



FTAA-2603-1191: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 2 decisions

Project Name: Waiinu Energy Park

Date submitted:	15 June 2026	Tracking #: 26-BRF-01608	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Chris Bishop, Minister for Infrastructure	Decision on recommendations	22 June 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz Approve the attached notice of decisions letter.
Number of appendices: 6	Appendices: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Statutory framework for making decisions2. Application documents for the Waiinu Energy Park project3. Stage 1 Briefing Note and decisions4. Section 18 Report on Treaty settlements and other obligations5. Comments received from parties invited under section 17 (including the further information received from the applicant under section 20)6. Draft Notice of Decisions

Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Helen Willis		
Manager	Stephanie Frame	s 9(2)(a)	✓
General Manager	Ilana Miller	s 9(2)(a)	

Project location

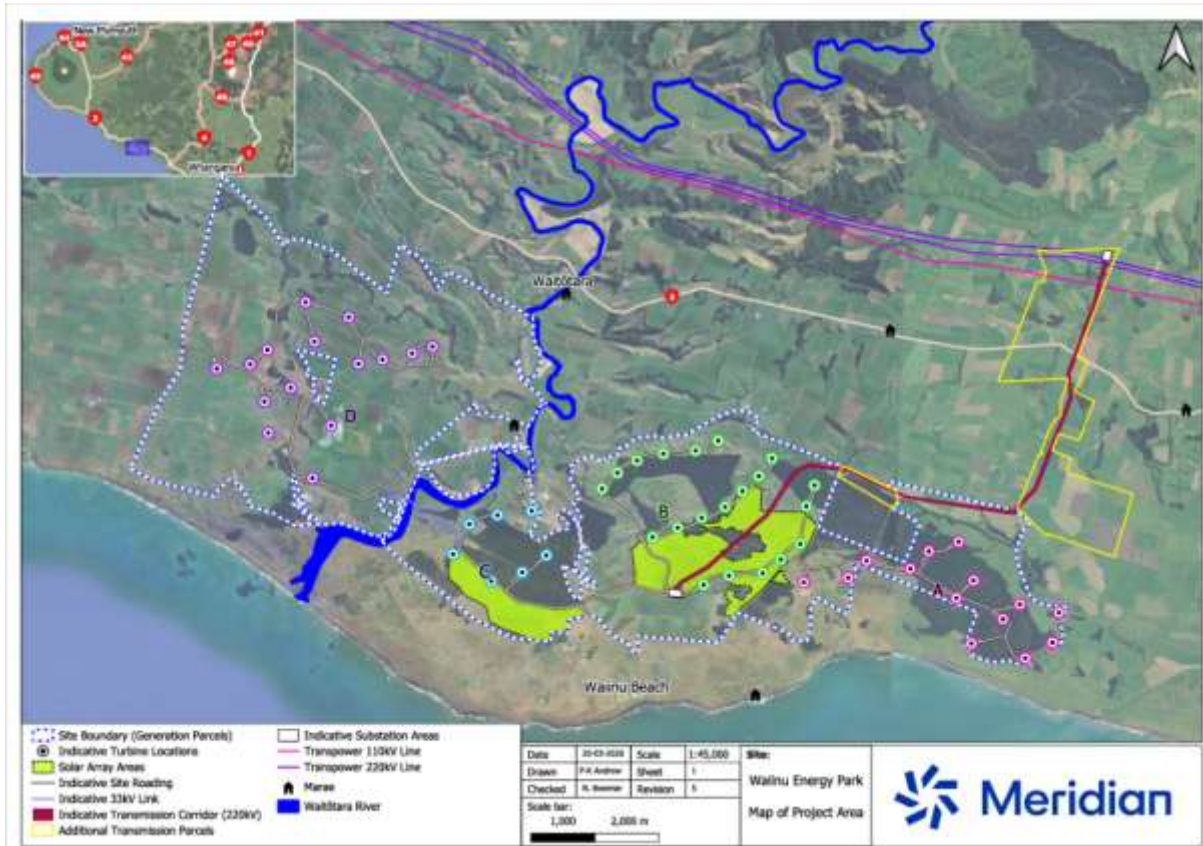


Image 1: Map showing the project site boundary and location

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your decisions under section 21 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on the application from Meridian Energy Limited (the applicant) to refer the Waiinu Energy Park project (the project) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. A copy of the application is in Appendix 2. This is the second briefing on this application. The first (Stage 1) briefing (BRF-00888) with your initial decisions annotated is in Appendix 3.
3. The project is an integrated renewable energy development located across the boundary of two regions, Taranaki and Manawatū-Whanganui (with the majority in the Taranaki Region), near the township of Waitōtara.
4. The project includes development and operation of:
 - a. a wind farm with up to 56 turbines (up to 250m high) with associated foundations, crane pads and met masts
 - b. a solar farm comprising approximately 510,000 panels over approximately 350 ha, supported by power conversion units, underground cabling and internal access tracks
 - c. a battery energy storage system for storage and supply of electricity
 - d. supporting infrastructure including a 37.5 km internal road network, substations, a 200 kV transmission line connecting to the national grid, operating and maintenance facilities, and security systems.

5. The project will require the proposed approvals:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
 - b. approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953
 - c. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.
6. We consider the project aligns with the section 22 referral criteria. We consider the project would have significant regional and national benefits because it will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure and address significant environmental issues, specifically by supporting climate change mitigation. The project does not appear to include an ineligible activity.
7. We recommend you **accept** the referral application. We seek your decisions on this recommendation, proposed directions to the expert panel, and notification of your decisions.

Assessment against statutory framework

8. The statutory framework for your decision-making is set out in Appendix 1. You must apply this framework when you are deciding whether to accept or decline the referral application and when deciding on any further requirements or directions associated with referral of the project.
9. Before accepting the project, you must consider the following:
 - a. the application (in Appendix 2)
 - b. the section 18 Treaty settlements report (in Appendix 4)
 - c. any comments received from invited parties and further information received from the applicant within the specified time frame (in Appendix 5).
10. Following that, you may accept the application if you are satisfied that it meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act and if there are no reasons you must decline the application. We provide our advice on these matters below.

