

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	Tauhei Solar Farm Extension
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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)	Matamata-Piako District Council		
*First name	Nathan		
*Last name	Sutherland		
Postal address	PO Box 266, Te Aroha 3342		
*Contact phone number	s 9(2)(a)	Alternative	
*Email	s 9(2)(a)		

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.

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.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension.

The Council understands that the proposal is to construct, operate and maintain an extension to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm, generating up to 50 megawatts of alternating current (MW AC) of renewable electricity, which the applicant states is sufficient to meet the annual electricity requirements of approximately 15,500 households. The project area comprises approximately 95.6 hectares of rural land at Te Aroha West, located immediately south of the existing Tauhei Solar Farm, and spans three land parcels across two titles. It is bounded by Mikkelsen Road to the west and Waiheka Road to the south, and is bisected by O'Donoghue Road. The applicant, Harmony Energy NZ Limited, seeks resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (including standard freshwater fisheries activities such as culverts), a change or cancellation of an existing resource consent condition, and wildlife

approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953, the latter sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigation.

Comments below are provided in response to the matters outlined in the invitation for comments, addressed to Manaia Te Wiata, Chief Executive of Matamata-Piako District Council, dated, 11 August 2026. The specific questions are provided in **bold**.

- 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.**

There are no competing applications that have been applied for or granted that would affect this project at the time of this referral application.

- 2. Whether you consider the project may involve an ineligible activity, and if so, why (as defined in section 5 of the Act)**

It is not considered that the project involves an ineligible activity.

- 3. Whether you consider any of the reasons to decline a referral application may be applicable to this application, and if so why (under section 21(5) of Act).**

Section 21 (5) criteria	MPDC Comment
(a) the project would be inconsistent with any of the following: i. a Treaty settlement: ii. the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019: iii. the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011: iv. a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe: v. a joint management agreement:	No, based on the information in the referral documentation, Council is not aware of any inconsistencies.
(b) it would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts:	In its referral application, the Applicant notes that under the usual resource consent pathway there is potential for the doubling of processing timeframes due to the scale and complexity of the project. In addition, they conclude that there is potential for public notification and that due to the “newness” of large-scale solar technology, there is a further risk of delays through the

	traditional consenting process due to a lack of expertise within local government and the community. The Council does not disagree with the applicant's summation, but considers that the usual consenting pathway has several positive aspects which a fast-track process would bypass. For instance, it provides for better public participation as well as an assessment of effects and a decision at a local level. This is particularly appropriate, given the effects of such activities are most keenly felt at this level, but not necessarily the benefits. This has been experienced through the construction period of the Tauhei Solar Farm, where local residents have experienced effects such as dust and traffic from the construction activities and numerous complaints regarding these effects have been made to the Council. However, given the Tauhei Solar Farm was determined through a similar fast-track process, the efficiencies of following this same process are understood.
(c) The project may have significant adverse effects on the environment	In its consideration of the original Tauhei Solar Farm application, the Panel found that there were no potential adverse effects, individually or cumulatively, that could not be adequately and appropriately addressed by conditions, or that would preclude or count against a grant of consent for the project. However, during construction, local effects were in fact felt by residents, particularly in relation to dust and traffic. It is understood that these effects were due to non-compliance with the Construction Traffic Management Plan, with complaints received by the Council as a result. Given the Tauhei Extension Solar Farm appears to be a very similar proposal, it seems unlikely to generate significant adverse effects; however, this experience highlights the importance of ensuring conditions of consent are robust and monitored and enforced to avoid a recurrence,

