



FTAA-2608-1275: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 1 decisions

Project Name: Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting Project

Date submitted	3 September 2026	Tracking	26-BRF-02611
Security level	In-Confidence	Priority	Urgent

To	Action sought	Response by
Hon Chris Bishop Minister for Infrastructure	Decisions on recommendations in Table A	10 September 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: <i>FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz</i> Send email to Ministers to invite written comments
Number of appendices: 3	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework summary 2. Application documents for the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting project and additional information received 3. List of the Māori groups referred to in section 18(2)

Ministry contacts

Name	Position	Telephone	1 st contact
Ashiley Sycamore	Principal Author		
Stephanie Frame	Manager	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Ilana Miller	General Manager	s 9(2)(a)	



Project area

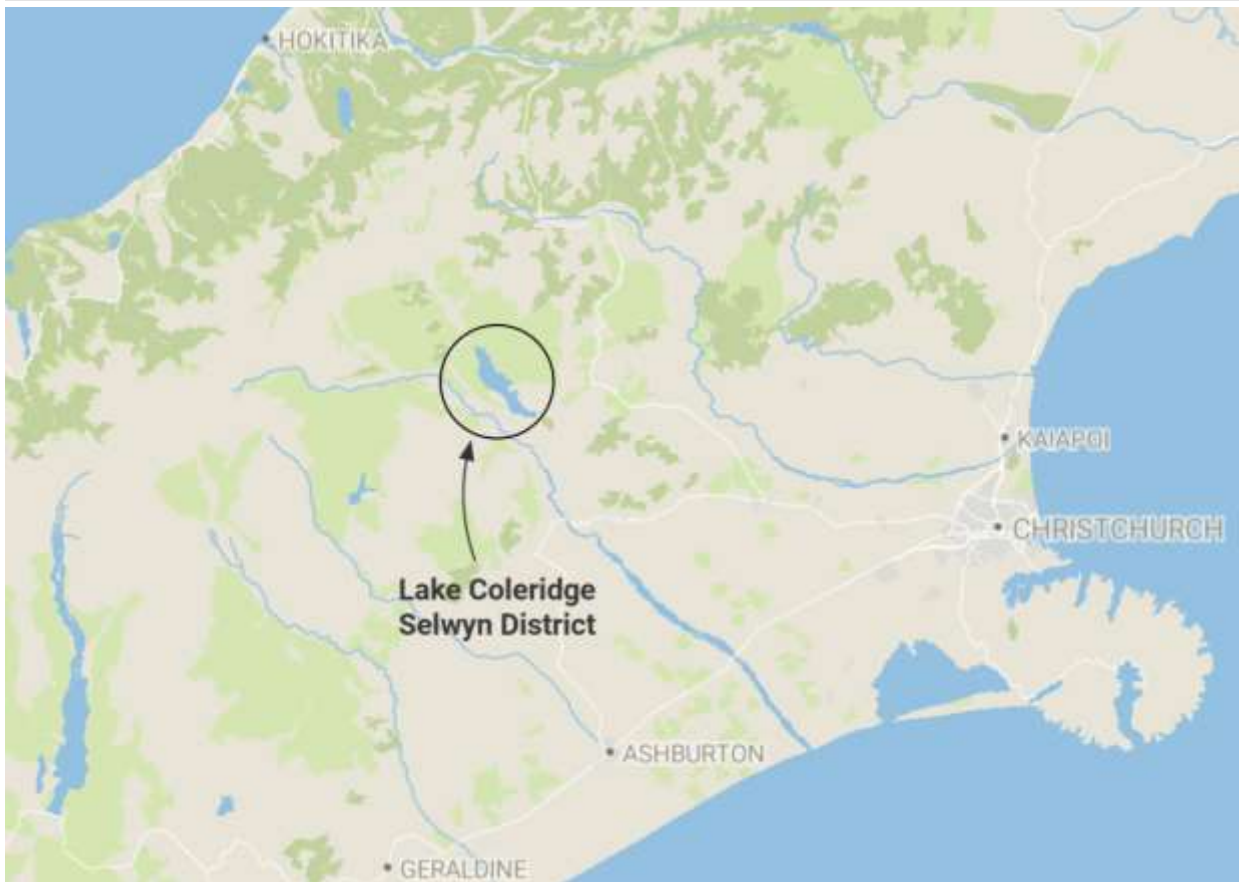


Figure 1: Location of Lake Coleridge, around which the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme is located