Section 18 Treaty settlements and other obligations report

11. A Treaty settlements and other obligations report (the report) prepared under section 18 of the Act is attached in Appendix 4.
12. The report identifies Te Kaahui o Rauru as a relevant Treaty Settlement entity, and Ngaati Hinewaiata hapuu and Parininihi ki Waitōtara as other Māori groups with interests in the application.
13. The Ngaa Rauru Claims Settlement Act 2005 (the Settlement Act) is relevant to the project area. The area is not within the common marine and coastal area, and no Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or joint management agreements apply.
14. The Settlement Act provides for a statutory acknowledgement over the Waitōtara River, Tapuarau Conservation Area, and Nukumaru Recreation Reserve. The Ngaa Rauru Kiihahi settlement also provides for deeds of recognition in relation to the Waitōtara River and Tapuarau Conservation Area. Parts of the project area directly adjoin the associated statutory areas. Under the RMA and the settlement legislation, a consent authority must have regard to a statutory acknowledgement when deciding whether an iwi is an 'affected person' for the purposes of notification decisions and must provide a summary of any consent applications relevant to the statutory area to a statutory acknowledgment holder.

15. The report concludes that the process for inviting comment from Te Kaahui o Rauru under the Act is comparable to the requirements for statutory acknowledgements under the RMA and Treaty settlements.
16. In response to the invitation for Māori groups to comment under section 17(1)(d) of the Act, Ngaati Hinewaiata (Te Ihupuku Marae) provided feedback on the application. Ngaati Hinewaiata expressed a desire to formalise a relationship with the applicant as partners to promote the hapuu's environmental, social, cultural, and spiritual interests in relation to the project.
17. The report does not identify any matters that make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts.

Section 16 Effects of Treaty settlements and other obligations on decision-making

18. The report concludes that as the project area does not extend into the statutory areas, no procedural requirements are triggered in relation to deeds of recognition.

Written comments received

19. Comments were received under section 17 from the following parties:
 - a. relevant local authorities – Taranaki Regional Council (TRC) and South Taranaki District Council (STDC) for the Taranaki Region, and Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council (MWRC) and Whanganui District Council (WDC) for the Manawatū-Whanganui Region
 - b. Ministers – the Minister for Energy, the Minister of Climate Change, the Minister for Arts, Cultural and Heritage, the Minister for Economic Growth, and the Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti / Minister for Māori Development
 - c. relevant administering agencies – the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPH)
 - d. the Māori groups identified in the list provided – Te Ihupuu Marae (Te Kaahui o Rauru) (TIM)
 - e. any other persons – the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA).
20. The key points of relevance to your decisions are summarised in Table A and the full comments are attached in Appendix 5. A summary of the comments is provided below:
 - a. TRC and MWRC did not identify any reasons to decline project referral, nor any competing applications or existing resource consents where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA would apply
 - b. STDC and WDC did not express a view on project referral nor identify any competing applications, but considers there are environmental and cultural matters that require further understanding
 - c. The Minister for Energy considers the project would deliver new nationally significant infrastructure and the Minister of Climate Change expressed support for the project
 - d. The Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage responded with no comment
 - e. The Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development supports project referral, noting the applicant and panel should have

due regard to Treaty settlement legislation and instruments, feedback from Māori groups and the section 18 report

- f. DOC is not aware of any reason the project should not be referred, but considers further engagement with the applicant and a comprehensive ecological assessment should be undertaken prior to any substantive application
- g. HNZPT considers further engagement with the applicant alongside a draft Archaeological Management Plan and fulsome archaeological assessment should be required prior to any substantive application, noting three recorded archaeological sites within the project area
- h. NZTA has no concerns with project referral but considers further engagement and a comprehensive Integrated Transport Assessment should be required prior to any substantive application.

21. The following parties were also invited to comment on the project, but no responses were received by the time of this briefing:

- a. the Minister for the Environment
- b. the Minister of Conservation
- c. the Minister for Regional Development
- d. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited
- e. the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority
- f. the Chief Executive of KiwiRail Holdings Limited
- g. Paraninihi ki Waitōtara Incorporation
- h. the owners of Section 352 Okotuku District
- i. the owners of Ihupuku G.

Further information provided by applicant, relevant local authorities, relevant administering agencies

22. Further information was requested from the applicant under section 20 on existing or proposed lease agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works.

23. In their response, the applicant confirms that any required agreements will be secured prior to lodging any substantive application, and in the unlikely event that this does not occur, there are options available for alternative arrangements to ensure the project's proposed regional and national benefits are delivered.

Reasons to decline

24. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the situations where you must decline the application for referral under section 21(3). We have considered these matters in detail in Table A. We have not identified any reasons under section 21(3) that you must decline this application.

25. You may also decline the application for any other reason under section 21(4). The Act gives some guidance on matters you could consider when deciding whether to decline an application and these are set out in Table A.

26. We have considered the matters above and this is discussed in Table A, and we do not consider you should decline the project for any of these reasons.

Reasons to accept

27. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the reasons you can accept a project for referral.

28. Our assessment of these matters is summarised in Table A. We consider the project meets the requirements of section 22, as it:

- a. is an infrastructure or development project because it involves the construction and operation of a large-scale energy park consisting of a wind farm, a solar farm and a battery energy storage system
- b. would have significant regional or national benefits because it will:
 - i. deliver new nationally significant infrastructure in the form of an integrated renewable energy development, generating 1,760 GWh of renewable electricity per year, which is 3.7% of New Zealand's current generation and enough to power up to 253,000 households
 - ii. provide significant regional and national economic benefits including capital investment of approximately \$1.5 billion, provision of 300 – 350 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during the five-year construction period and up to 15 FTE jobs operationally
 - iii. address significant environmental issues, specifically by supporting climate change mitigation
- c. referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes, due to the cross-boundary nature of the project which would require a joint consenting process and approvals under multiple specified Acts
- d. is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because the project is sufficiently advanced and the application is supported by the necessary expertise.

