

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

<b>Project name</b>	Waiinu Energy Project
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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](mailto:contact@fasttrack.govt.nz) or phone 0800 FASTRK (0800 327 875).

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

<b>1. Contact Details</b>			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council (Horizons Regional Council)		
<b>*First name</b>	Lauren		
<b>*Last name</b>	Edwards		
<b>Postal address</b>	Private Bag 11025, Manawatū Mail Centre, Palmerston North 4442		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	s 9(2)(a)
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a)		

<b>2. Please provide your comments on this application</b>
<p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this referral application.</p> <p><b><u>Applications lodged that would be competing if a substantive application for the project was lodged:</u></b></p> <p>With respect to identifying any competing applications to the consent to be sought, there are no applications lodged that would be competing if a substantive application for the Project was lodged.</p> <p>The only resource consent in close proximity is a large scale land disturbance consent (ATH-2020203514.00) for a Roding Aggregate Shellrock Gravel Quarry. The consent is particularly close to the two most western turbines in group "A".</p> <p><b><u>Any existing resource consents of the kind referred to in s30(3)(a):</u></b></p> <p>With respect to the consents to be sought, there are no consents subject to section 124C(1)(c) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).</p>

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**Involvement of an ineligible activity (section 5):**

I do not consider that the Project may involve an ineligible activity as defined in section 5.

**Reasons to decline application (section 21(5)):**

I do not consider that any of the reasons to decline a referral application, as set out in section 21(5), are applicable to this application except for section 21(5)(c).

The Project may have significant adverse effects on the environment if the potential effects of the Project are not managed effectively.

The following, in particular, have the potential to have significant adverse effects if not managed effectively (avoided, remedied, mitigated, offset/compensated):

- The effect of the proposal on wetlands (both NPS-FM and One Plan (2026) Schedule 6 wetlands), which will need to be identified following a detailed site investigation.
- Effects on flora and fauna from the Project, particularly on wetlands and waterways. Works in and around these areas can destroy habitat, and increased sedimentation has the potential to impact water quality and instream ecology. These effects can arise from the earthworks, disturbance of contaminated land and any instream works.
- Impacts of cultural values: the cultural effects assessment (CEA) from Ngaa Rauru Kaiitahi is yet to be completed, and so the potential of these impacts are not yet known. There is also other iwi that may have not yet been considered (see below '*iwi and iwi authorities*')

**Significant regional or national benefits:**

The Project is considered to be regionally and nationally significant infrastructure and therefore provides important benefits to both the region and nationally.

The Project will also contribute to renewable energy generation for New Zealand. Like any development, there will be an element of economic benefit associated with the Project including the creation of employment opportunities.

**Appropriateness of utilising Fast Track:**

Horizons' view on this matter is neutral. Horizons accepts that the projects status as both renewable energy and regionally and nationally significant infrastructure is of importance, but due consideration is needed to ensure that the environmental effects of the Project are appropriately managed.

**Delivery of new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure:**

The Project is considered to be of regional or national importance under One Plan (2026) policy EIT-P1.

**Climate Change:**

The Project is for renewable energy, which has benefits in terms of contributing to a low carbon future by increasing New Zealand's renewable electricity generation capacity, contributing directly to national climate change mitigation and electrification targets.

The Project, however, is a significant infrastructure investment that has its own carbon footprint. The Applicant should consider the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the Project and how they will be managed or reduced.

**Consistency with Regional Planning Documents:**

Based on the information provided and the discussions had to date, there does not appear to be any activities associated with the proposal that would be Prohibited by the Regional Planning Documents.

There is nothing that stands out in the application that would make the Project unable to be consistent with the One Plan (2026), the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater (2020)(NES-F) or the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (2020) (NPS-FM), on the basis that a full Assessment of Environmental Effects would need to be completed confirming that the potential effects from the Project will be managed effectively, and in accordance with the effects management hierarchy set out in the NPS-FM for any NES-F consents.

The potential adverse effects of the Project will need to be avoided, remedied, mitigated and/or offset in a manner that is consistent with the objectives and policies of the regional planning documents. This will need to be demonstrated in the substantive application with the current technical reports, and the addition of further reports (such as the cultural effects assessment, an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan etc).

**Iwi and iwi authorities:**

The Applicant has discussed that the Project is within the rohe of Ngaa Rauru Kaiitahi and has engaged with them, as well as hapu and marae.

I note that, as well as Ngaa Rauru Kaiitahi, the Project is also within the rohe of Ngā Hapu o Te Iwi o Whanganui and/or Whanganui Land Settlement Negotiation Trust (Lower Whanganui) who represent Whanganui Land Settlement (Lower Whanganui) as an iwi authority for the purposes of the RMA. Their settlement claims within this area is noted to be very close to the Project area. We would encourage the Applicant to engage with this group as well as the iwi listed.

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.

