



## FTAA-2604-1213: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 2 decisions

### Project Name: Hokonui Wind Farm Project

|                |                |          |              |
|----------------|----------------|----------|--------------|
| Date submitted | 17 August 2026 | Tracking | 26-BRF-02110 |
| Security level | In-Confidence  | Priority | Urgent       |

| To                                              | Action sought                | Response by    |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Hon Chris Bishop<br>Minister for Infrastructure | Decisions on recommendations | 21 August 2026 |

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Actions for Minister's Office staff | Return the signed briefing to the Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport - email: <a href="mailto:FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz">FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Number of appendices: 7             | Appendices:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Statutory framework for making decisions</li><li>2. Application documents for Hokonui Wind Farm project</li><li>3. Stage 1 Briefing Note and decisions</li><li>4. Section 18 Report on Treaty settlements and other obligations</li><li>5. Section 19 Report on Public conservation land</li><li>6. Written comments received from invited parties</li><li>7. Draft Notice of Decisions</li></ol> |

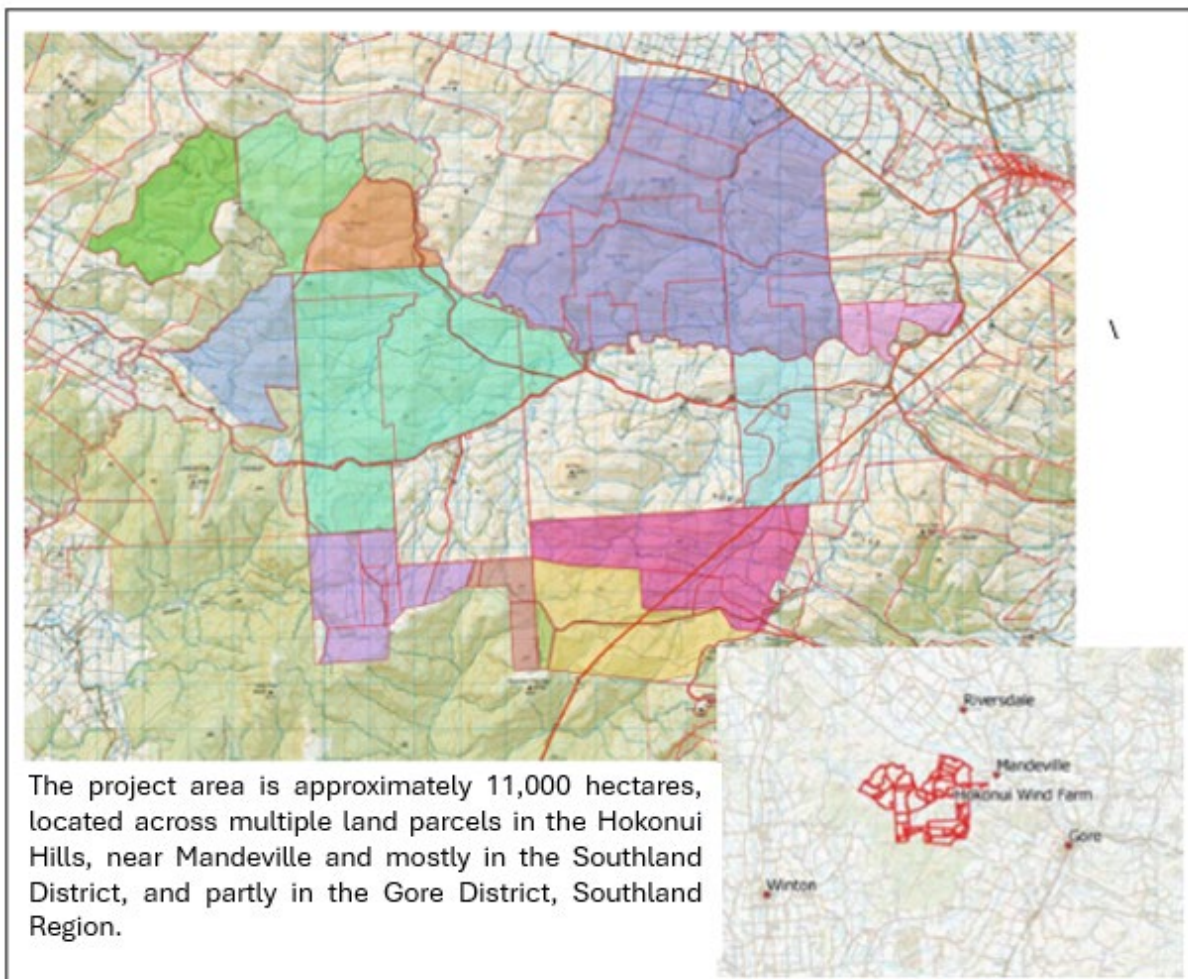
### Ministry contacts

| Name                | Position         | Telephone | 1 <sup>st</sup> contact |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Stephanie McNicholl | Principal Author |           |                         |
| Stephanie Frame     | Manager          | s 9(2)(a) | ✓                       |
| Ilana Miller        | General Manager  | s 9(2)(a) |                         |



## Project area

---



The project area is approximately 11,000 hectares, located across multiple land parcels in the Hokonui Hills, near Mandeville and mostly in the Southland District, and partly in the Gore District, Southland Region.

## Key messages

---

1. This briefing seeks your decisions under section 21 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on an application from Hokonui Hills Wind Farm Limited Partnership (the applicant) to refer the Hokonui Wind Farm 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-01693) with your initial decisions annotated is in Appendix 3.
3. The project is an infrastructure development to construct, operate, maintain and carry out end-of-life decommissioning of a wind farm with a peak generation capacity of up to 500 MW (Megawatts) and an annual expected output of 1,905 GWh (Gigawatt hours) and establish a mixed-use industrial area of approximately 30 hectares to enable co-location of complementary industrial or energy-related activities.