Conclusions

29. We consider the project meets the section 22 criteria and you could accept the referral application under section 21 of the Act and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process, with the specifications outlined below.

30. We consider that if you decide to refer the project, you should specify the following matters under section 27 of the Act:

- a. the following as persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53:
 - i. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited, as the project would require connection to the National Grid, and as a party that was invited under section 17(5) to comment on the application as any other person

- ii. the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority, as the project could affect aviation safety via turbines obstructing aircraft, and as a party that was invited under section 17(5) to comment on the application (any other person)

Next steps

31. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) must give notice of your decisions on the referral application, and the reasons for them, to the applicant and anyone invited to comment under section 17 and publish the notice on the Fast-track website.
32. If you decide to refer the project, the Ministry must also give notice of your decision to:
 - a. the panel convener
 - b. any additional iwi authorities or Treaty settlement entities that you consider have an interest in the matter other than those invited to comment under section 17
 - c. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
 - d. the relevant administering agencies.
33. You must also provide all of the information you received that relates to this application to the EPA and the panel convener, including:
 - a. the referral application
 - b. any comments received under section 17
 - c. the report obtained under section 18.
34. We will undertake this action on your behalf.
35. We have attached a notice of decisions letter to the applicant based on our recommendations (refer Appendix 6) and we will provide it to all relevant parties. We will provide you with an amended letter if required.
36. Our recommendations for your decisions follow.

Recommendations

37. We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** section 21(3) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) requires you to decline the referral application from Meridian Energy Limited (the applicant) if you are satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity, or you consider that you do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section or if you are not satisfied that the Waiinu Energy Park project (the project) meets the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act.

Noted

- b. **Agree** that before deciding on the application for project referral under section 21(1) of the Act you have considered:
- i. the application in Appendix 2
 - ii. the report obtained under section 18 in Appendix 4
 - iii. any comments and further information sought under sections 17 and 20 and provided within the required timeframe in Appendix 5.

Yes / No

- c. **Agree** you are satisfied the project will meet the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act as:
- i. it is a development/infrastructure project that would have significant regional or national benefits [*section 22(1)(a)*] as it
 1. will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure [*section 22(2)(a)(ii)*] by constructing and operating a large-scale energy park consisting of a wind farm, a solar farm and battery storage system, that will provide generation of 1,760 GWh of renewable energy per year, which is 3.7% of New Zealand's current generation and enough to power up to 253,000 households
 2. will provide significant economic benefits [*section 22(2)(a)(iv)*] including capital investment of approximately \$1.5 billion, provision of 300 – 350 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during the five-year construction period and up to 15 FTE jobs operationally
 3. will address significant environmental issues [*section 22(2)(a)(ix)*] and support climate change mitigation [*section 22(2)(a)(vii)*] through the creation of new renewable energy generation, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across the electricity system
 - ii. referring the project would facilitate its delivery [*section 22(1)(b)(i)*] by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes, due to the cross-boundary nature of the project which would require a joint consenting process and approvals under multiple specified Acts
 - iii. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [*section 22(1)(b)(iii)*] because the applicant is sufficiently advanced and supported by the necessary expertise.

Yes / No

- d. **Agree** to accept the referral application under section 21(1)(c) and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process under section 26(2)(a).

Yes / No

- e. **Agree** to specify Meridian Energy Limited as the person who is authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project

Yes / No

- f. **Agree**, under section 27(3)(b)(iii) of the Act, to specify the following groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53:

- i. the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited
- ii. the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority

Yes / No

- g. **Agree** that the Ministry for the Environment will provide your notice of decisions to:

- i. anyone invited to comment on the application including local authorities, relevant administering agencies and relevant Māori groups
- ii. the panel convener
- iii. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

Yes / No

Signatures



Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Table A: Stage 2 analysis

Recommendation	<u>Accept</u> the referral application and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process		
Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Location
	Waiinu Energy Park	Meridian Energy Limited	<p>The project is located across the boundary of two regions, Taranaki and Manawatū-Whanganui (with the majority in the Taranaki Region), near the township of Waitōtara. The project comprises two main areas separated by the Waitōtara River.</p> <p>There are approximately 90 land parcels associated with the project area.</p>
Project description	<p>The project is an integrated renewable energy development including development and operation of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a wind farm with up to 56 turbines (up to 250m high) with associated foundations, crane pads and met masts a solar farm comprising approximately 510,000 panels over approximately 350 ha, supported by power conversion units, underground cabling and internal access tracks a battery energy storage system for storage and supply of electricity supporting infrastructure including a 37.5 km internal road network, substations, a 200 kV transmission line connecting to the national grid, operating and maintenance facilities, and security systems. <p>The project will require the proposed approvals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 approvals under the Wildlife Act 1953 authorisation under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. 		
Minister invites comments / requests information	Comments from invited parties		
	<p>Local authorities</p> <p><i>Taranaki Regional Council (TRC)</i> TRC has not identified any reasons to decline project referral, noting that potentially significant environmental effects appear capable of being managed through conditions should approvals be granted. TRC advises that any substantive application would require a full assessment of effects, planning consistency and conditions.</p> <p>TRC has not identified any applications currently lodged with TRC that would be considered competing applications for the project, nor identified any existing resource consents where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA would apply.</p> <p><i>South Taranaki District Council (STDC)</i> STDC does not explicitly express a view on project referral, but forms a view that information provided in the referral application regarding the potential for significant adverse environmental effects is high level, appreciating that any substantive application would include further details. STDC is particularly interested in understanding how any offsetting requirements for effects will be delivered.</p> <p>STDC notes that the project area includes Māori land and that further information and input from Te Kaahui o Rauru should assist in understanding how the project may affect long-term development opportunities for Māori landowners.</p> <p>The applicant's assessment, relevant records of title, engagement with iwi and the section 18 report has confirmed that while Māori land is directly adjacent to the project area, the project site itself does not include identified Māori land. As required by the Act, we have only identified Māori groups whose interests may be directly affected by the project, being Te Kaahui o Rauru, Ngaati Hinewaiata (Te Ihupuku Marae), and Parininihi ki Waitotara Inc. To this end, we have not included Ngā Hapu o Te Iwi o Whanganui.</p> <p>STDC confirms there are no applications which would be considered competing applications for the project.</p> <p>STDC advises that the applicant should engage with Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī (the joint governance entity for Te Kāhui Tupua – Taranaki Maunga) in addition to Te Kaahui o Rauru as a relevant Treaty Settlement entity, and that attention to Te Ture Whakatupua Mō Te Kāhui Tupua 2025/Taranaki Maunga Collective Redress Act 2025 is required. STDC also notes that while it does not have a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreement currently, it has received an invitation from Te Kaahui o Rauru expressing desire to form such an agreement. STDC advises that discussions regarding this are ongoing and STDC intends to work under a partnership framework with Ngā iwi o te Tai Whakarunga through this application process, in lieu of a formal agreement.</p> <p>We have only identified Māori groups whose interests may be directly affected by the project, these being Te Kaahui o Rauru, Ngaati Hinewaiata (Te Ihupuku Marae), and Parininihi ki Waitotara Inc. To this end, we have not included Te Tōpuni Kōkōrangī, Ngā iwi o Taranaki or Ngā iwi o Te Tai Whakarunga.</p> <p>STDC requests clear details of individual consents be provided throughout the process should the project be referred, to support effective Council monitoring. STCD advises that consideration be given to how any approved consents will be managed across district and regional boundaries to ensure integrated management and effective compliance monitoring and expresses a desire to remain engaged in any ongoing discussion regarding coordinating cross-boundary management and post-consent implementation.</p>		

Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Council (MWRC)

MWRC does not consider there are any reasons to decline project referral, but notes that the project may have significant adverse effects on the environment if not effectively managed – namely, the effects of the project on wetlands, flora and fauna, and cultural values impacts. MWRC considers the project is regionally and nationally significant infrastructure ((consistent with the One Plan (2026) policy EIT-P1)) that contributes to renewable energy generation for New Zealand and provides economic benefits.

MWRC advises that Ngā Hapu o Te Iwi o Whanganui has not been identified by the applicant as an iwi authority for the project area and encourages the applicant to engage with this group.

As above, we have only identified Māori groups whose interests may be directly affected by the project, as required by the Act, being Te Kaahui o Rauru, Ngaati Hinewaiata (Te Ihupuku Marae), and Parininihi ki Waitotara Inc. To his end, we have not included Ngā Hapu o Te Iwi o Whanganui. The applicant's assessment, relevant records of title, engagement with iwi and the section 18 report has confirmed that while Māori land is directly adjacent to the project area, the project site itself does not include identified Māori land.

MWRC has not identified any competing applications, noting that the only resource consent in close proximity is a large-scale land disturbance consent for a Roding Aggregate Shellrock Gravel Quarry. MWRC has not identified existing resource consents where sections 124C(1)(c) of the RMA would apply. We note that MWRC did not provide comment on whether there are any existing resource consents where section 165Z1 of the RMA would apply.

Whanganui District Council (WDC)

WDC does not explicitly express a view on project referral, but forms a view that information provided in the referral application regarding the potential for significant adverse environmental effects is high level, appreciating that any substantive application would include further details. STDC is particularly interested in understanding how any offsetting requirements for effects will be delivered.

WDC notes that the project area includes Māori land and that further information and input from Te Kaahui o Rauru should assist in understanding how the project may affect long-term development opportunities for Māori landowners. We note that Te Kaahui o Rauru will be invited to comment on any substantive application by a panel as adjacent land owners under section 53(2)(h).

As above, we note that we have only identified Māori groups whose interests may be directly affected by the project, as required by the Act, being Te Kaahui o Rauru, Ngaati Hinewaiata (Te Ihupuku Marae), and Parininihi ki Waitotara Inc. To his end, we have not included Ngā Hapu o Te Iwi o Whanganui. The applicant's assessment, relevant records of title, engagement with iwi and the section 18 report has confirmed that while Māori land is directly adjacent to the project area, the project site itself does not include identified Māori land.

WDC confirms there are no applications which would be considered competing applications for the project.

Ministers

Minister for Energy

The Minister views the project as delivering new nationally significant infrastructure under section 22(2)(a)(ii) of the Act, in the form of large-scale energy generation and storage.

The Minister notes that demand for electricity is expected to increase by 70-170% above current levels by 2050. Electricity supply (generation, transmission and distribution) therefore needs to meet this rising demand to avoid risking an unreliable and costly electricity supply and move away from fossil fuels. The Minister particularly welcomes generation proposals that are large scale, flexible and located close to demand.

The Minister considers the project, if referred, would be one of New Zealand's largest renewable energy projects – with a potential capacity of over 500MW and average annual generation of up to 1,760GWh (approximately equivalent to the electricity used by 230,000 New Zealand households). The Minister references New Zealand's largest hydro power station (Manapōuri) as a comparison, which has an average annual generation of up to 4,800GWh. The Minister further considers that the proposed battery energy storage would significantly increase energy system benefits, enabling battery discharge that improves security of supply and power production during high wholesale price durations.

Minister of Climate Change

The Minister expresses broad support for projects that deliver positive climate outcomes for New Zealand, including this project. The Minister considers the project promotes the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to sustainable development.

Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

The Minister responds with no comments on the project.

Minister for Economic Growth

The Minister considers the project is likely to deliver significant national and regional economic benefits under section 22(2)(a)(iv) of the Act; noting the scale of the project, its contribution to renewable electricity supply, the size of capital and the scale of construction-phase employment. The Minister cites the applicant's economic assessment which identifies likely gains of capital investment, annual operational costs and provision of employment.

Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and Minister for Māori Development

The Minister supports project referral. The Minister encourages both 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 Treaty settlements and the section 18 report.

