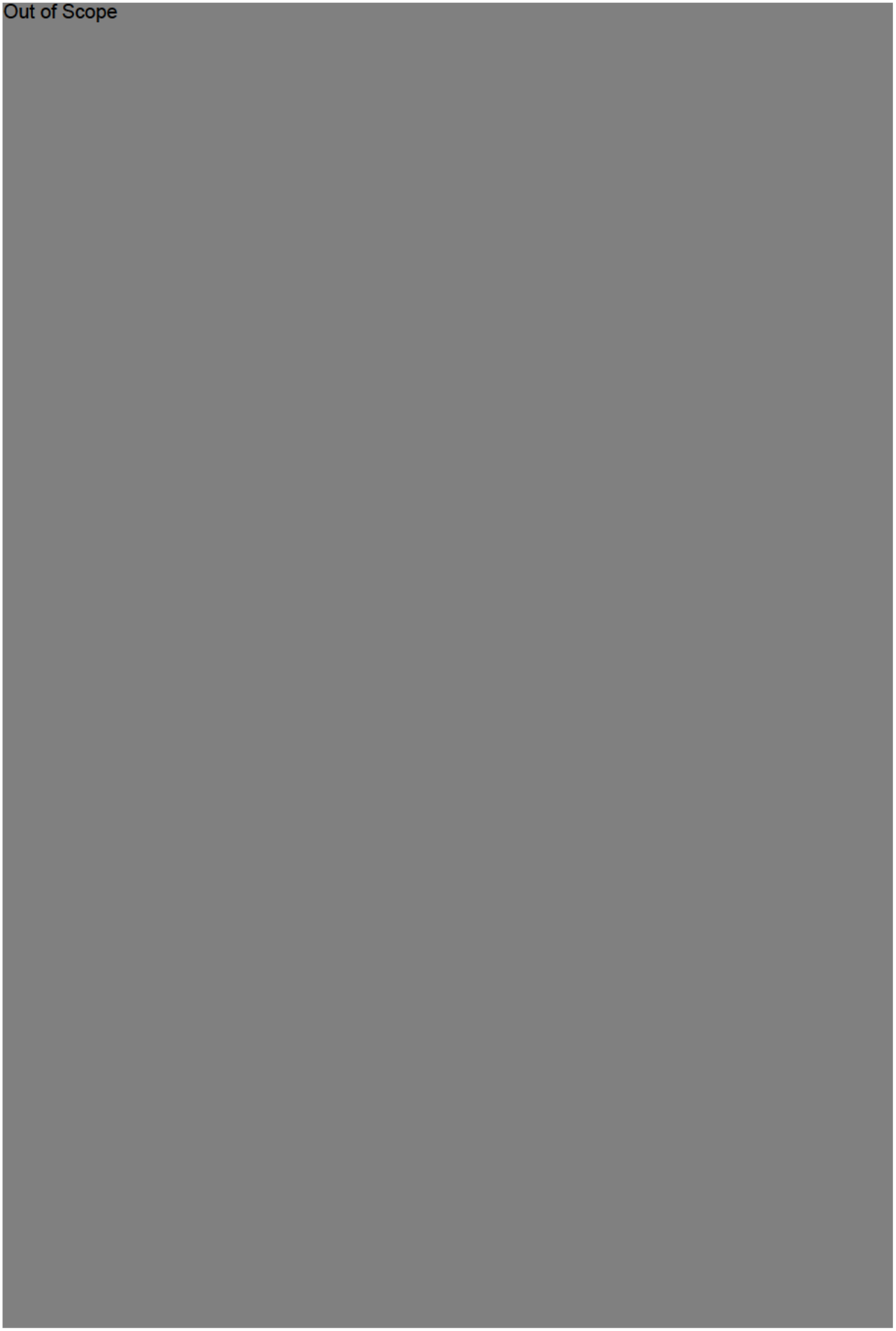
Once operational, the project is estimated to incur annual operating expenditure of $13.5 million over an operating life of more than 35 years, and directly support between 6 and 20 FTE jobs locally. This employment would be partly offset by a minor reduction in on-farm employment as the land changes from dairy farming to sheep grazing. It does not quantify net employment effects or provide estimates of ongoing GDP, wages or revenue.