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**Managers signoff**



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**Greg Bevin**

**Regulatory Manager**

**Date**

11/15/2026

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

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1. Contact Details		
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.		
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Taranaki Regional Council	
<b>*First name</b>	Leah	
<b>*Last name</b>	Miller	
<b>Postal address</b>	Taranaki Regional Council, Private Bag 713, Stratford 4332, New Zealand	
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>
<b>*Email</b>	consents@trc.govt.nz; and s 9(2)(a)	

2. Please provide your comments on this application
<p><b>Fast-track Approvals Act – Section 17(3)</b>  <b>Referral application: Waiinu Energy Project</b></p> <p><b>Taranaki Regional Council comments</b></p> <p><b>1. Competing applications lodged with the Council</b></p> <p>Taranaki Regional Council has reviewed its records for resource consent applications currently lodged with the Council that would constitute a competing application should a substantive application for the Waiinu Energy Project be lodged.</p> <p>Based on the information available at the time of preparing these comments, there are no applications currently lodged with Taranaki Regional Council that would be considered competing applications for the Waiinu Energy Project.</p>

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## **2. Existing resource consents where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA could apply**

*(Regional council matter – section 42(4)(a) of the Act)*

Taranaki Regional Council has reviewed existing resource consents held within the vicinity of the proposed project area, including consents relating to energy generation, land use, discharge to land and water, water takes, and associated infrastructure.

Based on the information available at this stage, the Council is not aware of any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) (existing interest priority) or 165ZI (requiring authority priority) of the Resource Management Act 1991 would be likely to apply in a manner that would preclude consideration of the Waiinu Energy Project, if it were to be applied for as a resource consent under the RMA.

### **Comments relevant to the Minister's decision-making criteria**

*(Sections 21 and 22 of the Fast-track Approvals Act)*

## **3. Ineligible activity (section 5 of the Act)**

Based on the information provided in the referral material, Taranaki Regional Council has not identified any aspects of the Waiinu Energy Project that would clearly meet the definition of an ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act.

The proposed activities appear to be of a type that is generally contemplated within the fast-track framework, subject to detailed effects assessment and appropriate conditions should the project proceed beyond referral.

## **4. Reasons to decline a referral application (section 21(5) of the Act)**

At this referral stage, and based on the information provided to Council, Taranaki Regional Council has not identified any clear matters that would require the referral application to be declined under section 21(5) of the Act.

In particular:

- The project appears capable of being assessed through a fast-track consenting process.
- No obvious procedural or jurisdictional barriers have been identified at this stage.
- Environmental effects, while potentially significant depending on final design and scale, appear capable of being assessed and managed through conditions if approvals were granted.

### **Closing comment**

Taranaki Regional Council's comments are limited to matters required under section 17(3) of the Fast-track Approvals Act and are based on the information available at the time of review. *The Council notes that a full assessment of effects, planning consistency, and conditions would be required should the project advance beyond referral.*

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**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Miller".

**Leah Miller**

**Consents Manager**    **Date** 15 May 2026

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

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1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	Whanganui District Council		
<b>*First name</b>	Jason		
<b>*Last name</b>	Shailer		
<b>Postal address</b>	101 Guyton Street Whanganui 4500		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	<b>Alternative</b>	s 9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
<b>*Email</b>	s 9(2)(a) [REDACTED]		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
<p>This is a response to the invitation for written comments dated 24 April 2026.</p> <p>Under section 17(3) of the Act, Whanganui District Council (WDC) <b>must</b> provide comments advising on the following matters:</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>WDC can confirm that no such applications exist.</i></p> <p>To this end, please ensure any comments you choose to provide are specific to this particular referral application, and linked to the Minister's decision-making criteria as set out in sections 21 and 22 of the Act. In this regard, we are particularly interested in comments you might have on the following matters:</p> <p>1. whether you consider the project may involve an ineligible activity, and if so, why (as defined in section 5 of the Act)</p>

*WDC has assessed the activity under Section 21(3)(b). WDC is not aware that the activity involves an ineligible activity.*

2. 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).

*WDC has considered if there are any reasons to decline the application. These reasons set out in section 21 (5) (a) as assessed below:*

*Comment on **S21(5)(a) (i)-(v)**. That the project is inconsistent with any of the following: (i) and treaty settlement (iv) a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe.*

*The Ngaa Rauru Katitahi Claims Settlement Act 2005 is relevant to the application. The applicant has indicated they are engaging with Te Kaahui o Rauru. WDC defer to Te Kaahui o Rauru to comment on whether the application is inconsistent.*

*WDC do not have a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreement . However it is noted WDC have been invited to initiate an agreement with Te Kaahui o Rauru under Section 58 O(1) of the RMA.*

*Comment on **S21(5)(c)**. WDC has reviewed the information provided in the referral application.*

*Comment can only be provided at a high level without full assessments provided at this stage. It is noted that the application is large in scale and its environs have landscapes and areas with appropriate District Plan protections. Technical reports provided are high level for the referral stage and identify the method for the substantive application. Comments are made:*

*- Landscape / visual effects: In agreement with the applicant WDC has undertaken a technical review of the Landscape and Visual effects memo (Boffa Miskell 27/03/2026 and the related Landscape Visuals (Appendix 6A). This review has been undertaken by an appropriately qualified person, Matthew Jones from Isthmus.*

*The site and its immediate environs has important ecological, landscape and cultural values that require appropriate assessment. The peer review shows that the landscape assessment provides an appropriate methodology based on Te Tangi a te Manu but remains high level. WDC acknowledge that the project shaping has been iterative to address landscape and visual effects. WDC appreciates that further detail will come in the substantive application and do note an absence of any detail in the landscape assessment on the cultural landscape values and how engagement with iwi/hapū has shaped and influenced design and layout.*