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on an application from Manawa Energy Limited and Contact Energy Limited (the applicant) to refer the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting Project (the project) under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) to the fast-track approvals process. The applicant identifies that any approvals will be held by Manawa Energy Limited.
2. At this stage you can either decline an application for the reasons set out section 21, or provide the application to, and invite comments from, the parties identified in section 17. If you do not decline the application, you will receive a further briefing following receipt of comments, to inform your final decision on whether to refer the project.

Project description and approvals sought

3. The project seeks approvals to enable the ongoing operation and maintenance of the existing Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme, a renewable electricity generation scheme originally commissioned in 1914, located around Lake Coleridge in the Selwyn District, Canterbury.
4. The existing hydro-electric generation scheme is owned and operated by Manawa Energy Limited, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Contact Energy Limited. The scheme currently generates, and is expected to continue generating, up to 39.5 MW (megawatts) of electricity, with an average annual output of approximately 270 GWh (gigawatt-hours). The applicant estimates that the scheme



generates sufficient electricity to power approximately 33,700 homes in the Canterbury Region.

5. The scheme utilises Lake Coleridge and associated water diversion, storage and conveyance infrastructure to generate electricity, including water takes and diversions from the Wilberforce, Harper and Acheron Rivers, canals, tunnels, penstocks, a power station, and a tailrace discharging to the Rakaia River. The project seeks approvals to enable the continued operation and maintenance of this existing infrastructure.
6. The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project, including some approvals sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigations prior to any substantive application:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
 - b. concessions under the Conservation Act 1987
 - c. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
 - d. an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation that would otherwise be applied for in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.

Initial recommendations

7. We have undertaken initial analysis of the referral application, and this is presented along with our considerations and recommendations in Table A.
8. We have decided the application is complete and complies with section 14 of the Act, as the application complies with section 13 requirements, may be capable of satisfying the criteria in section 22 and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity. The applicable fee and levy have been paid.
9. We recommend you progress consideration of the referral application to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite written comments from the parties prescribed in section 17(1) of the Act being:
 - a. Canterbury Regional Council and Selwyn District Council as the relevant local authorities
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. the Minister for Energy and the Minister of Conservation as the other relevant portfolio Ministers
 - d. the Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency
 - e. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups.
10. We recommend that you invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5) of the Act, for the reasons outlined below:
 - a. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited, as the existing scheme connects to Transpower's infrastructure
 - b. the Minister of Climate Change, as the project potentially involves benefits relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation



- c. the Minister for the South Island, as the project involves the ongoing operation of an existing hydro-electric scheme in the South Island
- d. the Minister for Regional Development, as the project involves the ongoing operation of a potentially significant regional development
- e. the Minister for Economic Growth, as the project involves potentially significant economic benefits.