The project is anticipated to generate approximately 870 GWh of electricity each year, equivalent to 2.1 per cent of New Zealand's current electricity generation. The proposed battery energy storage system would provide a little over 250 MW of capacity for eight hours, equivalent to approximately 2,000 MWh of storage. The additional generation and storage could help meet increasing electricity demand, manage capacity-related security-of-supply and dry-year risks, and bring electricity prices closer to the long-run marginal cost of new generation. These wider benefits would primarily be national, while construction employment and expenditure would provide more immediate regional and local benefits.

On balance, the proposal appears likely to have significant national economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act, particularly through the scale of investment, additional renewable generation and battery storage, and potential contribution to electricity security and resilience. It may also provide significant but time-limited regional benefits through construction activity and direct employment.

Out of Scope




Out of Scope

Out of Scope

Yours sincerely



Hon Nicola Willis
Minister for Economic Growth

Hon Simeon Brown

Minister of Health
Minister for Energy
Minister for State Owned Enterprises

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Chris

Fast-track Approvals Act referral application: Western Bays Solar Farm, FTAA-2606-1255

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application for referral under the Fast-track Approvals Act (the Act).

Demand for electricity is expected to increase by 70–170% of current levels by 2050. Electricity supply – generation, transmission, and distribution – needs to meet this rising demand. Without this increase, we risk an unreliable and costly electricity supply and our ability to electrify our economy away from fossil fuels.

Meridian Energy Limited proposes a large-scale solar farm, which would be a significant contribution to New Zealand's energy system. At 420 MW peak capacity, it would be New Zealand's largest solar farm by peak generation capacity if commissioned.

The proposed inclusion of a 250 MW capacity battery, with up to eight hours of storage, will significantly increase the energy system benefits of the solar generation, enabling load shifting to improve security of supply and produce power at times with high wholesale prices.

I therefore consider that this project will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure, as per s22(2)(a)(ii) of the Act, in the form of large-scale energy generation.

I note that other ministers and agencies are better placed to advise on other grounds for referral.

Yours sincerely



Hon Simeon Brown
Minister for Energy

Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand | +64 4 817 6804 | s.brown@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Tama Potaka

Minister of Conservation
Minister for Māori Crown Relations
Minister for Māori Development
Minister for Whānau Ora
Associate Minister of Housing

By email: infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister Bishop,

Invitation to comment on the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Western Bays Solar Farm project under section 17 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.

I have considered the application and its alignment with my portfolios as Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and Minister for Māori Development.

I support the application progressing and I encourage the applicant and the panel to have due regard to:

- relevant Treaty settlement legislation and instruments; and
- any feedback received from relevant Māori groups, as set out in the Treaty settlements and other obligations (Section 18) report.

Nāku noa, nā

Hon Tama Potaka
Te Minita mō Te Arawhiti me Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori
Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and Minister for Māori Development

Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand | +64 4 817 6811 | t.potaka@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Shane Jones

Minister for Oceans and Fisheries
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Resources
Associate Minister of Finance
Associate Minister for Energy

28 August 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Western Bays Solar Farm application (FTAA-2606-1255)

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this referral application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA 2024).

The FTAA 2024 has been established to provide a regime that makes it easier and quicker for regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects to gain the approvals needed for development, in support of this Government's economic growth objectives.

I have considered the application and its alignment with the priorities of my Regional Development portfolio. My comments are attached as Annex One.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Regional Development

Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand | +64 4 817 6826 | s.jones@ministers.govt.nz

Annex One – Regional Development comments

Project overview

1. Meridian Energy Limited has applied for Fast-track approval for the Western Bays Solar Farm project. The project entails the construction, operation and maintenance of a large-scale solar farm on an approximately 620-hectare site at Karangahape Road, Kuratau, above Lake Taupō.

2. The project would include solar panels, battery storage, an on-site substation, a 9.7-kilometre transmission line, and a grid injection point connecting to Transpower's Bunnythorpe-Whakamaru lines.