4. The project area is approximately 11,000 hectares in the Hokonui Hills near Mandeville, mostly in the Southland District, and partly in the Gore District, Southland Region.



5. The project involves associated infrastructure and ancillary activities to connect and supply electricity to the National and local grids that will comprise:
  - a. approximately 83 three-bladed wind turbines, with a maximum blade length of 90 metres and a hub height of approximately 150 metres (maximum blade tip height up to 240 metres above ground level)
  - b. electrical reticulation consisting of underground and overhead cables and wind turbine transformers
  - c. a new switching station and two new substations and associated transmission lines and connections to the National Grid
  - d. construction of internal roading and access tracks, turbine foundations and hard-stand areas adjacent to the wind turbines
  - e. ancillary activities associated with the construction including earthworks and quarrying, concrete batching plants (approximately 4000m<sup>2</sup> in area), operation and maintenance of the wind farm including permanent on-site facilities comprising an approximately 400m<sup>2</sup> building
  - f. mixed-use activities that may include data storage and processing facilities, battery energy storage systems and associated grid support infrastructure, electricity-intensive processing or manufacturing activities, renewable energy conversion activities, and directly associated ancillary facilities supporting industrial and logistics operations.
6. The project will require the proposed approvals under the fast-track approvals process:
  - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991
  - b. concessions and land exchange under the Conservation Act 1987
  - c. wildlife permits under the Wildlife Act 1953
  - d. archaeological authorities under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
  - e. approvals under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.
7. We recommend you **accept** the referral application as the project meets the criteria set out in section 22 of the Act and does not appear to involve an ineligible activity.
8. We seek your decisions on this recommendation, any proposed directions to the applicant and expert panel, and the notification of your decisions.

## Assessment against statutory framework

---

9. 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.
10. Before accepting the project, you must consider the application in Appendix 2, the section 18 Treaty settlements report in Appendix 4, the section 19 report as the project includes public conservation land in Appendix 5, the written comments from invited parties in Appendix 6, and any document that requires your consideration under section 16 and comply with any procedural requirements under section 16.