	this monitoring being not limited to the Council but also by the Applicant. The Council notes that the proposed extension is situated within the district's Rural Zone, where renewable energy developments are generally anticipated. However, the Matamata-Piako District Plan (MPDP) emphasises the sustainable management of natural and physical resources to ensure their protection for future generations. It is therefore necessary to ensure the proposal aligns with the MPDP's objectives relating to land use compatibility, landscape effects, and the preservation of rural character. In addition, the increase in construction activity is likely to place additional demands on local roads, and consideration should be given to ensuring appropriate road safety, maintenance, and traffic management measures are in place. The visual impact and noise effects (particularly during construction) of the expanded solar infrastructure on the rural landscape, road users, and nearby residences should also be considered. A photovoltaic glint and glare assessment is recommended to determine the level of effects and identify mitigation measures, potentially including direct engagement with neighbouring property owners as affected parties, to address these concerns.
(d) the applicant (or, if the referral application is lodged by more than 1 person, any of those persons) has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals	The Council have determined that the Applicant failed to adhere to the approved Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) however, there was no formal enforcement action taken or needed by the Council. While the Applicant was not considered to be proactive with effects management as required by the CTMP (such as dust and road damage/traffic) they were immediately responsive when Council raised these matters as concerns and they introduced measures to manage effects.
(e) the land is required for treaty settlement purposes.	No

(f) the activity is prohibited under the RMA	No
(g) the project would have one of more competing application.	No
(h) in relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consent), there are 1 or more existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a).	No

Managers signoff



[Nathan Sutherland – Planning Manager]

Date: 27/08/2026



[Ally van Kuijk – Group Manager Growth & Regulation]

Date: 27/08/2026

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

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

Project name	Tauhei Solar Farm Extension
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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	s 9(2)(a)	Alternative	
*Email	s 9(2)(a)		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
Waikato Regional Council (WRC) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on this application for referral under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act). The comments outlined below are grouped into two 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)

Are there any applications that have been lodged with Waikato Regional Council that would be competing 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 section 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI applications?

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 1 and 2 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 1 and 2 are defined as 'high class soils'. Similarly, the National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) classifies LUC class 1 and 2 as 'highly productive land'.

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. This will need to be addressed as part of any substantive application.

Ecology

The following information will need to be provided as part of an assessment of ecological effects in any substantive application for the project:

- Identification of wetlands on site, including their location, extent, and species. If the identified wetlands meet the definition of natural inland wetlands, a substantive application should include an accompanying description of how loss of natural inland wetlands will be avoided, their values protected, and their restoration promoted as per Policy 6 of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS-FM) and/or where exceptions to the loss of extent or values of natural inland wetlands apply under Clause 3.22 of the NPS-FM.

Indigenous biodiversity

The site is largely modified grazed pasture. While little indigenous vegetation remains, the site contains vegetation which is suitable habitat for birds and lizards (likely Copper skink), and previous evidence of the presence of bats on the site. WRC requests that an ecological assessment be provided with any substantive application.

Any substantive application should also include:

- Bat management plan.
- Bird management plan.
- Lizard incidental discovery plan.
- Wetland management where appropriate.

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 management plans and included as a condition of consent.

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Land drainage network

The site contains a number of Waikato Regional Council managed drains and drainage network assets. As such we request any substantive application addresses the following:

- Identify all existing drainage infrastructure
- Demonstrates how the proposal will maintain existing channel capacity of the Waikato Regional Council managed drains and conveyance of water from this proposal
- How the proposal avoids adverse effects on the wider drainage network
- That access corridors are either created and/or retained to and along the existing drains to allow for machinery access
- That appropriate setbacks from drains are incorporated into the design and that any planting should be compatible with drainage function, allow for maintenance, and avoid future obstruction risks
- Manage sediment discharge, disturbance to drains, and temporary blockage risks
- Implementation of appropriate erosion and sediment controls will be required.
- Assessment of effects related to changes to land cover (including solar arrays) including effects such as altered run off patterns and erosion and sediment risks.

Flooding

The application indicates that areas across the site may be subject to moderate or high hazard flooding. It is recommended that flood modelling is provided in any substantive application.

Acid Sulphate Soils

WRC's preliminary regional Acid Sulphate Soils Probability spatial layer indicates a high probability of acid sulphate soils occurrence across part of the site. When disturbed (e.g. excavated) and exposed to oxygen, acid sulphate soil materials can produce sulfuric acid which can become mobilised following rainfall. This can lead to impacts on the environment, including aquatic ecosystems, and infrastructure. The potential for the occurrence of acid sulphate soils at the site should be considered in relation to the proposed development.