3. The applicant states the project would have capacity of up to 420 megawatts and is anticipated to generate 870 gigawatt hours of electricity per year, equivalent to around 2.1 per cent of New Zealand's current generation. The applicant describes the project as one of the largest solar developments proposed in New Zealand to date.

4. The applicant states that the project would increase renewable electricity generation, help meet future electricity demand, and contribute to managing dry-year risk. The applicant also states that additional generation from the project may help reduce pressure on future electricity prices.

5. High-level economic analysis provided by the applicant states that the project will:

    a. provide one-off benefits to the region over the expected 5-year build period of:

        i. capital investment of around $758 million

        ii. a peak on-site workforce of around 280 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs

    b. once operational, generate annual operational costs of around $14.3 million over a 35 plus year operating life and require 6–20 direct FTE jobs onsite or within the local area to maintain and operate the plant

    c. maintain productive use of the site through sheep grazing under the solar panels.

6. The economic assessment does not quantify contribution to GDP, wages or indirect or induced economic impacts.

Regional Development comments

7. Based on the information provided by the applicant, I consider the project may be regionally significant. While quantified employment effects are modest at the Waikato regional scale, the project's stronger significance is its contribution to regionally and nationally significant infrastructure, which may support economic activity by increasing electricity supply, storage, resilience and affordability.

8. A peak workforce of 280 would equal about 1.3 per cent of filled jobs in Taupō District and 0.1 per cent in the Waikato region, indicating a potentially significant district-level employment benefit but a modest regional impact.

9. Increased electricity generation can benefit regional New Zealand by supporting reliable supply, business investment and economic activity. If it helps reduce pressure on electricity prices, it may also improve affordability for regional communities.

10. Comment on the impact of the proposed project on New Zealand's energy system should come from the Minister for Energy.

Outlook

FW: NGCOR3286 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

From Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Date Wed 19/08/2026 5:15 PM
To FTAreferrals <FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz>

From: Environment Portfolio <Environment.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Wednesday, 19 August 2026 4:32 PM
To: Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Subject: RE: NGCOR3286 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

Kia ora koutou,

Minister Grigg does not wish to provide comment on FTAA-2606-1255.

Best wishes,
Stephen

Stephen Piva
Private Secretary (Cover) – Environment | Office of Hon Nicola Grigg
Minister for the Environment | Minister of State for Trade and Investment
Minister for Women | Associate Minister for ACC | MP for Selwyn

Mobile: 0212 812 550 Email: stephen.piva@parliament.govt.nz Website: www.beehive.govt.nz
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

From: Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>
Sent: Monday, 10 August 2026 9:11 am
To: Nicola Willis (MIN) <N.Willis@ministers.govt.nz>; Shane Jones (MIN) <S.Jones@ministers.govt.nz>; Nicola Grigg (MIN) <N.Grigg@ministers.govt.nz>; Tama Potaka (MIN) <T.Potaka@ministers.govt.nz>; Paul Goldsmith (MIN) <P.Goldsmith@ministers.govt.nz>; Simeon Brown (MIN) <S.Brown@ministers.govt.nz>; Simon Watts (MIN) <S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz>
Cc: FTAreferrals <ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz>
Subject: NGCOR3286 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2606-1255

To:

- Minister for Economic Growth
- Minister for Regional Development
- Minister for the Environment
- Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti
- Minister for Māori Development
- Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Minister for Energy
- Minister of Climate Change

Dear Ministers,

Hon Chris Bishop, the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister), has asked for me to write to you on his behalf.

The Minister has received an application from Meridian Energy Limited for referral of the Western Bays Solar Farm project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process (application reference FTAA- 2606-1255).

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

Invitation to comment on referral application

I write in accordance with section 17 of the Act to invite you to provide written comments on the referral application. I have provided summary details of the project below.

If you wish to provide written comments, these must be received by **return email** within **15 working days** of receipt of this email, being **31 August 2026**. The Minister is not required to consider information received outside of this time frame. Any comments submitted will contribute to the Minister's decision on whether to accept the referral application and to refer the project.

If you do not wish to provide comments, please let us know as soon as possible so we can proceed with processing the application without delay.