Action sought

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

Signature

Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Table A: Stage 1 analysis

	Project Name		Applicant		Project Area	
Project details	Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting Project (the project)		Manawa Energy Limited and Contact Energy Limited (the applicant)		The project area is sited at and around Lake Coleridge, which is within the Rakaia River catchment, in the Selwyn District of the Canterbury Region. Lake Coleridge is located approximately 100 kilometres west of Christchurch City. The applicant identifies that the project area may include public conservation land.	
Project description	The project seeks approvals to enable the ongoing operation and maintenance of the existing Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme, a renewable electricity generation scheme originally commissioned in 1914, located around Lake Coleridge in the Selwyn District, Canterbury. The existing hydro-electric generation scheme is owned and operated by Manawa Energy Limited, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Contact Energy Limited. The scheme currently generates, and is expected to continue generating, up to 39.5 MW (megawatts) of electricity, with an average annual output of approximately 270 GWh (gigawatt-hours). The applicant estimates that the scheme generates sufficient electricity to power approximately 33,700 homes in the Canterbury Region. The scheme utilises Lake Coleridge and associated water diversion, storage and conveyance infrastructure to generate electricity, including water takes and diversions from the Wilberforce, Harper and Acheron Rivers, canals, tunnels, penstocks, a power station, and a tailrace discharging to the Rakaia River. The project seeks approvals to enable the continued operation and maintenance of this existing infrastructure. The applicant seeks the following approvals via the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project, including some approvals sought at this stage on a precautionary basis, subject to further investigations prior to any substantive application: a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) as described in section 42(4)(a) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) b. concessions under the Conservation Act 1987 as described in section 42(4)(e) of the Act c. wildlife approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 as described in section 42(4)(h) of the Act d. an approval, a dispensation, or an authorisation that would otherwise be applied for in respect of a complex freshwater fisheries activity under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 as described in section 42(4)(j) of the Act.					
Notification and/or consultation undertaken	As required by section 11, the applicant has:					
	Notified in writing, the relevant local authorities		Notified in writing, the relevant iwi authorities, hapū and Treaty settlement entities		Notified in writing, the relevant administering agencies	
	Notified in writing, the relevant administering agencies		Consulted, ngā hapū o Ngāti Porou or the relevant MACA groups		Notified in writing, the holder of land to be exchanged	
	– Canterbury Regional Council – Selwyn District Council		– Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu – Te Ngāi Tūahuriri Rūnanga – Te Taumutu Rūnanga – Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua		– Department of Conservation	
					– Not applicable to the project	
					– Not applicable to the project	
Section 22 assessment criteria						
The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]	The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)] The only current GPS is the GPS on Grocery Competition. This is not relevant to your decisions on the project.					
	You <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters you consider relevant – the applicant considers the project is an infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits for the reasons outlined below:					
	Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)] The applicant considers the project meets this criterion because the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme is regionally and nationally significant infrastructure that supplies renewable electricity to the Canterbury Region and Transpower’s national electricity transmission grid. The applicant states that the project will enable the continued operation of this existing infrastructure through the reconsenting of the scheme.					
	Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)] The applicant considers the project will deliver significant economic benefits by enabling the continued operation of the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme and avoiding the need for substantial investment in replacement generation infrastructure. The applicant states that the scheme contributes more than \$10 million annually to the local economy through its operation and maintenance, supports regional employment, and benefits local suppliers of labour, goods and services. The applicant further states that the continued operation of the scheme will avoid costs associated with replacing its generation output and support wider economic activity by maintaining an existing source of renewable electricity.					

	<i>Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support climate change mitigation by enabling the continued operation of the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme as a source of renewable electricity generation. The applicant states that the scheme contributes to the decarbonisation of New Zealand's economy by displacing electricity generation from fossil fuel sources and supporting New Zealand's emissions reduction targets. The applicant further states that the project is consistent with the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation, which recognises the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including avoiding, reducing or displacing greenhouse gas emissions. <i>Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]</i> The applicant considers the project will support climate change adaptation and recovery from natural hazard events by enabling the continued operation of the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme. The applicant notes that Contact and Manawa Energy are recognised as lifeline utilities under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 and states that the scheme contributes to New Zealand's renewable electricity supply and transition to a low-emissions economy. <i>Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]</i> The applicant considers the project addresses a significant environmental issue through the continued generation of renewable electricity, which supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emission. <i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i> The applicant considers the project is consistent with relevant regional and local planning documents, including the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement and Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan. The applicant states that these documents recognise and provide support for infrastructure and renewable electricity generation activities. The applicant acknowledges that the planning framework requires effects on freshwater values, natural character, biodiversity, public access and cultural values to be appropriately managed. The applicant further notes that the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan recognises existing hydro-electric schemes as part of the existing environment and provides for key activities associated with the ongoing operation of the scheme.		
Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]	<i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i> The applicant considers the project meets this criterion because the fast-track approvals process would enable the reconsenting of the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme to be progressed more efficiently than through the RMA process. The applicant states that previous hydro-electric scheme reconsenting processes have taken several years to complete, whereas the fast-track approvals process has provided substantially shorter timeframes and greater certainty of outcome for comparable projects. <i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because the project relates to the reconsenting of an existing hydro-electric power scheme and similar hydro-electric projects have already been successfully processed through the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states that technical assessments are being prepared to support a substantive application.		
Minister invites comments	<i>You must copy the application to, and invite written comments from [s17(1)]:</i> - relevant local authorities: - Canterbury Regional Council - Selwyn District Council - the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development - other relevant portfolio Ministers: - Minister for Energy – as the project proposes the continued operation of an existing hydro-electric power scheme - Minister of Conservation – as the project seeks conservation approvals through the fast-track approvals process - relevant administering agencies: - Department of Conservation - the Māori groups identified in Appendix 3.	<i>You may copy the application to, and invite written comments from, any other person [s17(5)]:</i> We recommend you invite comments from the following additional persons, for the specified reasons: - the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited – as the existing scheme connects to Transpower's infrastructure - the Minister of Climate Change – as the project potentially involves benefits relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation - the Minister for the South Island – as the project involves the ongoing operation of an existing hydro-electric scheme in the South Island - the Minister for Regional Development – as the project involves the ongoing operation of a potentially significant regional development - the Minister for Economic Growth – as the project involves potentially significant economic benefits.	<i>You may request further information about a referral application from the applicant, the relevant local authorities, or the relevant administering agencies to be provided within the time frame specified in the request.</i> We have not identified any further information to be sought at this initial stage.
Recommendations			Minister's decision
a. Note that section 25 of the Act permits you to decline the referral application without inviting comments from the parties under section 17.			Noted
b. Note that you have not yet provided the application to, nor sought any written comments on it from, the parties listed in section 17(1) but that you are required to do so if you do not decline the application under section 21 of the Act.			Noted