*-Archaeological effects: WDC has reviewed the Brief Statement of Archaeological Record (Archaeological Resource Management 18/09/2025) in Appendix 8. Council supports the need for a comprehensive archaeological authority as recommended noting the historic occupation and cultural significance of this landscape. Appendix 2 provides an outline of Marae, Māori land, known archaeological and cultural sites and it is understood that the applicant is engaging with iwi and hapū on the cultural effects. WDC understand that in coastal areas in Taranaki there is the potential for 'unknown' finds in the area and that this is a matter that will need to managed in the project stages.*

*-Ecological effects: WDC has reviewed the Summary of Ecological Investigations (Boffa Miskell 27 March 2026) in Appendix 6. Section 5.1 indicates that the site is mainly exotic pasture, plantation*

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*radiata pine with areas of seasonal cropland and localised areas of mixed indigenous and exotic shrubland. The referral application states that the project infrastructure avoids areas of indigenous vegetation. WDC has a strong interest in ensuring robust requirements around revegetation and pest management plans that are likely to be required. WDC will continue to work alongside other agencies regarding advice regarding ecological effects, particularly the regional councils.*

*-Acoustic effects WDC has reviewed the Assessment of Acoustic Effects Summary (Marshall Day 26 March 2026) in Appendix 9. The assessment outlines a standard methodology based on the appropriate NZ Standards listed in the District Plan. The assessment is high level and summarises conclusions for the Wind Farm, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Solar Farm that they will comply with the relevant NZ Standard and District Plan limits.*

*The Council acknowledges that the noise assessment has been an iterative process that will be shown in the full AEE that will benefit from data from background noise environments. WDC will be interested in ensuring noise logging is comprehensive, particularly in proximity to dwelling clusters.*

*WDC supports a Construction Noise and Vibration Management Plan that is prepared to best practise standards as described in the application.*

*-Other effects: There are effects and development matters that the referral application does not yet assess in detail. Section 8.15 of the referral applications outlines the known transport effects and how these will be addressed. A full integrated transport assessment, as described in the referral application, is required. Technical reports have not been provided on this matter, although it is acknowledged that detailed work will be required to determine the level of effect. In WDCs experience with such projects, conditions and management plans are applied at all project phases to address effects.*

**Section 22(6)** of the FTAA allows consideration of effects on existing and likely future land uses. Given that the project area includes Māori land, which is scarce in the area due to historic confiscation, further information and input from Te Kaahui o Rauru will assist to understand how the proposal may affect long-term development opportunities for Māori landowners.

**Under section 22 (1)(b)(a)** of the FTAA the Minister may consider whether the referral would provide a timelier and cost-effective process. Although there are upfront benefits for approvals through the fast track process there are operational considerations particularly post compliance that need to be embedded within the process to ensure on-going efficiency for Councils implementing the consents.

*It is requested that clear detail on the individual consents is provided through the process, as this will support effective post-consent monitoring within Council systems and between councils. Consideration is also needed on how these consents will be managed across district and regional boundaries to ensure integrated management and effective compliance monitoring. Clear and enforceable consent conditions and management plans, with clear objectives will assist implementation phases. WDC want to remain engaged in this ongoing discussion to support coordinated cross-boundary management and effective post-consent implementation.*

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**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jason Shailer

Operations Manager – Regulatory and Compliance

Whanganui District Council

Date 18 May 2026

# Hon Nicola Willis

Minister of Finance  
Minister for Economic Growth  
Minister for Social Investment



11 May 2026

Hon Chris Bishop  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

REQ-0032017

Dear Chris

Thank you for the opportunity to comment under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on the following referral applications: Out of Scope [redacted] Waiinu Energy Park (Waiinu Energy Project) (FTAA-2603-1191), Out of Scope [redacted] [redacted] [redacted].

I am providing comment in my capacity as Minister for Economic Growth, focusing on whether the applications are likely to deliver significant economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act, based on the information provided.

Out of Scope [redacted]

Out of Scope

***Waiinu Energy Park (Waiinu Energy Project), FTAA-2603-1191***

This application seeks approval for the construction and operation of the Waiinu Energy Park, an integrated renewable energy development on farmland near Waitōtara (South Taranaki and northwestern Whanganui). The proposal combines wind generation, solar generation, and battery storage, supported by associated roading, substations, and a transmission connection to the national grid.


The application states the project would generate up to 1,760 GWh of renewable electricity per year, described as enough to meet the electricity needs of 253,000 households (up to 12% of private dwellings in New Zealand). Meridian also estimates capital investment to construct the project will be approximately \$1.5 billion and estimated annual operational costs of \$28 million per year for the lifetime of the project.

In terms of employment, the application states the project would provide an estimated peak of 300–350 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during construction and notes a total construction workforce likely to exceed 3,000 individuals. The economic assessment estimates that 15 to 20 direct full-time equivalent jobs would be required locally to operate and maintain the facility over its lifetime.