If the Minister decides to accept the application and to refer the project, the Applicant will need to complete any preliminary steps required under the Act and then lodge their substantive application for the approvals needed for the project. An expert panel will be appointed to decide the substantive application.

Process

The application documents are accessible through the Fast-track portal. Please note that application documents may contain commercially sensitivity information and should not be shared widely. If you haven't used the portal before, you can request access by emailing ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz. Once you are registered and have accepted the terms and conditions, you will receive a link to view the documents. Existing users will be able to see application documents via the request when logging into the portal. Should you need for your agency to provide any supplementary information, a nominated person can be provided access to the portal, access can be requested by emailing ftareferrals@mfe.govt.nz.

To submit your comments on the application, you can either provide a letter or complete the attached template for written comments and return it by replying to this email, infrastructure.portfolio@parliament.govt.nz.

Before the due date, if you have any queries about this email or need assistance with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz. Further information is available at https://www.fasttrack.govt.nz/.

Important Information

Please note that all comments received from Ministers invited to comment will be subject to the Official Information Act 1982. Comments received will be proactively released at the time the Minister for Infrastructure makes a referral decision, unless the Minister providing comments advises the Minister for Infrastructure's office they are to be withheld, at the time they are submitted.

If a Conflict of Interest is identified by the Minister providing comments at any stage of providing comments, please inform my office and the Cabinet Office immediately. The Cabinet Office will provide advice and, if appropriate, initiate a request to the Prime Minister to agree to a transfer of the project/portfolio invite to another Minister (a request to transfer a COI from one Minister to another can take 1-7 days).

Project summary

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm
Applicant	Meridian Energy Limited
Location	Kuratau, Waikato
Project description	The project is for the development, operation and maintenance of a solar farm and battery energy storage system occupying approximately 620 hectares. The project includes: a. a solar farm comprising solar photovoltaic panels, inverters and power conversion units, with a generation capacity of up to 420 megawatts

	(MW); b. a battery energy storage system (BESS), with a storage capacity of approximately 250 MW / 2,000 megawatt-hours (MWh), for the storage and supply of electricity to support grid stability and security of supply; c. a 33 kilovolt (kV) underground electricity network, a 33/220 kV onsite substation, operational facilities, buildings, perimeter fencing and mitigation planting; d. sheep grazing beneath the solar panels; e. a 220 kV double-circuit transmission line approximately 9.7 kilometres long, supported by towers up to 60 metres high, connecting the solar farm substation to the Grid Injection Point; f. a 220 kV Grid Injection Point (GIP) connecting the project to Transpower's Bunnythorpe–Whakamaru A and B 220 kV transmission lines; g. associated construction activities, including earthworks, vegetation clearance, laydown areas, access works, road widening and supporting infrastructure; and h. groundwater take and use from an existing bore during construction and operation

Your written comments on a project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

1. Contact Details

Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.

Organisation name	Director-General of Conservation Statutory delegations are in place for the Department of Conservation (DOC / the Department) to provide commentary on behalf of the D-G.		
***First name**	Amelia		
***Last name**	Wilkinson		
Postal address			
***Contact phone number**	Out of Scope	**Alternative**	
***Email**	Fast-track@doc.govt.nz; Out of Scope		

2. Please provide your comments on this application

If you need more space, please attach additional pages. Please include your name, page numbers and the project name on the additional pages.

PTO

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

Manager's signoff

Lynn Hansberry 27 August 2026

Director-General of Conservation s17 comments

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm
Applicant name	Meridian Energy Limited
Application number	FTAA-2606-1255
Project summary details	The project is for the development, operation and maintenance of a solar farm and battery energy storage system occupying approximately 620 hectares near Kuratau, in the Waikato region. The project will require the proposed approvals: • consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 • an archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

1 Overview of comments

1.1.1 In accordance with section 17(5) of the Act, the Director-General of Conservation has been invited to comment on the referral application, including on the following matter:

As the project site includes titles that refer to Part IVA of the Conservation Act 1987, [...] confirmation is sought as to whether any marginal strips are present within the project area.