Administering agencies

Department of Conservation (DOC)

DOC is not aware of any reason the project should not be referred. It has considered the criteria under section 22 and has not identified anything it considers you should take into account.

DOC considers it does not have sufficient information to determine the level of any actual and potential environmental effects, although considers it likely that with the appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels.

Noting that in that some cases it has been necessary for applications referred under the fast-track process to seek additional approvals under normal processing, DOC recommends that the applicant consider whether it should seek to include additional approvals that may be required for the project and suggests you should consider whether further information be sought from the applicant. Namely, DOC recommends consideration of whether any culverts or works within waterways might require complex freshwater fisheries approval, as there is currently not enough information to determine whether this is the case. We note that we have confirmed with the applicant that no complex freshwater fisheries approvals are required for the project.

DOC notes that while the project site does not contain any Public Conservation Land, the alignment of the project's impacts on wildlife with statutory planning documents should be considered as part of the overall assessment.

DOC recommends that any substantive application should be supported by a comprehensive ecological assessment that covers the matters detailed in its comments. If the project is referred, DOC considers it would be highly beneficial to have further engagement with the applicant prior to lodging a substantive application.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)

HNZPT notes that the applicant's screening report has identified three recorded archaeological sites within the project area, with the potential for unrecorded subsurface sites which could be affected during proposed earthworks activities. Accordingly, an archaeological authority will be required. HNZPT expects to be provided with a draft Archaeological Management Plan to provide feedback on or approve through this process.

HNZPT advises that a suite of conditions will be required to mitigate adverse effects on archaeological values, although these have not yet been discussed with the applicant. 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, methodologies and strategies proposed, draft management plan and research strategy, evidence of consultation with tangata whenua and draft conditions.

Māori Groups

Te Ihupuu Marae (Te Kaahui o Rauru) (TIM)

TIM does not explicitly state support or opposition for the project. TIM acknowledges the requirement for renewable energy nationally but highlights their responsibility as kaitiaki to protect the environment and social considerations, and the importance of engagement to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles. TIM requests direct consultation with the applicant throughout the process (noting that a meeting with the applicant is scheduled for May 28, 2026) and emphasises the need for a cultural impacts assessment.

Any other persons or groups

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA)

NZTA notes that no significant concerns or adverse effects were identified during its pre-application engagement with the applicant. NZTA has no concerns with the project being referred.

NZTA considers that sight of any substantive application would be required to determine actual impacts on the state highway network, noting that developments of this nature generally impact the network through increased heavy vehicle movements during development and construction, and a sustained minor increase in traffic after development completion.

NZTA expects a comprehensive Integrated Transport Assessment would be prepared for any substantive application that includes a construction management plan, a glint and glare report and mitigation measures to address any adverse effects on the state highway. Should upgrades be required to mitigate effects, NZTA advises that the applicant would be required to work with NZTA and fund any required works.

Further information from applicant

The applicant

Further information was sought from the applicant under section 20 regarding all existing or proposed lease agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works, including a summary of whether the project or its benefits would be affected should no lease(s) be obtained.

In response, the applicant outlined 14 lease and access agreements with landowners of land encompassing the project site that would be required to enable the applicant to undertake the proposed works. Of these, 12 have been executed, while the remaining two (for transmission and telecommunications easements option agreements) are in advanced negotiations. The applicant confirms that securing these lease agreements is required to implement the project and is confident that the remaining agreements will be concluded prior to the lodgment of any substantive application. The applicant advises that, in the unlikely event any agreement cannot be finalised, the applicant can assess available options – including design modifications to give effect to alternative arrangements – to ensure the project's proposed regional and national benefits are delivered.

We consider this response sufficient to determine that the applicant has appropriate legal interest in the land to enable the works to be undertaken and is not a barrier to project referral.

The Minister must decline an application if the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity [section 21(3)(b)]

We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity because it:

- would not occur on identified Māori land, Māori customary land or a Māori reservation as confirmed by the relevant records of title, and consultation with iwi authorities
- would not occur in a customary marine title area or protected customary rights area as it is not in the coastal marine area
- is not an aquaculture activity or activity that is incompatible with aquaculture activities that would occur in an aquaculture settlement area and for which the applicant is not authorised to apply for a coastal permit because it will not occur in the CMA or in an aquaculture settlement area
- would not require an access arrangement which cannot be granted under the Crown Minerals Act (including s61(1A)) because it does not include an access arrangement and would not occur on Schedule 4 land
- would not be prevented by section 165J, M, Q, ZC or ZDB of the RMA because it will not occur in the CMA
- would not occur on Schedule 4 land as confirmed by the records of title and comments received from DOC
- would not occur on a national reserve as confirmed by the records of title and comments received from DOC
- would not occur on a reserve held under the Reserves Act 1977 that is managed by or vested in someone other than the Crown or a local authority and that person has not consented in writing as confirmed by the records of title and comments received from DOC