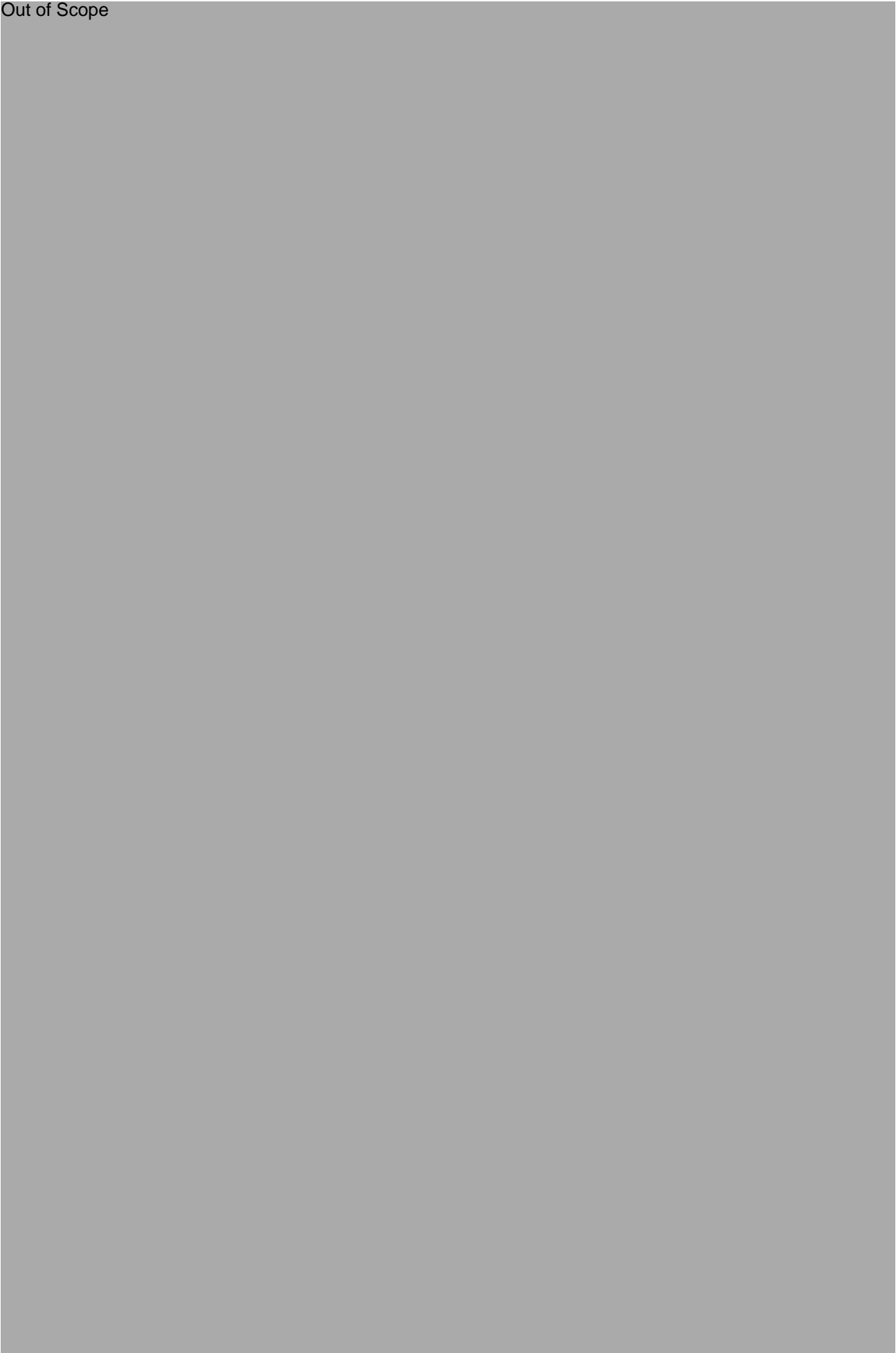
While the referral application does not include estimates on the expected GDP impacts, the scale of the project, including its contribution to renewable electricity supply, the size of capital investment, and the scale of construction-phase employment, indicates it is likely to deliver significant national and regional economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act.

Out of Scope

Out of Scope



Out of Scope



Out of Scope

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 Shane Jones

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



19 May 2026

Hon Chris Bishop  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

## **Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Waiinu Energy Park referral application (FTAA-2603-1191)**

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 read 'Shane Jones'.

Hon Shane Jones  
**Minister for Regional Development**

## **Annex One – Regional Development comments**

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### **Project overview**

1. The Waiinu Energy Park application is for a project to construct and operate, an integrated renewable energy development on farmland near Waitōtara, in South Taranaki and northwestern Whanganui. The project will cover an area of approximately 4,300 hectares and include:
  - a. 510,000 solar modules across 350 hectares, and a battery energy storage system
  - b. up to 56 wind turbines, each measuring up to 250 metres to blade tip from ground level
  - c. supporting infrastructure including an internal road network of around 37.5 kilometres and a 220-kilovolt transmission line of around 10 kilometres.
2. The applicant estimates the project would generate up to 1,760 gigawatt-hours of renewable electricity annually, contributing 3.7 per cent of New Zealand's current generation and powering around 253,000 households.
3. The applicant further estimates that the project would result in \$1.5 billion of capital investment and generate employment for 300-350 full-time equivalent jobs during peak construction.