It is recommended that the applicant develops a strategy for managing acid sulphate soils encountered during the various stages of construction and addresses this matter in detail within any substantive application.

Waikato Regional Plan

WRC staff generally agree with the resource consent approvals required from WRC listed by the applicant under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), and we make the following clarifying comments to assist decision making:

Earthworks and cleanfill

- We agree with the applicant's assessment that earthworks, inclusive of culvert installation works, in the vicinity of modified watercourses and/or wetland(s) will likely trigger the requirement for land use consent for earthworks in a high-risk erosion area.
- We note that if cleanfill is required to be imported to the site, inclusive of aggregate for tracking, and it will exceed the Waikato Regional Plan (WRP) rule 5.2.5.4 volume limit of 2,500 cubic metres per annum, consent will be needed under Rule 5.2.5.5 as a controlled activity.

Dewatering

- We agree that dewatering of trenches for cable installation will require resource consent. The WRC practice is to treat this as a groundwater diversion in accordance with rule 3.6.4.13. The surface water take of daylighted groundwater is assessed as a non-complying activity in accordance with rule 3.3.4.26 of the WRP. The discharge of water to water during dewatering activities may be a permitted activity as per rule 3.5.4.4 of the WRP, alternatively, consent may be required and will be determined by the selected discharge methodology (inclusive of receiving environment).

Stormwater

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

Wetlands

- We agree that land use consent and a water permit under the NES-FW for works within, and within 10 m of a wetland, will be required in accordance with Regulation 45 discretionary activities - construction of specified infrastructure.

Land drainage network

- There are WRC assets/maintained drains within the properties that together comprise the extension footprint. Refer the Waihou -Johnson Creek Branch Drain (24) in respect of LOT 1 DP 12172. Refer the Waihou-Johnson Creek R4 Drain (23) and Waihou – Hamlyn Drain (14) in respect of LOT 2 DP 337667 and LOT 1 DP 8280. Subject to confirmation of setback distances and the nature of the ancillary activities, resource consent under WRP Rule 4.2.18.1 will likely be required (Maintaining Access for Maintenance Purposes).
- A review of Waikato maps confirms that the drains referred to above are highly modified watercourses. Accordingly, any proposed bed disturbance or structure

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installation will need to be assessed to confirm resource consent requirements under the WRP.

Culverts

- Any proposed culvert installation will need to be assessed to confirm resource consent requirements under the WRP and NES-F
- The installation of culverts into waterways onsite may trigger the requirement for regional consent. Particularly under WRP rule 4.2.9.3 if standards and requirements of other rules cannot be met.
- Consent may also be required under NES-Freshwater Regulation 71, if the standards in Regulation 70 cannot be met.
- The application mentions damming and diverting of waterways to undertake installation works for culverts. Authorisation may also be required under WRP rule 3.6.4.14.

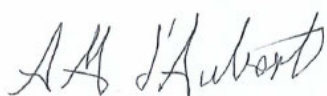
SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR ANY SUBSTANTIVE APPLICATION

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

- Assessment against NPS-HPL.
- Detailed Ecological Assessment (EIA).
- Bat Management Plan.
- Bird Management Plan.
- Lizard Incidental Discovery Plan.
- Assessment of matters related to the land drainage network.
- Site specific flood modelling.
- Acid sulphate soils management plan.
- Whilst WRC has undertaken a preliminary assessment of potential consents requirements, confirmation is required to detail the exact consents sought for each activity.
- 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 25 August 2026