11. 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**

12. The section 18 report in Appendix 4 identifies six groups as relevant Māori groups under section 18(2) of the Act. A collective of the groups invited to comment on the application provided a response.
13. The Treaty settlement that is relevant to the project area is the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998. We have not identified any other obligations such as Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or joint management agreements.
14. The relevant principles and provisions of the Treaty settlement and arrangements that apply to the project area are that Schedules 42 and 50 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 provide for statutory acknowledgements over the Maitai River and the Ōreti River respectively. The project area includes tributaries of both rivers.
15. As statutory acknowledgements under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 do not extend to any tributary flowing into a river, unless expressly provided for in the relevant schedule, we do not consider you (or any panel considering a substantive application) are required to comply with procedural requirements concerning this statutory acknowledgement. Nevertheless, it has become common practice in subsequent Treaty settlements for statutory acknowledgements over waterways to include tributaries. This approach is consistent with the holistic Māori worldview of water. You may wish to consider this in the context of the statutory acknowledgements held by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu over waterways downstream of the project area.
16. Under the RMA and the relevant Treaty settlements, 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 acknowledgement holder. We consider the process of inviting comment (including providing information about the application) from these groups under the Act is comparable to the requirements for statutory acknowledgements under the RMA and Treaty settlements.
17. In any case, you have already invited Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, as a relevant iwi authority and Treaty settlement entity, and Hokonui Rūnanga, Waihopai Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Awarua, and Te Rūnanga o Ōraka Aparima as relevant Treaty settlement entities, to comment on the application. Should you accept this referral application, these groups will also be invited for comment by the panel on a substantive application under section 53(2)(c) of the Act.
18. In response to the invite to comment under section 17(1)(d) of the Act, you received comments from Kā Rūnanga, comprising the Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga of Hokonui Rūnanga, Waihopai Rūnanga, Te Rūnanga o Awarua, and Te Rūnanga o Ōraka Aparima. Kā Rūnanga comments emphasised the importance of their kaitiaki role, of balancing development with environmental responsibility, and of undertaking early and meaningful engagement with mana whenua.
19. We consider the section 18 report does not raise any matters that would make it more appropriate to authorise the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts.

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

20. Based on the above section, we consider there are no relevant documents and procedural requirements under section 16 that apply to your consideration of the application.

## Section 19 Report in relation to use of public conservation land

21. As the project area includes the use of public conservation land (PCL), the Director-General of Conservation has prepared a report in Appendix 5 which sets out:

- a. the use of PCL as part of the consideration of the referral application for Hokonui Wind Farm by Hokonui Hills Wind Farm Limited Partnership
- b. the information that must be contained in a report in relation to PCL as set out in s19(2)(a) and (b) of the Act and outlines any consultation undertaken as required by s19(3), as outlined in the report

22. The summary of advice provided in the report is that:

- a. there are nine concessions that apply to the Otamita Stream Marginal Strip, and ten concessions that apply to the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area. These arrangements are not specific to the proposed areas, and do not raise any issues with the proposed activities
- b. the applicant has indicated that they will be seeking an easement and airspace easement for the project across the marginal strip, outside of the fast-track process
- c. there are no management bodies associated with the Otamita Stream Marginal Strip and the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area
- d. the fast-track process provides a land exchange pathway which, among other matters, involves an assessment of the conservation values of the land and the financial implications, and risks and liabilities for the Crown of the exchange. As such, risks to the Crown can be appropriately dealt with through this process, should it be pursued. *We note the report from the Director-General identifies that the applicant will decide whether to pursue the land exchange or concession prior to lodging any substantive application, if referred.*

## Written comments received

23. Written comments were received from Southland Regional Council (SRC), Southland District Council (SDC), seven Ministers, the Department of Conservation (DOC), Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT), Ka Rūnaka identified Māori group and Transpower New Zealand Limited (Transpower).

24. The key points of relevance to your decisions are included in Table A, with the full comments attached in Appendix 5. Ka Rūnaka comments are addressed in the section 18 above, all other comments are summarised below.