### **Regional Development comments**

4. Although the applicant has not provided an economic impact assessment, based on the information provided by the applicant, the proposed development would have significant regional and national economic benefits by boosting energy supply and potentially increasing regional employment opportunities through expanded manufacturing investment.
5. Although the application notes the project will not take place on highly productive land, it would be useful to understand the opportunity cost arising from land used for energy generation and other infrastructure becoming unavailable for primary production.
6. The application primarily has implications for New Zealand's energy system, and commentary from the Energy portfolio will be important in assessing the strategic importance and potential energy system impacts of the project.
7. I also understand that based on a map provided by the applicant, the project partially overlap with a prospecting permit application made by Tectoniq Pacific Limited (Tectoniq) under the Crown Minerals Act 1991 (CMA). The permit application is still being processed and covers all metallic and non-metallic minerals (excluding uranium) as well as dunite and serpentinite.
8. A prospecting permit, if granted, would allow Tectoniq to carry out only low-impact prospecting activities. Tectoniq could not progress to exploration (such as drilling and bulk sampling) or mining unless it obtained additional CMA permits, appropriate resource consents *and* secured the permission of the relevant landowners.
9. My officials have referred Tectoniq to the Waiinu Energy Park project's public website, and suggested Tectoniq engage with Meridian Energy so the parties can understand each other's activities and intentions.

# 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: Waiinu Energy Project, FTAA-2603-1191**

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

Demand for electricity is expected to increase by 70–170% above 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 risk our ability to electrify our economy away from fossil fuels.

While any new electricity generation is to be welcomed, we should particularly welcome generation proposals that are large scale, flexible and located close to demand.

Meridian proposes a large-scale wind farm and solar farm, with battery storage that will contribute to energy system flexibility. The proposed 420 megawatt peak capacity of the wind generation paired with the proposed 150 megawatt peak capacity of the solar generation will make this project one of New Zealand's largest renewable energy projects. It would have a potential capacity of over 500MW, and average annual generation of up to 1,600GWh (approximately equivalent to the electricity used by 230,000 New Zealand households). For comparison New Zealand's largest hydro power station, Manapōuri, has an average annual generation of up to 4,800GWh. The proposed battery energy storage system will also significantly increase the energy system benefits of the solar generation that it will be integrated with, enabling battery discharge at times that improve security of supply and produce power at times of high wholesale prices.

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

I note that other Ministers and agencies are better placed to advise on other grounds for referral, such as the environmental impacts of the proposal.

Yours sincerely

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

Hon Simeon Brown  
**Minister for Energy**

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

Project name	Waiinu Energy Park
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1. Contact Details			
Please ensure that you have authority to comment on the application on behalf of those named on this form.			
<b>Organisation name</b>	Department of Conservation		
<b>*First name</b>	David		
<b>*Last name</b>	Greaves		
<b>Postal address</b>			
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>	
<b>*Email</b>	<a href="mailto:Fast-track@doc.govt.nz">Fast-track@doc.govt.nz;</a>		

2. Please provide your comments on this application
Comments follow overleaf.

### Manager's signoff

Jenni Fitzgerald

18<sup>th</sup> of May 2025

## Director-General of Conservation s17 comments

<b>Project name</b>	Waiinu Energy Park
<b>Applicant name</b>	Meridian Energy Limited
<b>Application number</b>	FTAA-2603-1191
<b>Project summary details</b>	<p>Waiinu Energy Park is a proposed renewable energy park which includes wind turbines, solar array, battery energy storage system (BESS), transmission and grid connection, access roads and associated supporting project infrastructure.</p> <p>At this stage it is proposed that the development could generate 1,600GWh of renewable energy annually and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 wind turbines of up to 250m in height, generating a total of up to 420MW</li> <li>• 100ha of solar array</li> <li>• 8-10km of new transmission lines</li> <li>• A grid-scale battery energy storage system.</li> </ul> <p>No public conservation land has been identified on the Site.</p>

### 1 General comment

- 1.1.1 As the project includes an approval under a specified Act for which DOC is the administering agency, the Applicant was required to undertake pre-lodgement consultation in accordance with section 11(e) of the Fast-track Approvals Act (FTAA).
- 1.1.2 A meeting between DOC and the Applicant occurred on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2025 wherein the Applicant provided an overview of the project, including preliminary plans and an ecological assessment. DOC provided a formal pre-lodgement consultation summary to the Applicant on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2025.
- 1.1.3 While DOC does not have sufficient information to determine the level of any actual and potential environmental effects, DOC considers that it is likely that with the appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels.
- 1.1.4 DOC is not aware of any reason the project should not be referred.

### 2 Minister's decision on referral application

- 2.1.1 FTAA sections 21 and 22 set out matters to be considered in determining whether a referral application should be accepted.
- 2.1.2 DOC notes that other agencies are better placed to comment on most matters. Comments below are therefore targeted to sections where DOC has specific interests or information relevant to the Minister's decision.

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2.1.3 For completeness, DOC has considered the criteria for assessing referral applications in section 22 and has not identified anything it considers the Minister should take into account.