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not a prohibited activity or decommissioning activity under the EEZA, or under sections 15B or 15C of the RMA • is not for the purpose of an offshore renewable energy project. <p>Comments raised by STDC and WDC have indicated that Māori land may be present on the project site. The applicant details that there are five marae located in proximity to the project site, as well as areas of significance to Māori and statutory acknowledgement areas. The applicant notes that the project has been designed to avoid known areas of potentially significant cultural value, including identified archaeological sites, indigenous wetlands, and potential sites of historic conflict.</p> <p>The applicant's assessment, relevant records of title, engagement with iwi and the section 18 report has confirmed that while Māori land is directly adjacent to the project area, the project site itself does not include identified Māori land and the project is not ineligible for referral for this reason.</p>
<p>The Minister must decline an application if the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision [section 21(3)(c)]</p>	<p>We consider you have adequate information to inform your referral decision, noting that the applicant will be required to provide further environmental, cultural and transport-related assessments with any substantive application.</p>
<p>Relevant considerations and procedural requirements in Treaty settlement, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, joint management agreement, or the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 or the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 [section 16]</p>	<p>The section 18 report has identified the Ngaa Rauru Kaitiaki Settlement Act 2005 as relevant to the project area. The project area is not in the common marine and coastal area, and no Mana Whakahono ā rohe or joint management agreements are relevant to the project area. The section 18 report has identified that the project area does not extend into the statutory areas and no procedural requirements are triggered in relation to deeds of recognition.</p>
<p>Section 22 assessment criteria</p>	
<p>The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</i> The only current GPS is the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition. As this project does not involve a supermarket development or grocery-related activities, there is no GPS relevant to your decision.</p> <p><i>You <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters you consider relevant:</i></p> <p><i>Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers the project, being a large-scale energy park consisting of a wind farm, a solar farm and a battery energy storage system, will deliver new regionally and nationally significant infrastructure. The applicant notes the project will provide generation of 1,760 GWh of renewable electricity per year (or 3.7% of New Zealand's current generation) – enough to power up to 253,000 households or up to 12% of private dwellings across the country.</p> <p>The applicant considers the project is aligned with the strategic direction set out in the National Infrastructure Plan (2026) prepared by Te Waihanga New Zealand Infrastructure Commission. The Plan identifies electricity generation; transmission and distribution as nationally significant infrastructure requiring coordinated and accelerated investment and recognises that substantial additional renewable generation capacity will be required over coming decades to meet growing electricity demand. The Plan further emphasises the need for timely consenting pathways and long-term infrastructure planning certainty to avoid electricity supply shortfalls and escalating costs.</p> <p>The Minister for Energy views the project as delivering nationally significant infrastructure in line with this criterion, noting the project would be one of New Zealand's largest renewable energy projects.</p> <p>Based on the applicant's assessment and the comments received from the Minister for Energy, we recommend that the project does meet the criterion under section 22(2)(a)(ii) as it will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.</p> <p><i>Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]</i> The applicant considers the project will have significant regional and national economic benefits as detailed in the application documents, including a memo prepared by an economic expert with extensive involvement in the design and regulation of the electricity market since 1994.</p> <p>The applicant notes that the capital investment expected to construct the project sits at around \$1.5 billion, with estimated annual operational costs of \$28 million per year for the lifetime of the project. The project is anticipated to create 300 – 350 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs during the construction period (up to 5 years), with a total number of over 3000 individuals working on the project. Indirect employment benefits to the region are anticipated to create an additional 40 – 60 FTE jobs during construction, with up to 15 – 20 direct FTE jobs operationally.</p> <p>The applicant details New Zealand's significant need for additional renewable electricity generation to support electrification of the economy and meet increasing electricity demand – stating that approximately 1,250 GWh of additional renewable generation will be required each year until 2050, with the past 30 years leading up to 2020 commissioning an average of only 380 GWh. The proposed storage infrastructure included in the project is anticipated to support system flexibility and reliability, required by increasing reliance on intermittent renewable electricity.</p> <p>The applicant further details how New Zealand's electricity market has experienced ongoing supply pressures since 2018 including declining gas availability, increasing fuel costs and period of elevated wholesale electricity project. The applicant considers the scale of the project will make a significant contribution towards New Zealand's future electricity generation requirements and support continued transition to a more renewable electricity system, significantly benefitting the economy nationally.</p>

The Minister for Economic Growth considers the project is likely to deliver significant national and regional economic benefits; noting the scale of the project, its contribution to renewable electricity supply, the size of capital and the scale of construction-phase employment.

Based on the applicant's assessment and the comments received from the Minister for Economic Growth, we recommend that the project **does meet the criterion under section 22(2)(a)(iv)** as it will deliver significant economic benefits. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Will support primary industries, including aquaculture [s22(2)(a)(v)]

The applicant considers the project will support primary industries through the supply of electricity for agricultural processes and services. While the project would contribute additional renewable electricity generation to the national grid, we consider there is insufficient information to determine the extent to which any resulting electricity supply would directly benefit primary industries.

Accordingly, **we do not recommend** you refer the project on this basis.

Will support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum [s22(2)(a)(vi)]

The applicant considers the project will support development of natural resources through the supply of electricity for mining, quarrying and related processes. We note that the project is not itself a natural resource development project and the application does not identify any specific mineral, petroleum, quarrying or related activities that would be enabled by the project.

Accordingly, **we do not recommend** you refer the project on this basis.

Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]

The applicant considers the project will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, by generating large-scale renewable electricity and contributing to decarbonisation. The project would generate up to 1,760 GWh of renewable electricity annually, sufficient to power approximately 253,000 New Zealand households.

The applicant provides graphs taken from independently assessed reports by Concept Consulting regarding the extent of new renewable generation required to achieve New Zealand climate change targets. These consider there is an ever-increasing urgency to generate more renewable electricity per year – around 300% more than New Zealand has been over the past 30 years. The applicant further considers the project supports climate change mitigation objectives including the target of net zero emissions by 2050, the electrification objectives in the Second Emissions Reduction Plan (2026 – 2030), and Pillar 3 of the New Zealand Climate Strategy, which seeks to ensure “clean energy is abundant and affordable.”

The Minister of Climate Change considers the project promotes the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to sustainable development.

Based on the applicant's assessment and the comments received from the Minister of Climate Change, we recommend that the project **does meet the criterion under section 22(2)(a)(vii)** as it will support climate change mitigation to a scale that would have significant regional and national benefits. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]

The applicant considers the project will support climate change adaptation, resilience, and recovery from natural hazards – noting the project site is not located in an area prone to climate change disruptive events and significant natural hazards and can continue producing power whenever the site has sufficient wind and/or during daylight. The applicant anticipates that in the event of natural hazards occurring, the project can provide solutions by continuing to generate and deliver power to the National Grid during disaster recovery periods – providing resilience to regions and communities, as was demonstrated following cyclone Gabrielle.

The applicant further details how the project has been designed to avoid risk from natural hazards, including via hazard mapping and geotechnical assessments to inform the placement of turbines, access roads, and ancillary facilities in areas with minimum exposure to such risks.