25. A summary of the key points is below:

- a. SRC does not oppose the application progressing and considers the project is likely to have regional and national benefits. SRC identifies the Hokonui syncline as a prominent landform in the Southland context that will require consideration at the substantive stage.
- b. SDC does not oppose the application progressing and identifies the Hokonui Syncline as a prominent landscape feature within the Southland district and in context, the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development will be an important consideration during any substantive process.



- c. The Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and the Minister for Māori Development supports the application progressing and encourages the applicant and the panel to have due regard to relevant Treaty settlement legislation and instruments and any feedback received from identified Māori groups.
- d. The Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage confirms no comments.
- e. The Minister for Climate Change confirms broad support for the project.
- f. The Minister for Energy comments that, if built, the project would be one of New Zealand's largest renewable energy projects, being approximately twice the size of New Zealand's largest existing wind farm and larger than the Contact Energy wind farm granted Fast-track approvals in April 2026. The project will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure in the form of large-scale energy generation.
- g. DOC does not oppose referral and confirms both a land exchange and concession is within referral scope until the applicant has determined which process to pursue. If referred, the matters can be resolved before lodgement of the substantive application.
- h. HNZPT does not oppose referral and confirms recorded archaeological sites and potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites. HNZPT confirm an archaeological authority is required, and a cultural impact assessment should support the application and anticipates ongoing engagement.
- i. The Minister for Economic Growth considers that in the short to medium term; the primary benefit of the proposal is the direct value-add of approximately \$136.5 million in GDP (\$455 million into the local economy) and employment generated as 185–250 direct FTEs during construction and as 24 to 33 FTEs once operational. Over the longer term, the primary benefit is increased renewable electricity generation to meet growing demand associated with electrification.
- j. The Minister for Regional Development commented that the project is expected to offer notable employment opportunities for the region during the three-year build period. The ongoing regional GDP impact may be considered modest – once operational it is expected to be around 0.2 per cent of the region's GDP. The proposed project would help meet both Southland and national electricity demand by increasing renewable electricity generation capacity.
- k. Transpower supports the project and ongoing discussions regarding connection to the National Grid. Transpower was invited to comment as an 'other person' and is an occupier of land subject to the project area, as there is Transpower networks and infrastructure traversing the project area.

### Reasons to decline

- 26. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the situations where you must decline the application for referral under section 21(3) of the Act.
- 27. We do not consider you must decline this application.
- 28. 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.

29. We have considered the matters under section 21(4), and these are discussed in Table A. We do not consider you should decline the application for referral for any of these reasons.

### Reasons to accept

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

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

- a. it is an infrastructure and development project that would have significant regional and national benefits because it:
  - i. would deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure
  - ii. would deliver significant economic benefits by generating approximately \$136.5 million in direct benefits to the region and approximately 185–250 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct construction jobs over the development period and 24–33 FTE jobs once operational. The project will deliver \$256.7 million in total direct expenditure for the construction period and, once operational, up to \$18 million into the local economy annually
  - iii. would support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards and that, as a large-scale project, can provide an alternative energy source.
- b. 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 more cost-effective way than under normal processes because it precludes public and limited notification in an RMA context and enables multiple approval types under specific Acts to be considered under a singular process, and appeals under the Act are to the High Court and limited to points of law.
- c. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because the project is neither novel in the New Zealand context nor beyond the scope of what a panel would typically assess where multiple approval types are sought under the fast-track approvals process.

### Correction

32. We have identified that in the Stage 1 briefing; we noted the project area as 1100 hectares in error. The project area is 11,000 hectares. This matter has been rectified in the project description and considerations below. No party is considered disadvantaged by this error, as all invited parties received a full copy of the application information.

### Conclusions

33. 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.

## Next steps

---

34. The Secretary for the Environment (the Secretary) 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 of the Act and publish the notice on the Fast-track website.
35. If you decide to accept and refer the project, the Secretary must also give notice of your decisions 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 of the Act
  - c. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
  - d. the relevant administering agencies.
36. 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 written comments received under section 17 of the Act
  - c. the Treaty report obtained under section 18 of the Act
  - d. the public conservation land report obtained under section 19 of the Act.
37. We will undertake this action on your behalf.
38. We have attached a draft notice of decisions letter to the applicant based on our recommendations in Appendix 7, that we will provide as required (on behalf of the Secretary for the Environment) to all relevant parties. We will provide you with an amended letter if required.
39. Our recommendations for your decisions follow.