2.1.4 Section 21(3) and (4) set out when the Minister may/must decline a referral application. DOC has considered these criteria and comments as follows:

Section	Criteria	Comments
21(3)(b)	Does the project involve an ineligible activity	DOC has considered section 5(1) (f), (h), (i), (j) and (k). DOC has not identified any aspect of the project that would be considered ineligible under these sections.
21(3)(c)	Is there adequate information to inform a decision	<p>The Applicant provided a high-level ecology assessment prepared by Boffa Miskell and dated 27 March 2026.</p> <p>If the project is referred, the substantive application should be supported by a comprehensive ecological assessment that specifically addresses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence (including flight paths) of birds, including migratory birds. The assessment should include bird radar data that can demonstrate likely bird movements during day and night.</li> <li>• Particular regard should be given to information on crakes and bittern, including how the population travels through the site and adjacent wetland, the coastal environment and nearby plantation forestry.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to the potential effects of the solar array on water fowl. Overseas examples have identified large areas of solar panels can result in confusion for bird species (incorrectly identifying them as large areas of water), with consequential adverse effects resulting.</li> <li>• Bats have been identified in the vicinity of the Site. To better understand the potential effects on bats radar surveys should be conducted to determine the number and flight paths of bats.</li> <li>• It is anticipated that the windfarm will result in bird strike. Consideration should be given to seeking an approval under the Wildlife Act for the handling of carcasses, as part of the monitoring and mitigation package that will likely be required by conditions of consent.</li> <li>• Confirmation is required on the extent of works proposed within waterways and wetlands, including construction and enhancement activities.</li> <li>• Freshwater surveys should be provided for the Waiau stream as proposed in Appendix 7, particularly in order to determine instream value and fish species present to inform fish passage</li> </ul>

Section	Criteria	Comments
		<p>design (using additional survey methods than just eDNA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish Passage and requirements under S51 - Complex Freshwater Fisheries approvals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A stocktake of any current fish barriers present on the site and advise of any works to remove or alter them if works are proposed in waterways.</li> <li>○ How any culverts and diversions to be implemented will be designed in accordance with New Zealand Fish Passage Guidelines</li> <li>○ Material required under clause 3 of Schedule 9 of the Act for the Complex Freshwater Fisheries Activity approval required for any culverts.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Description of how construction and ongoing management of the site will ensure compliance with the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations. The Applicant is encouraged to identify opportunities to enhance waterways as a result of the proposal wherever possible.</li> <li>• How the construction and ongoing management effects, particularly any discharge of sediment and stormwater, will be managed to avoid sensitive fish migration periods, and the whitebaiting season. The Waitotara river is a significant whitebaiting river for the region.</li> <li>• Measurements and length of the freshwater ecosystems present e.g. drains, and waterways.</li> <li>• Good description (including measurements) of the impacts of the project on freshwater ecosystem i.e. length of waterways and wetlands lost.</li> <li>• How the impacts will be avoided, remedied, mitigated or offset/compensated.</li> <li>• If offsetting is used, then the details around the offsetting model e.g. SEV/ECR calculations.</li> <li>• Proposed conditions that mitigate the impacts of the project.</li> <li>• The substantive application should identify proposed mitigation measures to address anticipated effects on wildlife, along with a comprehensive monitoring and review process.</li> </ul> <p>DOC considers the information provided is high-level but adequate in terms of a referral decision.</p>
21(4)	Are there any other reasons not specified	DOC has not identified any reasons why the project should not be referred.

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Section	Criteria	Comments
21(5)(a)	Is the project inconsistent with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Treaty settlement;</li> <li>• Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019;</li> <li>• Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011.</li> </ul>	DOC has not identified any inconsistency with any relevant settlement or other obligation. Relevant Treaty Settlement Acts are:  Ngā Rauru Kītahi Claims Settlement Act 2005.
21(5)(b)	Would it be more appropriate to deal with the proposed approvals under another Act(s)	DOC has not identified any reason why wildlife approval 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 measures and conditions that could be implemented, we consider 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, 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 under the Wildlife Act 1953.
21(5)(g)	Would a substantive application have any competing applications	No competing applications relating to wildlife approvals have been identified.

2.1.5 Section 22 sets out the criteria for the Minister for accepting a referral application. DOC has considered these criteria and comments as follows:

Section	Criteria	Comments
22(1)(b)(i)	Would referring the project to the fast-track process facilitate the project, including in a way that is more timely and cost-effective than under normal processes?	A Wildlife Act approval would generally take approximately three to four months to process, which is not significantly longer than the FTAA process is expected to take. However, there may be benefits for the Applicant in terms of consideration being combined with RMA approvals (rather than being advanced by a separate process) and given the different decision-making framework under the FTAA.
22(2)(a)(ix)	Will this project address significant environmental issues?	No.
22(2)(a)(x)	Is the project consistent with local or regional planning document, including spatial strategies?	<p>The site does not contain any Public Conservation Land, however the alignment of the proposed project's impacts on wildlife with statutory planning documents should be considered as part of the overall assessment.</p> <p>The application is not inconsistent with the relevant statutory planning provisions. However, consideration needs to be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the protection of threatened indigenous species, on the land where the energy park is proposed, to enhance their populations and improve their conservation status; and</li> <li>• protecting and restoring relevant indigenous ecosystems</li> </ul>
22(b)	Any other matters the Minister may consider as relevant?	No other project specific matters which may be of importance for the Minister to consider have been identified.

### 3 Other considerations

3.1.1 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

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included in a substantive application. In some cases, it has been necessary for applicants to seek additional approvals via normal processing. This can result in inefficiencies, additional costs and undermining the benefits of the 'one stop shop' approach of the FTAA.