1.1.2 DOC provides the following comments on behalf of the Director-General.

1.1.3 Part IVA of the Conservation Act relates to the reservation of marginal strips when the Crown disposes of land, extending along and abutting qualifying water bodies. The applicant has not provided information regarding the presence of any qualifying water bodies on the sections in question. DOC does not hold information on whether any marginal strips exist within the project site. Further information is therefore required from the Applicant about whether there are any qualifying water bodies within or adjacent to the project area.

1.1.4 If the project area includes public conservation land, the Minister must, for a referral application, obtain and consider a report that is prepared by the Director-General of Conservation in accordance with s 19(1).

1.1.5 DOC considers that without appropriate mitigations, the project would likely result in significant adverse effects on the environment, including in relation to Threatened and At-Risk species of birds and bats. It may be possible that with appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels.

1.1.6 DOC considers that additional approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 are likely to be required.

1.1.7 DOC is not aware of any other reasons the project should not be referred.

2 Determination of marginal strip under Part IVA of the Conservation Act 1987

2.1.1 The Titles for Sections 3 to 5 of Office Plan 59130 (SA57C/924, SA43B/384 and SA50B/764) each include a notation that the land is subject to Part IVA of the Conservation Act 1987.

2.1.2 Section 24D Conservation Act 1987 requires that all disposition by the Crown must record on the record of title that the land is subject to Part IVA of the Conservation Act. The existence of this notation on the Title means that if a qualifying water body exists on the property, a marginal strip is automatically reserved along that water body. DOC understands this would fall within the definition of 'public conservation land' under the FTAA. It is unclear to DOC from the level of information provided whether a qualifying water body under s 24(1) of the Conservation Act exists on the subject property.

2.1.3 If any qualifying water bodies are located on or adjacent to the sections indicated, then additional requirements and approvals may be required. We understand that for any project that includes public conservation land (PCL), DOC is required to provide a report under s 19 of the FTAA detailing any risks and liabilities to the Crown and potential issues in relation to referral. At the time of writing, DOC has not received a request for a s 19 report for this project.

2.1.4 DOC recommends that surveys be undertaken on the subject properties to identify any potentially qualifying water bodies. If PCL is present, the Minister must obtain and consider a report that is prepared by the Director-General of Conservation for the purposes of a referral decision (s 19(1)).

3 General comments

3.1.1 The Project is seeking resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 only.

3.1.2 DOC notes that the project site and the surrounding environment, including Lake Taupō and its associated wetlands, support high-value avifauna and bat populations including the following species:

- Long-tailed bats *Chalinolobus tuberculatus* - (Threatened – Nationally Critical)
- Central lesser short-tailed bats *Mystacina tuberculata* - (At Risk – Declining)
- Australasian Bittern / matuku-hūrepo (Threatened – Nationally Critical)
- New Zealand dabchick / weweia (Threatened – Nationally Increasing)
- Fernbird / mātātā (At Risk – Declining)
- New Zealand Falcon / kārearea (Threatened – Nationally Increasing)
- New Zealand pipit / pīhoihoi (At Risk – Declining)
- Red-billed gull / tarāpunga - At Risk – Declining)

3.1.3 Without appropriate mitigations, the project would likely result in significant effects to these species, including injury, mortality and disturbance arising from:

- Collisions with solar panels and other related infrastructure resulting in fatalities, injury and electrocution;

- Habitat displacement and avoidance.

3.1.4 It may be possible for these potential adverse effects to be addressed through appropriate conditions, particularly those that ensure a robustly designed carcass monitoring programme, and the identification of measures to be implemented if collisions occur.

3.1.5 The impacts to protected species outlined above are likely to require authorisation under the Wildlife Act 1953 as they may otherwise constitute an offence under that Act. In addition, implementation of the proposed bird carcass monitoring programme, and any similar monitoring for bats, would require approval under the Wildlife Act to collect and hold dead specimens.

3.1.6 DOC notes that once a referral decision is made, the scope of any subsequent substantive application is confined by that of the referral application. DOC has provided input to a number of fast-track projects to date where additional conservation approvals that would have been available under the FTAA have not been included in an application. In some of these cases it has been necessary for applicants to seek additional approvals under the specified Acts via normal processing. This can result in inefficiencies, additional costs and undermining of the benefits of the 'one stop shop' approach the FTAA was designed to deliver.