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

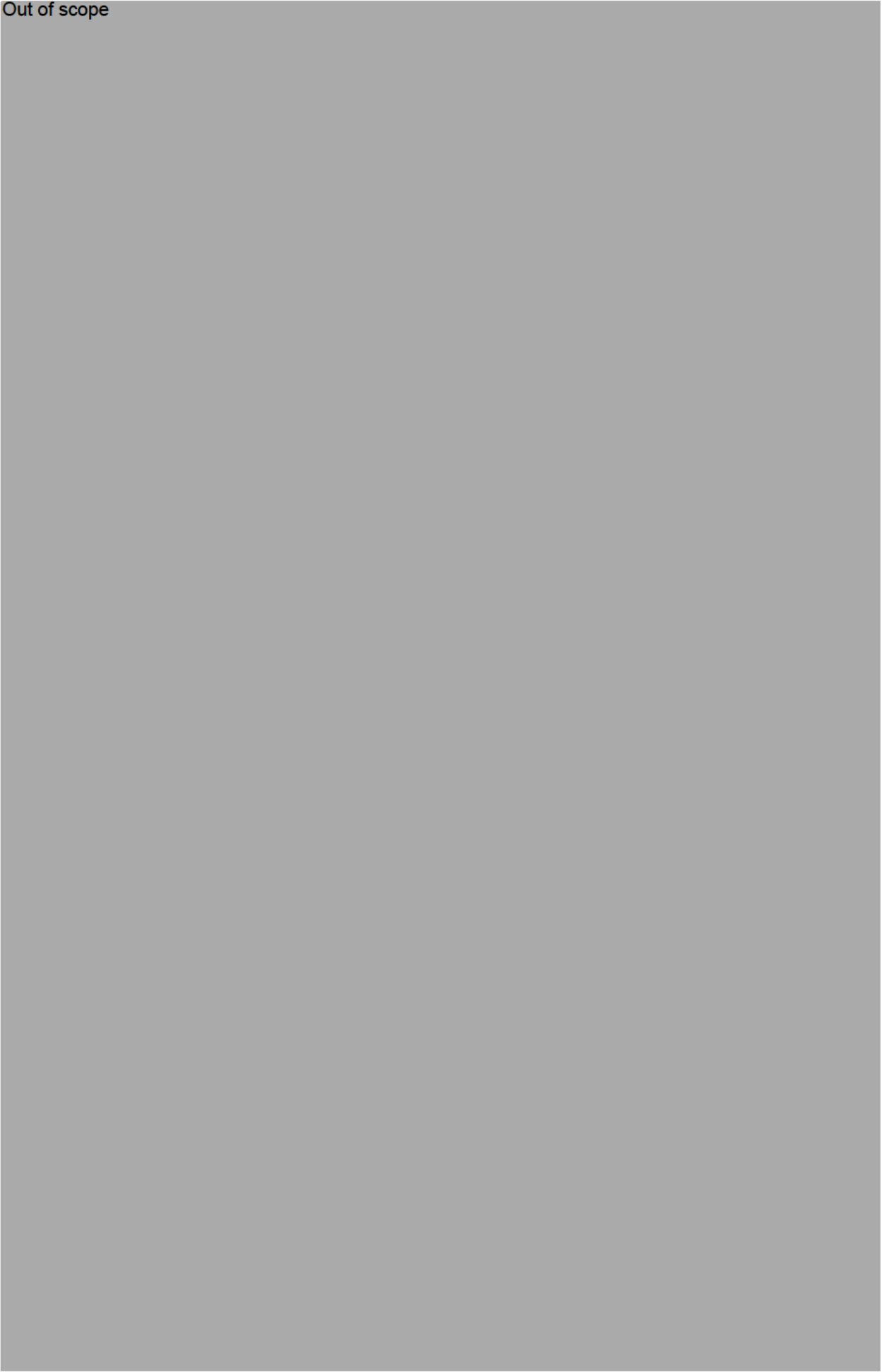
and Tauhei Solar Farm Extension (FTAA-2607-1261).

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



Out of scope



Out of scope

Out of scope

Tauhei Solar Farm Extension, FTAA-2607-1261

The application is for a 50 MW AC extension to the consented Tauhei Solar Farm at Te Aroha West in Waikato. The extension would occupy approximately 95.6 hectares adjoining the existing 150 MW AC solar farm and include solar panels, and supporting infrastructure. Electricity generated by the extension would use the existing on-site substation and grid connection to Transpower's Waihou Substation.

The project has an estimated total capital cost of \$70 million, of which \$35 million is expected to be spent domestically. Over the 15 to 18-month development period, the project is estimated to contribute approximately \$21 million in GDP to the Waikato regional economy, comprising \$6 million in direct GDP and \$15 million in indirect GDP.