- 3.1.2 DOC recommends the Applicant consider whether it should seek to include additional approvals that may be required for the project and suggests the Minister should consider whether further information should be sought from the Applicant.
- 3.1.3 DOC recommends consideration of whether any culverts or works within waterways might require complex freshwater fisheries approval, as highlighted to the Applicant as part of the pre-lodgement consultation. The referral application currently indicates that no approvals are sought under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983. However, there is currently not enough information to determine if additional approvals are required.
- 3.1.4 Given the lack of specific detail in the referral application, DOC considers it would be highly beneficial for the Applicant to engage further with DOC as it relates to any conservation approvals (as well as conservation matters subject to RMA consideration) prior to making any substantive application. Benefits include ensuring information necessary to support decision-making with respect to conservation approvals is included; 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 specify (s27)**

- 4.1.1 None identified.



Jenni Fitzgerald  
Fast-Track Applications Manager

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

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> of May 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



## Comments on referral application under the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024

### Waiinui Energy Park Project, FTAA-2603-1191

Contact Details			
Organisation Name	Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)		
Contact person	Fast-Track Team		
Contact Number	s 9(2)(a)	Alternative	
Email	<a href="mailto:fasttrack@heritage.org.nz">fasttrack@heritage.org.nz</a>		

#### General Comments

1. Meridian Energy Limited (Applicant) has lodged an application for referral of the Waiinui Energy Park Project (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. HNZPT was approached in September 2025 by the applicant seeking initial comments on the proposed development. HNZPT was provided with the proposed plans, and a brief memo regarding archaeological risk, *Bruce, I. 2025. Waiinui Energy Park, Brief Statement of Archaeological Record*, (screening report) which has been submitted as Appendix 8 of the referral application.

#### Archaeological Authority Application

5. The screening report identifies three recorded archaeological sites within the project area and potential for unrecorded subsurface sites which could be affected during proposed earthworks activities.
6. HNZPT notes that an archaeological assessment of effects for the project is currently in preparation and agrees with the recommendation that an archaeological authority will be required.
7. HNZPT expects to also be provided with a draft Archaeological Management Plan to provide feedback on or approve through this process.
8. The project area sits within the rohe of Ngaa Rauru Kiihahi, and we note that Meridian Energy has been engaging with tangata whenua through its governance organisation Te Kaahui o



Raura (TRoK). HNZPT is pleased to note that that TKoR is working with tangata whenua to prepare a cultural effects assessment (CEA).

9. Should the project be referred, appropriate consultation with tangata whenua must be provided with a substantive application, and a CEA will assist HNZPT to assess the application's impact on Māori values.

#### Effects on Archaeological Values

10. In order to mitigate the adverse effects on archaeological values, a suite of conditions will be required. This has not yet been discussed with the Applicant, but we anticipate discussion with the applicant once the archaeological impacts are fully assessed.

#### **Conclusion**

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

- A fulsome archaeological assessment;
- Appropriate methodologies and strategies proposed;
- Appropriate draft management plan and research strategy;
- Evidence of appropriate consultation with tangata whenua; and
- Appropriate draft conditions.

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

<b>Project name</b>	Waiinu Energy Park
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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](mailto: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.		
<b>Organisation name (if relevant)</b>	New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA)	
<b>*First name</b>	Nicola	
<b>*Last name</b>	Foran	
<b>Postal address</b>		
<b>*Contact phone number</b>	s 9(2)(a)	<b>Alternative</b>
<b>*Email</b>	environmentalplanning@nzta.govt.nz	

2. Please provide your comments on this application
<p>NZTA thanks the Minister for the opportunity to comment on the referral of this application into the fast track approvals process.</p> <p>NZTA has had pre-application engagement with the applicant regarding this project in September 2025. This consisted of email engagement with the applicant’s consultant and NZTA provided preliminary feedback. The information provided at the time was also assessed by NZTA subject matter experts. During the initial pre-application engagement the applicant undertook with NZTA, no significant concerns or adverse effects were identified by NZTA.</p> <p>NZTA would need to see the substantive application to be able to determine actual impacts on the state highway network, however developments of this nature usually impact the network through increased heavy vehicle movements during site development and construction, and a sustained minor increase in traffic volumes at the completion of the development.</p> <p>As part of the substantive application, NZTA would expect to see a comprehensive Integrated Transport Assessment prepared, along with a construction management plan, a glint and glare report and mitigation measures to address any adverse effects on the state highway resulting from this development. If upgrades are required to mitigate effects, the developer would be required to work with NZTA and fund any works required.</p> <p>Therefore, based on the information provided, NZTA has no concerns with this project, Waiinu Energy Park, being referred into the fast track approvals process. NZTA would welcome the opportunity to provide comments on any substantive application in due course.</p>

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**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "nicolaforan". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

**Nicola Foran**

Date 8 May 2026

Fast Track Application Team

[info@fasttrack.govt.nz](mailto:info@fasttrack.govt.nz)

18 May 2026

Teena koe e te Minita,

**R.E: REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK ON REFERRAL APPLICATION CRM:0139012926 FROM MERIDIAN ENERGY FOR THE WAIINU ENERGY PARK**

This feedback is provided in respect of the Meridian Energy (**The Applicant**) Waiinu Energy Park project (**The Proposal**).

This feedback is provided on behalf of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi and Te Kaahui o Rauru Trust, the post-settlement governance entity (together, **Te Kaahui o Rauru**). Te Kaahui o Rauru is authorised to provide this statement on behalf of the trustees of the Trust (**the Paepae Representatives**).