c. Note that section 17(5) of the Act permits you to forward an application to, and invite written comments from, any other person.	Noted
d. Note that if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame you are required to consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.	Noted
e. Note that section 20 of the Act permits you to request further information from the applicant or relevant local authorities or relevant administering agencies at any time before you decide whether to accept or decline an application.	Noted
f. Agree to progress the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting Project to our Stage 2 analysis (invite written comments and request section 18 Treaty report).	Yes / No
g. Agree to provide the application to, and invite written comments from: i. Canterbury Regional Council and Selwyn District Council as the relevant local authorities under section 17(1)(a) ii. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development under section 17(1)(b) iii. the Minister for Energy and the Minister of Conservation as the other relevant portfolio Ministers under section 17(1)(b) iv. the Department of Conservation as the relevant administering agency under section 17(1)(c) v. the parties in Appendix 3 as the identified Māori groups under section 17(1)(d) vi. any parties you are required to invite comments from under section 17(1)(d) and (e) who may be subsequently identified.	Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
h. Agree to provide the application to and invite written comments from the following additional persons under section 17(5): i. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited ii. the Minister of Climate Change iii. the Minister for the South Island iv. the Minister for Regional Development v. the Minister for Economic Growth.	Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No Yes / No
i. Note that section 19(1) of the Act requires you to obtain and consider a report in relation to the use of public conservation land for the project from the Director-General of Conservation.	Noted
j. Note that you have agreed to delegate to the Secretary for the Environment your responsibility to send all correspondence, other than to Ministers.	Noted
k. Agree to send the email to invite written comments from Ministers.	Yes / No

Signed:

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Appendix 1: Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application, then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at this initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities
 - b. the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti, and the Minister for Māori Development
 - c. any other relevant portfolio Ministers
 - d. the relevant administering agencies
 - e. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - f. the owners of Māori land in the project area (if applicable)
 - g. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.

Appendix 2: Application documents for the Coleridge Hydro-electric Power Scheme Reconsenting Project

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

Name of group	Type of group (section of Act)
Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu	iwi authority (s18(2)(a)), Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a) – Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998)
Te Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga	Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga –Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Te Taumutu Rūnanga	Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga –Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua	Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga –Treaty settlement entity (s18(2)(a))
Whitiora Centre Limited	Entity owned by Papatipu Rūnanga – other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited	Entity owned by Papatipu Rūnanga – other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))
Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Limited	Entity owned by Papatipu Rūnanga – other Māori group with relevant interests (s18(2)(k))