## Recommendations

40. 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 Hokonui Hills Wind Farm Limited Partnership (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 Hokonui Wind Farm 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 the:

- i. application in Appendix 2
- ii. reports obtained under sections 18 and 19 in Appendices 4 and 5
- iii. written comments sought under section 17 in Appendix 6 provided within the required time frame.

Yes / No

- c. **Note** that in considering this application, and any directions to a panel, under section 7 of the Act, you have considered the:

- i. Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.

Noted

- d. **Agree** you are satisfied the project will meet the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act as:

- i. it is an infrastructure and development project that would have significant regional and national benefits and because it:
  1. would deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure
  2. would deliver significant economic benefits by generating approximately \$136.5 million in direct benefits to the region and approximately 185–250 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct construction jobs over the development period and 24-33 FTE jobs once operational. The project will deliver \$256.7 million in total direct expenditure for the construction period and, once operational, up to \$18 million into the local economy annually
  3. would support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards and that, as a large-scale project, can provide an alternative energy source.
- ii. 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 because it precludes public and limited notification in an RMA context and enables multiple approval types under specific Acts to be considered under a singular process, and appeals under the Act are to the High Court and limited to points of law

- iii. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because the project is neither novel in the New Zealand context nor beyond the scope of what a panel would typically assess where multiple approvals are sought under the fast-track process.

Yes / No

- e. **Agree** there is no reason the project must be declined under section 21(3) of the Act.

Yes / No

- f. **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) of the Act.

Yes / No

- g. **Agree** to specify Hokonui Hills Wind Farm Limited Partnership as the person who is authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project.

Yes / No

- h. **Agree** to specify under section 27(3)(b)(i) of the Act the deadline for lodging the substantive application is two years from the date of the referral notice of decisions letter to the applicant.

Yes / No

- i. **Note** that the Secretary for the Environment must provide your notice of decisions to:

- i. the applicant and anyone invited to comment on the application including relevant local authorities, relevant portfolio Ministers, relevant Māori groups and any additional parties
- ii. the panel convener
- iii. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)
- iv. the Department of Conservation and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga as the relevant administering agencies
- v. publish the notice to the Fast-track website.

Noted

- j. **Note** that under section 21 you **must** decline a referral application if:

- i. the application **may not** be accepted under section 21(1) (which relates to the criteria for assessing a referral application in section 22); or
- ii. you are **satisfied** that the project involves an ineligible activity; or



- iii. you are **satisfied** that you do not have adequate information to inform your referral decisions.

Noted

- k. **Note** that you **may** decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not the project meets the criteria in section 22, including (but not limited to) the reasons for decline set out at section 21(5) of the Act.

Noted

- l. **Approve** the draft notice of decisions letter to the applicant in Appendix 7.

Yes / No

## Signatures

---

Stephanie Frame  
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Hon Chris Bishop  
Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