Construction would support 117 FTE-years of employment over the development period, comprising 33 direct FTE-years and 84 indirect FTE-years, and generate approximately \$11 million in wages and salaries. A peak construction-year FTE estimate is not provided. The assessment assumes that 75 per cent of the estimated benefits would accrue to the Waikato region, with the balance accruing elsewhere in New Zealand.

The project's principal benefits are expected to arise over its operational life through additional renewable electricity generation and the efficient use of existing grid infrastructure. The extension is expected to generate approximately 108.4 GWh each year, equivalent to approximately 0.25 per cent of New Zealand's total electricity generation in 2024. By using the existing grid connection, transformer, substation and switching infrastructure, the applicant estimates that the project could avoid approximately \$27 million in costs relative to a comparable standalone solar development. The assessment also estimates net displacement of approximately 53,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions each year. The additional generation may contribute to wholesale-market competition and electricity-system resilience, although the effects on wholesale or retail electricity prices have not been quantified and actual emissions displacement would depend on prevailing system conditions.

The assessment considers the opportunity cost of forgone dairy production, estimated at approximately \$0.75 million in annual GDP, 2.8 FTEs and \$0.25 million in wages and salaries, including direct and indirect effects. These estimates assume that the entire site would otherwise remain in dairy farming.

On balance, the proposal appears likely to have significant regional and national economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act. Regional benefits are principally associated with estimated construction expenditure, GDP contribution and employment supported during the 15 to 18-month development period. National benefits arise from the project's contribution to renewable electricity generation and use of existing grid infrastructure.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Willis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Nicola Willis
Minister for Economic Growth

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 Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Tama Potaka'.

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

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 - Tauhei Solar Farm Extension application (FTAA-2607-1261)

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'S. Jones'.

Hon Shane Jones

Minister for Regional Development

Annex One - Regional Development comments

Project overview

1. Harmony Energy New Zealand Limited has applied for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project to be referred to the Fast-track approvals process. The project would expand the 150-megawatt solar farm under construction at Te Aroha West, Waikato, by adding 50 megawatts of generation capacity from 115,000 panels across 95.6 hectares.
2. The applicant estimates the extension would generate 108.4 gigawatt hours annually, enough for about 15,525 households, and increase national solar generation by around 18 per cent from the 2024 baseline.
3. The applicant states the project would increase renewable supply, improve system resilience and help limit national electricity price growth.
4. Economic analysis provided by the applicant estimates that the project would:
 - a. involve total capital expenditure of approximately \$70 million, of which about \$35 million is expected to be spent in New Zealand
 - b. support an average of 78 to 94 full-time positions during the 15 to 18-month construction period, including direct and supply-chain employment
 - c. during construction, generate around \$11 million in wages and salaries, and contribute around \$21 million to gross domestic product (GDP), primarily in the Waikato region
 - d. once operational, add around one direct permanent on-site full-time equivalent (FTE) and, including supply-chain effects, support about 4.3 FTEs, \$0.56 million in wages and \$2.05 million in GDP annually.
5. The applicant estimates that replacing the land's current dairy use would forgo approximately \$0.75 million in GDP, \$0.25 million in wages and 2.8 FTEs each year. Sheep grazing could continue beneath the panels and partly offset this cost although this is not estimated.

Regional Development comments

6. Based on the applicant's information, the project's direct economic benefits would be meaningful locally during construction but limited at the regional level, and minor once operational. Its regional and national significance therefore relates mainly to its potential contribution to electricity supply, resilience and power affordability.
7. The construction workforce of 78 to 94 FTE jobs would represent about 0.4 to 0.5 per cent of filled jobs in Matamata-Piako District. The estimated \$21 million GDP contribution would equal about 0.7 per cent of district GDP and 0.05 per cent of Waikato GDP. This suggests a meaningful but temporary local economic benefit, with limited impact at the regional level.
8. 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.
9. Comment on the impact of the proposed project on New Zealand's energy system and on primary production should come from the Ministers for Energy and Primary Industries respectively.