The Trust is a relevant iwi authority, Treaty settlement entity and an applicant group for the purposes of section 18(2) of the Fast Track Approvals Act 2024 (**the Act**).

Te Kaahui o Rauru has a strong understanding of the significant adverse impacts on-shore wind generation has on the revitalisation of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga. This in part is informed through the experience Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi has from the establishment of the wind farm adjacent to the application site at Waipipi operated by Mercury NZ Limited. This is considered to be relevant context for this proposal.

*Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi Deed of Settlement 2003*

The Crown and Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi settled our historical Treaty of Waitangi claims in 2003. In our settlement, the Crown has acknowledged the importance to Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi of revitalising Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga and our desire to practice Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga.

Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga is the foundation of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi culture. Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga is the term used by Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi to describe those values, rights and responsibilities Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi holds according to custom, including the values, rights and responsibilities recognised by Te Tiriti o Waitangi/the Treaty of Waitangi and its principles.

Te Kaahui o Rauru Trust is a trust with charitable status and acts for the benefit of Ngaa Uki o Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi. The Trust holds many functions, including:

- a) As the post-settlement governance entity for Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi established pursuant to the Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi settlement;

- b) Representing Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi as an iwi authority for the purposes of the Resource Management Act 1991;
- c) Administration of statutory acknowledgements, deeds of recognition and statements of association including for those reserves adjoining and adjacent to the proposed location for the Application;
- d) Ownership and administration of fee-simple land parcels within and adjacent to the proposed location for the Application; and
- e) As an applicant on behalf of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi for recognition orders under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, including:
  - i. Customary marine title between Te Awanui-a-Taiehu (Patea River) in the north, through to the Whanganui River, in the south, out to 12 nautical miles; and
  - ii. Protected customary rights for mahinga kai between Te Awanui-a-Taiehu (Patea River) in the north, through to Whanganui River, in the south, out to 12 nautical miles.

The Trust Deed (**'Te Kawa'**) provides that the Paepae Representatives will be guided by the following:

*Kia rangatira te tuu Te Kaahui o Rauru  
hei roopuu whakatiinana i ngaa rau wawata  
o te iwi Maaori, o te motu hoki*

Te Kawa requires that Paepae Representatives be guided by and informed by maatauranga maaori in their policy development and decision-making. That is, "Maatauranga Maaori is informed by puurakau, karakia, mooteatea, whakataukii, whakapapa and many other puna koorero. Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga is the foundation of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi culture and is derived from this Maaori world view".

Te Kaahui o Rauru has developed and lodged an iwi planning document with relevant local authorities which articulates this world view into a resource management context; that is the Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi Puutaiao Plan. The Puutaiao Plan itself is an expression of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga.

In addition Te Kaahui o Rauru has developed Ka mate kaainga tahi, ka ora kaainga rua – the Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi Climate Change Strategy which contextualises Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga for climate change. Ka mate kaainga tahi, ka ora kaainga rua itself is an expression of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga.

This world view is reliant on, and derived from the relationship of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi with the attributes of the environment and associated aatua domains. Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga that is reliant on the Waiinu and Waitootara area face irreversible change with the prospect of this application. The relationship Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi are able to hold and maintain with these spaces similarly face this irreversible change.

*Te Kaahui o Rauru engagement with the Applicant*

As described in the referral application Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi has engaged with Meridian in good faith on this project for a number of years now. In our view that engagement is best characterised as incomplete with a number of information gaps and other concerns remaining unresolved. This

has limited the ability for Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi to apply our Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga to assess the impacts of the proposal and ultimately develop the Cultural Effects Assessment relied on in the referral application to demonstrate consistency with our Treaty Settlement arrangements.

Information about the proposed project and how it impacts on Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga has been and remains central to the engagement Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi is committed to with the Applicant.

Although time has elapsed it is our view that the assessment contained in the referral application remains at a high level. The referral application correctly identifies our Treaty Settlement. Despite this, the attributes of the settlement arrangements described above are yet to be reflected in and have bearing on the technical reports and assessments the proposal relies on.

The current benefits assessment remains high level, with no meaningful consideration of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi or local communities. At present the assessment identifies the scale of economic activity, as well as general alignment of the project with national energy/climate change strategies. In our view economic activities should not be conflated with economic benefit. There is little detail available in the assessment completed to date with respect to how these benefits would accrue locally, or how these would meaningfully impact on Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi in a positive sense or assist in revitalising Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga.

Conversely, it is considered that the adverse effects on Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi that result from this proposal on the landscape when viewed through Ngaa Rauru Kiitahitanga, and on the limited maaori land parcels within and adjacent to the project area, as well as marae which overlook or are located within the proposed site remain significant.

*Position on the referral application*

Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi and Meridian have recently entered into a Terms of Engagement, in part to facilitate genuine engagement by the parties in this process. In our view there is risk that genuine engagement is frustrated if subjected to the time pressures of a fast-track process.

It is our view that upholding the Settlement arrangements of Ngaa Rauru Kiitahi is of substantial benefit to Aotearoa. Consistency with these Settlement arrangements is yet to be reflected into the proposal.

It is for these reasons Te Kaahui o Rauru stress that these issues, information gaps and the completion of the final Cultural Effects Assessment ('CEA') must be resolved ahead of any substantive application being lodged.

Ngaa manaakitanga,



**Tahinganui Hina**  
**Tumu Whakarae (Chairperson)**  
**Te Kaahui o Rauru**