3.1.7 As noted above, DOC has identified the potential need for approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953. The applicant may wish to consider whether to seek the relevant wildlife approvals as part of the fast-track application process. Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any reason why the Project, including any wildlife approvals, should not be dealt with under the FTAA.

3.1.8 In relation to this application, the applicant has taken steps to consult with DOC. DOC considers it would be highly beneficial for the applicant to continue engaging with DOC on conservation matters subject to RMA consideration prior to making any substantive application. Benefits include ensuring information necessary to support decision-making; supporting the management of any actual and potential adverse effects on the environment; and early identification and resolution of any issues.

4 Matters for the Minister to request (s20)

4.1.1 Prior to the referral of the application, DOC recommends that the Minister request the applicant provide the following information in accordance with s 20(1):

- Surveys of Section 3 Survey Office Plan 59130, Section 4 Survey Office Plan 59130 and Section 5 Survey Office Plan 59130 to identify any qualifying waterways under Part IVA of the Conservation Act.

5 Matters for the Minister to specify (s 27)

5.1.1 If the project is referred, DOC recommends that the Minister request the applicant provide the following information in the substantive application in accordance with s 27(3)(b)(ii):

- Details of proposed avoidance and mitigation measures to address effects on ecological values, including the methodology proposed to determine whether the measures used to address effects are adequate to avoid, remedy, or mitigate adverse effects;
- Details of additional mitigation measures in the event that proposed measures are found to be inadequate to address effects;
- Proposed consent conditions;
- A Bat Management Plan;
- A monitoring plan that includes details of pre- and post- construction monitoring for avifauna and bats, including searches for carcasses;
- An outline of consultation with DOC, iwi, and any relevant landowners, including any feedback from the same and an explanation of how that feedback has been addressed.



Lynn Hansberry
Director Regulatory Systems Performance

Acting pursuant to delegated authority on behalf of the Director-General of Conservation.

Date: 27 of August 2026

Note: A copy of the Instrument of Delegation may be inspected at the Director-General's office at Conservation House Whare Kaupapa Atawhai, 18/32 Manners Street, Wellington 6011

HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND
POUHERE TAONGA

Comments on referral application under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

Western Bays Solar Farm, FTAA-2606-1255

Contact Details	
Organisation Name	Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)
Contact person	HNZPT Fast-track Team
Contact Number	Out of Scope
Email	fasttrack@heritage.org.nz

General Comments

1. Meridian Energy Limited (Applicant) has lodged an application for referral of the Western Bays Solar Farm (project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the FTA Act).
2. In accordance with section 17(1)(c) of the FTA Act, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) has been invited to comment on the referral application as the administering agency for the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
3. HNZPT has been provided application documents that are relevant to the archaeological authority application. These have been assessed and HNZPT comments as follows:

Consultation and Engagement

4. The Applicant provided background information by email on 11 March 2026, which was followed by a Teams meeting with HNZPT on 18 March 2026.
5. The Applicant sent an archaeological assessment for review on 9 June 2026, which stated there were no recorded archaeological sites in the project area and provided no evidence to suggest an authority would be required. No archaeological values were identified. The assessment provided conflicting recommendations stating that the work could be carried out under an accidental discovery protocol or an authority could be applied for in case archaeological sites were encountered.
6. HNZPT provided comments to the Applicant by email on 10 June 2026 acknowledging that the work could be carried out under an accidental discovery protocol and pointing out that if an authority was sought, HNZPT would require more detail on why there is potential for unrecorded archaeological sites to be present and what the archaeological values were.
7. On 6 August 2026 the Applicant sent the latest version of the archaeological assessment dated June 2026 which included comment on effects on potential archaeological values.

Archaeological Authority Application

8. The Applicant has provided an archaeological assessment that does not identify any recorded archaeological sites within the project area and identifies very low potential for to unrecorded archaeological sites to be affected by the proposal. The applicant has decided to apply for an archaeological authority.

