



Expert Panel, Southland Wind Farm [FTAA-2508-1095]

By email: Substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Contact Energy's application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) for the Southland Wind Farm.

I am providing these comments in my capacity as Minister for Energy, under section 53(2)(J) of the Act.

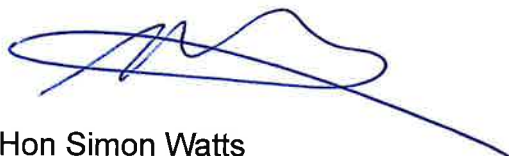
I have considered how this project would support the purpose of the Act, i.e. *to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.*

I consider this proposed project has significant regional and national benefits as follows:

- The proposed windfarm would make a noticeable contribution to New Zealand's renewable energy generation capacity. The proposed capacity of between 250 – 350 MW peak generation would make it the largest windfarm in New Zealand (at the time of this letter). Contact Energy has estimated this is able to generate enough renewable electricity to power up to 150,000 homes. By comparison, the current largest windfarm in NZ has approximately 222 MW max generation capacity.
- Renewable electricity generation of this scale could support multiple outcomes including:
 - contribution to climate change targets, as increasing renewable electricity generation can displace use of fossil fuels in both the electricity and wider energy systems (eg reducing the use of thermal fuels for electricity generation, and supporting increased demand for electricity in sectors such as transport)
 - contribution to security of energy supply, both through increased generation but also diversity of generation – since wind generation differs across different regions of New Zealand
 - downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices, which supports more affordable energy for New Zealand firms and households. Affordable energy also has wider flow-on benefits to the wider economy – eg by reducing input costs for commercial and industrial energy users.

I support the Panel's continued consideration of this application.

Yours sincerely

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

Hon Simon Watts
Minister for Energy