FW: NGCOR3300 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2607-1261

From Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>

Date Wed 19/08/2026 5:15 PM

To FTArefferrals <FTArefferrals@mfe.govt.nz>

From: Environment Portfolio <Environment.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>

Sent: Wednesday, 19 August 2026 4:35 PM

To: Infrastructure Portfolio <Infrastructure.Portfolio@parliament.govt.nz>

Subject: RE: NGCOR3300 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2607-1261

Kia ora koutou,

Minister Grigg does not wish to provide comment on FTAA-2607-1261.

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: Tuesday, 11 August 2026 8:25 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>; Simeon Brown (MIN) <S.Brown@ministers.govt.nz>; Simon Watts (MIN) <S.Watts@ministers.govt.nz>

Cc: FTArefferrals <ftarefferrals@mfe.govt.nz>

Subject: NGCOR3300 Invitation to comment on Fast-track referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – FTAA-2607-1261

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 Energy
- Minister of Climate Change
- Minister of Conservation

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 Harmony Energy NZ Limited for referral of the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track process (application reference FTAA- 2607-1261).

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 **1 September 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	Tauhei Solar Farm Extension
Applicant	Harmony Energy NZ Limited
Location	Te Aroha, Waikato
Project description	The project involves the construction, operation, and maintenance of an extension to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm in the Matamata-Piako District, Waikato. The extension would generate up to 50 megawatts of alternating current (MW AC) renewable electricity, which the applicant states is sufficient

to meet the annual electricity requirements of approximately 15,500 households.

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

- approximately 115,000 solar panels and associated electricity infrastructure with an installed capacity of approximately 50 MW AC
- underground cabling and associated electricity infrastructure to connect the project to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm substation and the national grid via Transpower's Waihou Substation
- internal access roads, vehicle crossings, earthworks, and stream crossing works primarily for the installation of culverts
- security fencing, lighting, monitoring equipment and other operational infrastructure
- temporary construction facilities and associated construction activities
- landscaping, ecological restoration and planting, including riparian and wetland restoration works
- ongoing agricultural activities, including sheep grazing
- other ancillary works required to support the construction, operation and maintenance of the solar farm
- minor consequential changes to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm consent as required.

Office of Hon Simon Watts

[IN-CONFIDENCE]

Minister for Building and Construction
Minister of Climate Change
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Revenue
Minister for Auckland



20 AUG 2026

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
c.bishop@parliament.govt.nz

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the invitation to comment on Harmony Energy NZ Ltd's Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA) referral application for the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project (FTAA-2607-1261).

The proposal promotes the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to sustainable development.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my broad support for projects which deliver positive climate outcomes for New Zealand, including the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Simon Watts', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hon Simon Watts
Minister of Climate Change

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

Project name	Tauhei Solar Farm Extension
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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	Shawn		
*Last name	Gardner		
Postal address			
*Contact phone number	s 9(2)(a)	Alternative	
*Email	Fast-track@doc.govt.nz ;		

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.

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

28 August 2026

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Director-General of Conservation s17 comments

Project name	Tauhei Solar Farm Extension
Applicant name	Harmony Energy NZ Limited
Application number	FTAA-2607-1261
Project summary details	The project involves the construction, operation, and maintenance of an extension to the existing Tauhei Solar Farm in the Matamata-Piako District, Waikato. The extension would generate up to 50 megawatts of alternating current (MW AC) renewable energy, which the applicant states is sufficient to meet the annual electricity requirements of approximately 15,500 households. The project area is described as approximately 95.6 hectares of rural land at Te Aroha West in the Matamata-Piako District, Waikato. The project area is located immediately south of the existing Tauhei Solar Farm and spans three land parcels across two titles. The project area is bounded by Mikkelsen Road to the west, Waihekau Road to the south, and is bisected by O'Donoghue Road.

1 Overview of comments

1.1 Applicant Engagement

- 1.1.1 As the project includes an approval under a specified Act for which the Director-General of Conservation is the administering agency, the applicant was required to notify DOC and allow 20 working days to respond before lodging the referral application in accordance with section 11.
- 1.1.2 In relation to this application, DOC has had the following engagement with the applicant:
- DOC was notified of the application on the 28th of May 2026;
 - DOC did not provide a formal response within the 20 working day response period.