9. The project area is of significance to Te Kotahitanga ko Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Ngāti Parekaawa, Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board (TMTB), Ngāti Te Maunga and Ngāti Raukawa due to the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Claims Settlement Act 2018 and the Raukawa Claims Settlement Act 2014.

10. HNZPT notes that no Cultural Impact Assessment has been provided as an attachment with this application. However, Attachment 9 states that "Ngāti Parekaawa have nominated two Cultural Advisors to support the project, with the Advisors being contracted directly by Meridian. The Advisors have authored a Cultural Impact Assessment (CIA) with respect to the project, which has been subsequently reviewed by the hapū and Meridian. The Advisors have also completed mihi whakatau for all visitors to the project and supported the archaeological and other effects assessments".

Effects on Archaeological Values

11. The Applicant has demonstrated a very small risk of there being adverse effects on unrecorded archaeological sites.

Conclusion

12. If the project is referred, HNZPT anticipates further engagement with the Applicant to ensure all relevant documentation is provided with a substantive application for an Authority, including:

    - Evidence of appropriate consultation with tangata whenua; and
    - Appropriate draft conditions.

Invitation to provide written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

You have been invited to provide written comments to the Minister for Infrastructure (the Minister) on an application to refer under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process.

Please upload comments directly via the portal by completing this template.

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

Written comments must be received by MfE, on behalf of the Minister for Infrastructure, no later than the due date.

Important information

Your personal information will be held by MfE and be used in relation to the project application and process. You have the right to access and correct personal information held by MfE.

A copy of your comments, including all personal information, will be provided to the Minister and the applicant.

If you are a corporate entity making comments on this application, your full contact details will be publicly available.

For individuals, your name will be publicly available, but your contact details (phone number, address, and email) will not be publicly available.

A copy of your comments will also be published on the Fast-track website. If you believe any of the information you have provided is confidential or sensitive and should be withheld from publication, please highlight the information concerned and provide an explanation to support your request for withholding it. Your comment and explanation will be decided by the Ministry on whether to withhold the information from publication.

Please do not use copyright material without the permission of the copyright holder.

All information held by MfE is subject to the Official Information Act 1982.

More information on the fast-track approvals process and providing comments can be found at Process overview | Fast-track website

Your written comments on a project under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

Project name	Western Bays Solar Farm (FTAA-2606-1255)

Before the due date, for assistance on how to respond or about this template or with using the portal, please email contact@fasttrack.govt.nz or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

All sections of this form with an asterisk (*) must be completed.

1.0 Contact Details

Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.

Organisation name (if relevant)	NZ Transport Agency (NZTA)		
***First name**	Nicola		
***Last name**	Foran		
Postal address			
***Contact phone number**	Out of Scope	**Alternative**	
***Email**	environmentalplanning@nzta.govt.nz		

2.0 Please provide your comments on this application

NZTA thanks the Minister for the opportunity to comment on the referral of this application into the fast-track approvals process.

Engagement between NZTA, Meridian Energy Limited (**'the Applicant'**) and Tonkin + Taylor (**'the Agent'**) in relation to the Western Bays Solar Farm (**'the Project'**) has been ongoing since February 2025, when pre-application advice was sought from NZTA from the Applicant on the gaining of access for the Project onto State Highway 32 (**'SH32'**, Western Bay Road).

NZTA notes that several intersection and access upgrades will be required to appropriately manage construction and operational traffic associated with the Project, including upgrades to the relevant SH32 crossing places, vegetation trimming to achieve appropriate sightlines, temporary construction traffic signage, and completion of the necessary corridor access, temporary traffic management, safety audit and statutory access processes. These requirements are not unusual for projects of this nature and are matters that can be addressed through conditions, advice notes and subsequent approvals. These matters do not represent an issue that would prevent the Project from proceeding to the substantive stage.

Insert Fast-track logo

Overall, based on the above commentary, NZTA does not have any concerns with this Project, Western Bays Solar Farm, being referred to the fast-track approvals process and would welcome the opportunity to provide further comments on any substantive application for this Project in due course.

Note: All comments will be made available to the public and the applicant when the Ministry for the Environment proactively releases advice provided to the Minister for the Environment.

Managers signoff Date: 31 August 2026