We consider that the project's contribution to climate change adaptation is less direct than climate change mitigation. Although we agree the project may deliver some benefits to climate change adaptation, reducing risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards, the applicant has provided limited analysis to support this criterion and no invited parties have specifically commented on this matter. Given the project's strong alignment with other criteria, we **do not recommend** you refer the project on this basis.

Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]

The applicant considers the project will address significant environmental issues by contributing to decarbonising New Zealand's energy system, achieving energy and climate targets, and support the electrification of New Zealand's economy, as detailed under the criterion above.

We agree that the climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are significant environmental issues, and we consider that the project will address these significant environmental issues by significantly contributing to renewable electricity generation in New Zealand.

We recommend that the project **does meet the criterion under section 22(2)(a)(ix)** as it will address significant environmental issues. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]

The applicant identifies several regional and district planning documents relevant to the project, including the Taranaki Regional Policy Statement (2010), Manawatū-Whanganui Regional Policy Statement (as given effect through the operative One Plan (2014)), Taranaki Regional Freshwater Plan (2001), South Taranaki District Plan 2024, and Whanganui District Plan (2004).

The applicant notes that both Regional Policy Statements recognise the national and regional significance of renewable electricity generation and provide for its development, operation, maintenance and upgrading, consistent with the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (Objective A and Policies A and B). The applicant further notes that renewable electricity generation activities are generally anticipated within the relevant rural zones under both the South Taranaki District Plan (2024) and Whanganui District Plan (2004), subject to an assessment of environmental effects.

MWRC considers the project is regionally and nationally significant infrastructure, consistent with the One Plan (2026) policy EIT-P1, that contributes to renewable energy generation for New Zealand.

The relevant planning framework also contains strong tangata whenua provisions, and objectives and policies relating to protection of ecological, landscape, and coastal values. The applicant acknowledges these matters, noting the project has been shaped having regard to this framework including by seeking to avoid significant/sensitive natural areas and through ongoing engagement with tangata whenua.

	<p>While we consider that the project may be broadly consistent with aspects of the relevant planning framework, detailed assessments of consistency will be undertaken as part of a substantive application, alongside an assessment of environmental effects and cultural impacts. Without detailed further assessment, it is difficult to conclude that the project will be consistent with local or regional planning documents in a way that would have significant regional or national benefits.</p> <p>Accordingly, we <u>do not recommend</u> that you refer the project on this basis.</p> <p><i>Conclusion</i> Based on the assessment above, we consider the project is an infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits in line with the criteria for accepting a referral application under section 22(1)(a) of the Act. If you agree with this recommendation and are satisfied that the whole project meets the criteria in section 22, you may accept the referral application and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process in accordance with section 26 of the Act.</p>
<p>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</p>	<p><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 that referring the project would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes. This is due to the cross-boundary nature of the project which would require a joint consenting process with consents obtained under four separate local authorities – a process that would add substantial complexity due to differing plans, policy frameworks and consenting processes.</p> <p>The applicant notes that there are three primary statutory consenting pathways under standard process that could be used to coordinate this joint consenting approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - standard resource consenting under Part 6 of the RMA where each council would process the respective consents – involving multiple, potentially overlapping decision makers, with an increased likelihood of hearings, public notification and Environment Court appeals. This would create inconsistent timeframes, duplication of consent conditions and increased cost, duration and complexity. - a Board of Inquiry process under Part 6AA of the RMA for nationally significant projects which would require approval from the Minister for the Environment – involving high resourcing costs for the applicant and all parties involved - a Direct Referral to the Environment Court under sections 87D – 87I and 198B, where the applicant can request councils refer a resource consent application directly for decision – involving a full merits-based court hearing and complex consenting process. <p>The applicant considers that each of these options typically involves lengthy pre-application engagement, extensive technical reporting, public notification and submissions, and potentially protracted hearings and appeals. It is estimated that consenting via these standard processes could take between 2 – 4+ years and be resource-intensive. By comparison, the applicant considers the fast-track approvals process provides a timelier and more cost-effective pathway for project of this scale and nature. Obtaining consents under multiple legislations through a 'one-stop-shop' adds to this effectiveness.</p> <p>We agree with the applicant's assessment that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes, in line with section 22(1)(b)(i) of the Act.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers that referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process, as the project is at an advanced stage of preparation with a comprehensive suite of technical assessments either already completed or underway, alongside comprehensive engagement with mana whenua, the local community and stakeholders as detailed in Appendix 5 of the referral application. This level of readiness ensures that an expert panel would have a well-defined information base to assess any substantive application, reducing the likelihood of delays or creating undue pressure on the fast-track approvals processing system.</p> <p>We note that projects of this scale and nature are consistent with the types of nationally significant infrastructure the fast-track approvals process was established to consider. We agree with the applicant's reasoning for this criterion and consider that the project is in line with section 22(1)(b)(ii) of the Act.</p>
<p>Reasons to decline</p>	
<p>Minister must decline [section 21(3)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister must decline a referral application if:</i></p> <p><i>The application may not be accepted under subsection 1 (meets referral criteria)</i> As detailed above, we consider that the project is an infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits in line with the criteria for accepting a referral application under section 22(1)(a) of the Act. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p><i>The Minister is satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity</i> As detailed above, we consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p><i>The Minister considers that they do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section</i> As detailed above, we consider you have adequate information to inform your decision on the referral application. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p><u>We have not identified any reason that you must decline the application under section 21(3).</u></p>
<p>Minister may decline [section 21(4) and 21(5)(a-h)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister may decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not it meets the criteria in section 22.</i> <i>Reasons to decline a referral application under subsection 4 include, without limitation:</i></p> <p><i>The project would be inconsistent with a Treaty settlement, Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, or a joint management agreement</i> No specific inconsistencies have been identified within the Section 18 Treaty settlements report.</p>

It would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts

The section 18 report has not identified any matters which would make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts.