1.2 Conservation Approvals Sought

- 1.2.1 The referral application states that the Project may require approval under the Wildlife Act 1953 for the salvage and relocation of lizards.

1.3 Conclusion

- 1.3.1 In conclusion, DOC is not aware of any reason the Project should not be referred.



2 Criteria for Minister's decision on referral application

2.1.1 Sections 21 and 22 of the FTAA set out matters to be considered by the Minister in determining whether a referral application should be accepted.

2.1.2 Comments below are targeted to provisions where DOC has specific interests or information relevant to the Minister's decision.

2.2 Criteria for declining a referral application

2.2.1 Section 21 sets out the criteria for the Minister for declining a referral application. DOC has considered these criteria and provides comments in the table below.

Section	Criteria	Comments
21(3)(b)	Does the project involve an ineligible activity	Based on the information available, DOC has considered the ineligibility criteria at sections 5(1)(h), (i), (j) and (k), and has not identified any aspect of the Project that would be ineligible based on those criteria.
21(3)(c)	Is there adequate information to inform a decision	With respect to the approvals identified in the referral application for which DOC is the administering agency, DOC considers the information adequate in terms of a referral decision.
21(4)	Are there any other reasons to decline the application?	Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any reason why the Project should be declined.
21(5)(a)	Is the project inconsistent with: • a Treaty settlement; • Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019; • Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011.	Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any inconsistency with any relevant Treaty settlement or other obligations. However, it is noted that: • Parts of the Project site sit within the Statutory Acknowledgement for the Waihou River and its tributaries under the Ngāti Hinerangi Claims Settlement Act 2021; • Both the Ngāti Rāhiri Tumutumu Claims Settlement Act 2026 and the Ngāti Tara Tokanui Claims Settlement Act 2026 gained Royal Assent on the 18th of May 2026. The Conservation Relationship Agreements for each of these are still being drafted. The final scope of conservation obligations is not yet known. • There are multiple under-negotiation Treaty settlements that may be relevant to the Site, including:

Section	Criteria	Comments
		○ Ngāti Tamaterā ○ Pare Hauraki ○ Ngāti Maru ○ Ngāti Hako ○ Waikato-Tainui remaining claims Should any of the above settlements be passed, additional obligations may apply.
21(5)(b)	Would it be more appropriate to deal with the proposed approvals under another Act(s)	Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any reason why the Project should not be dealt with under the FTAA.
21(5)(c)	Would the project have significant adverse effects on the environment	Based on our knowledge of the existing environment and species expected to occur on the site, our understanding of the Project, and our experience of the kinds of design measures and conditions that could be implemented, DOC considers that once more detailed information is available, it would be possible to achieve a project with the imposition of conditions (that are appropriate, enforceable, include best management practice, and apply the relevant ecological management plans, as and where required), that does not have significant adverse effects on the environment.
21(5)(d)	Does the applicant(s) have a poor compliance history under a specified Act	DOC has not identified any issues with the applicant's compliance history.
21(5)(g)	Would a substantive application have any competing applications	Based on the information available, DOC has not identified any competing applications in respect of conservation approvals.

2.3 Criteria for accepting a referral application

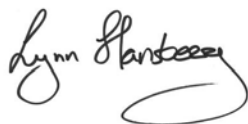
2.3.1 Section 22 sets out the criteria for the Minister for accepting a referral application.

2.3.2 DOC has considered these criteria and has not identified anything where DOC has specific interests or information relevant to the Minister's decision.

3 Matters for the Minister to specify (s27)

3.1.1 None identified

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynn Hansberry', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Lynn Hansberry
Director Regulatory Systems Performance

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

Date: 28 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

Feedback Details

Feedback ID * FDB002409P9R0

Title * Transpower New Zealand Limited

Regarding  [Transpower - Tauhei Solar Farm Extension](#)

Comments

Transpower has had involvement in the overall project, but notes that this stage will involve work a reasonable distance from the existing National Grid Transmission lines and no work will be undertaken within close proximity of the National Grid. Transpower is supportive of the project and should work be required in closer proximity to the National Grid lines and their support structures, Transpower is available to provide guidance and technical assistance to the applicant and or the panel. Kind regards Andy Eccleshall - Technical Lead, Landowner Development Enquiries - Transpower New Zealand Limited.