The project may have significant adverse effects on the environment

The applicant provides preliminary technical assessments at appendices 6 – 9 of the referral application and considers the known adverse effects of the project on the environment include:

- landscape and visual effects
- ecological effects
- earthworks and sedimentation effects
- contaminated land effects
- traffic effects
- community and social effects
- cultural effects
- archaeological and historical heritage effects
- lighting glint and glare effects
- noise and vibration effects
- aviation effects
- radio interference effects
- hazardous substance effects.

We note that the following were invited to comment on the project under section 17 of the Act, with no response:

- the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority, as the applicant identified that the project could adversely affect aviation safety via turbines obstructing aircraft.
- the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand, as the project requires connection to the National Grid.

If you decide to refer the project, we recommend directing a panel to invite comments from these parties, to ensure any effects can be appropriately considered.

DOC considers that it does not have sufficient information to determine the level of any actual and potential environmental effects, although considers it likely that with appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels. DOC further notes that it is not aware of any reason the project should not be referred to an expert panel. MWRG notes that the project may have significant adverse effects on the environment if not effectively managed – namely, effects on wetlands, flora and fauna, and cultural values impacts. STDC expressed a desire to understand further detail on how any offsetting requirements for effects will be delivered.

The applicant notes that the project has been iteratively designed to avoid or minimise effects where practical, including through setbacks from sensitive landscape and any ecological features, avoidance of cultural and archaeological sites, and refinement of infrastructure layout. The applicant considers that any adverse effects can be successfully mitigated or managed.

We note the Act does not require the applicant to provide a full assessment of environmental effects with a referral application, and the information provided has not indicated that any potential adverse environmental effects would be significant. We consider an expert panel is best placed to consider the adverse environmental effects of the project with the benefit of a full application (including a full assessment of environmental, cultural, and archaeological impacts), relevant expert input, and further input from commenters. An expert panel has the ability to seek technical advice and impose conditions as deemed appropriate or decline the application if the effects outweigh the benefits. We consider that the project strongly aligns with the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act, namely that it is an infrastructure project with significant regional and national benefits.

Accordingly, we do not consider you should decline the application on this basis.

The applicant(s) has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals

The applicant notes that there have not been any compliance or enforcement actions taken against it under a specified Act. There is no information to suggest the application has been the subject of any actions, nor has any commentors raised this in response.

The project area includes land that the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations considers necessary for Treaty settlement purposes

No comments received from invited parties have indicated that the project area includes land necessary for Treaty settlement purposes.

The project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the RMA

No prohibited activities under the RMA have been identified by the applicant, commentors, or our analysis.

A substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications.

Neither TRC, STDC, MWRC, nor WDC identified any competing applications for the project. We note the applicant, relevant local authorities, and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) are required to re-check this at the substantive application stage.

In relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consents), there are one or more existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)

Neither TRC nor MWRC identified any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165Z1 of the RMA could apply. We note the applicant, relevant local authorities, and the EPA are required to re-check this at the substantive application stage.

Any other matters

We have not identified any other matters or reasons to consider declining the referral application.

We do not recommend you decline the application. We note you retain the discretion to decline a referral application under section 21(4) for any other reason, whether or not the project meets the criteria in section 22.

Specified matters for an accepted referral application

The Minister may specify any of the matters under section 27(3)

The Minister may specify any or all of the following under section 27(3) in the notice of decisions letter for an accepted referral application.

Restrictions that apply to the project (for example, on its geographical location, its duration, or the aspects of the project that may be carried out)

We recommend the project description and project details at the beginning of this table are copied into the notice of decisions letter. We have not identified any other specific restrictions that we consider would apply to the project.

In relation to a substantive application for the project:

A deadline for lodging the application, unless section 27(3)(c) applies

The applicant anticipates construction of the project will commence in 2028. We consider the standard deadline for lodging the substantive application under section 28(3)(d)(ii) is suitable, which would be the date that is two years after the notice is given to the applicant.

Information that must be submitted with the application

Parties have identified matters that they consider should be addressed further in any substantive application, including an ecological assessment, integrated transport assessment, and environmental and cultural considerations.

We note that the applicant has already indicated the intention to supply this relevant and detailed information to an expert panel, and in addition to the information requirements in the Act, we do not consider it necessary to include additional information to support an effective assessment. Following a decision on the referral application, the applicant will also have access to the comments received from invited parties and can have regard to those matters when determining the scope of information and technical assessments to include with the substantive application. Careful consideration of those comments is likely to assist in supporting an efficient assessment process.

Notwithstanding this recommendation, you retain discretion to specify any further information that must be submitted with the substantive application if you consider it appropriate to do so.

The persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments in addition to those specified in section 53

If you decide to accept the referral application, we recommend you specify in the notice of decisions the following persons or groups be invited to comment on the substantive application, for the reasons outlined below:

- the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited, as the project would require connection to the National Grid, and as a party that was invited under section 17(5) to comment on the application as any other person (with no response), and that is not specified in section 53.
- the Chief Executive of the Civil Aviation Authority, as the project could adversely affect aviation safety via turbines obstructing aircraft, and as a party that was invited under section 17(5) to comment on the application as any other person (with no response), and that is not specified in section 53.

We note you retain discretion to decide not to specify that any of these parties be invited by the panel to comment at the substantive application stage. You may also specify that any other person or groups of your choosing be invited to comment. You do not need to specify the parties already captured under section 53, as those parties must be invited to comment on a substantive application by the expert panel. This includes relevant local authorities, relevant iwi groups and Treaty settlement entities, relevant administering agencies, the Minister for the Environment and other relevant portfolio Ministers, and the owners and occupiers within or adjacent to the land to which the substantive application relates (including any requiring authority that has a designation within or adjacent to the land – this includes NZTA for this project).

Whether the substantive application would have any competing applications

N/A – relevant local authorities have confirmed they have no record of competing applications in the same project area.

Whether, in relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consent), there are any existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)

N/A – relevant local authorities did not identify any resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a).

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 section 22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (section 5)
 - 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 section 21(5) and even if the application meets the section 22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under section 17(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 the 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.