1 September 2026

Environmental Protection Authority
Private Bag 63002
Wellington 6140
NEW ZEALAND

Teena koe

TAUHEI SOLAR FARM EXTENSION – REFERRAL APPLICATION

1. These comments are provided on behalf of Te Whakakitenga o Waikato Incorporated (Waikato-Tainui).
2. Te Whakakitenga o Waikato Incorporated is the governing body for the 33 hapuu and 68 marae of Waikato and manages the tribal assets for the benefit of over 97,000 registered tribal members. It is also:
 - a) the trustee of the Waikato Raupatu Lands Trust, the post-settlement governance entity for Waikato-Tainui for the purposes of the Waikato Raupatu Lands Deed of Settlement 1995 and the Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995;
 - b) the trustee of the Waikato Raupatu River Trust, the post-settlement governance entity for Waikato-Tainui for the purposes of the Waikato-Tainui River Deed of Settlement 2009 and the Waikato Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010 (River Settlement);
 - c) the mandated iwi organisation for Waikato-Tainui for the purposes of the Maaori Fisheries Act 2002; and
 - d) the iwi aquaculture organisation for Waikato-Tainui for the purposes of the Maaori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004.
3. Waikato-Tainui welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Tauhei Solar Farm Extension Fast-Track application.

WAIKATO-TAINUI COMMENTS

4. Waikato-Tainui understands that the proposal is for a utility-scale solar farm and associated infrastructure, including solar panels, battery and electrical infrastructure, internal roads, earthworks, stream crossings, ancillary buildings and associated restoration and planting. The proposal would result in the conversion of land currently used for dairy farming to renewable electricity generation and sheep grazing.
5. Waikato-Tainui acknowledges the applicant's stated rationale for the proposed electricity generation and considers that the scale and strategic nature of the proposal, as presented in the application, may warrant its progression to the substantive phase. The need for additional electricity generation and the proposal's contribution to national and regional electricity supply should be considered alongside relevant sector advice and broader national, regional and local growth and infrastructure strategies.
6. The applicant has undertaken engagement with mana whenua, including Ngaati Hinerangi, Ngaati Haua and Ngaati Raukawa, since 2023. Waikato-Tainui has considered the engagement undertaken to date, together with the relevant Treaty settlement and statutory context, in forming its position on the referral application. Should the project progress to the substantive phase, further engagement with mana whenua should continue as the proposal is developed and the potential effects and measures proposed to address them are assessed in greater detail.
7. Waikato-Tainui acknowledges that the applicant has provided an assessment of the proposal against the relevant provisions of Tai Tumu, Tai Pari, Tai Ao – Waikato-Tainui Environmental Plan. At this stage, that assessment is appropriately considered provisional. Should the project progress to the substantive phase, the application should provide for a more detailed assessment against the relevant objectives and policies of the Plan and demonstrate how these have informed the further design and development of the Project.

OVERALL POSITION

8. In principle, Waikato-Tainui does not support the use of an approvals process where condensed timeframes limit the opportunity for full and meaningful participation by iwi. Notwithstanding this, Waikato-Tainui is satisfied that the referral application, together with the information provided directly to Waikato-Tainui through engagement to date, provides a sufficient high-level understanding of the proposal, its potential effects and its interface with Waikato-Tainui interests to inform the referral decision. On that basis, Waikato-Tainui does not oppose the project progressing to the substantive phase. This position does not represent support for the proposal or its effects, which will require further expert assessment and engagement should the project proceed.
9. Waikato-Tainui looks forward to continued engagement as the proposal progresses through the Fast-Track Approvals process.

Naaku i roto i ngaa mihi, naa

T Mapu

Te Maakariini Mapu
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER
WAIKATO-TAINUI