**Table A: Stage 2 analysis – FTAA–2604–1213**

|                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendation                                                             | Accept the referral application and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Project details                                                            | Project Name                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Applicant                                             | Project Area                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                            | Hokonui Wind Farm (the project)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Hokonui Wind Farm Limited Partnership (the applicant) | The project area is approximately 11,000 hectares, located across multiple land parcels in the Hokonui Hills near Mandeville, mostly in the Southland District, and partly in the Gore District, Southland Region. |
| Project description                                                        | <p>The project is to construct, operate, maintain and carry out end-of-life decommissioning of a wind farm with a peak generation capacity of up to 500 MW (Megawatts) and an annual expected output of 1,905 GWh (Gigawatt hours) and establish a mixed-use industrial area of approximately 30 hectares to enable co-location of complementary industrial or energy-related activities.</p> <p>The project area is approximately 11,000 hectares in the Hokonui Hills near Mandeville, mostly in the Southland District, and partly in the Gore District, Southland Region.</p> <p>The project involves associated infrastructure and ancillary activities to connect and supply electricity to the National and local grids that will comprise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>approximately 83 three-bladed wind turbines, with a maximum blade length of 90 metres and a hub height of approximately 150 metres (maximum blade tip height up to 240 metres above ground level)</li> <li>electrical reticulation consisting of underground and overhead cables and wind turbine transformers</li> <li>a new switching station and two new substations and associated transmission lines and connections to the National Grid</li> <li>construction of internal roading and access tracks, turbine foundations and hard-stand areas adjacent to the wind turbines</li> <li>ancillary activities associated with the construction including earthworks and quarrying, concrete batching plants (approximately 4000m<sup>2</sup> in area), operation and maintenance of the wind farm including permanent on-site facilities comprising an approximately 400m<sup>2</sup> building</li> <li>mixed-use activities that may include data storage and processing facilities, battery energy storage systems and associated grid support infrastructure, electricity-intensive processing or manufacturing activities, renewable energy conversion activities, and directly associated ancillary facilities supporting industrial and logistics operations.</li> </ol> <p>The project will require the proposed approvals under the fast-track approvals process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991</li> <li>concessions and land exchange under the Conservation Act 1987</li> <li>wildlife permits under the Wildlife Act 1953</li> <li>archaeological authorities under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014</li> <li>approvals under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Minister invites comments [section 17] / requests information [section 20] | Written comments from invited parties                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                            | <p><b>Local authorities</b></p> <p><i>Southland Regional Council (SRC)</i> – did not oppose referral and commented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mixed-use area was not raised in previous discussions and the information provided is limited</li> <li>the project is likely to have regional and national benefits in assisting the achievement of renewable energy targets and providing renewable energy resources for further developments of regional benefit. In October 2025, SRC formulated an energy position statement which supported the development of further renewable energy facility in principle, subject to appropriate environmental sustainability elements</li> <li>the Southland Regional Spatial Plan is currently in pre-planning stages of development. There is no regional spatial strategy to be consistent with. The proposal is not inconsistent with regional planning documents</li> <li>the Hokonui syncline is a prominent landform in the Southland context and a Visual Amenity Landscape although not an Outstanding Landscape or Outstanding Natural Feature in the Southland / Murihiku Regional Landscape Study. SRC would expect that this would be an issue requiring close scrutiny if the application proceeds to the substantive stage</li> <li>potential ecological sensitivities, such as the wetlands present on some of the sites will require further consideration and comment if the application proceeds to substantive application</li> <li>the involvement of Hokonui Rūnanga as a partner to this project is noted and the linkage appreciated between the project and the aspirations of Hokonui Runanga as Papatipu Rūnanga for the area. The Cultural Values Statement from Hokonui Rūnanga is noted. SRC has liaised with Te Ao Mārama Incorporated, which has advised it will be undertaking a detailed cultural impact assessment.</li> <li>there are no applications lodged with SRC that would be competing application is a substantive application were lodged and no existing resource consents issued where sections 124(1) (c) or 165Zl of the Resource Management Act 1991 could apply, if the project were to be applied for as a resource consent.</li> </ol> <p><i>Southland District Council</i> – did not oppose referral and commented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>although not identified as an Outstanding Natural Feature or Outstanding Natural Landscape, the Hokonui Syncline is recognised as a prominent landscape feature within the Southland District. Noting the scale and location of the proposed development within this landscape context, the assessment of landscape and visual effects will be an important matter for detailed scrutiny during any substantive process</li> <li>no significant cross-boundary jurisdiction issues have been identified at this stage that would prevent project delivery; however, appropriate coordination with Gore District Council, Transpower, and other relevant authorities will be required</li> <li>an application seeking consent for a 20-lot rural subdivision has been lodged by a different applicant and relates to the same land as the project. Based on available information, it is not apparent that the subdivision could not be fully exercised if the Hokonui Wind Farm Project were approved, or vice versa. There is no apparent impediment to both activities occurring concurrently. Accordingly, Council does not currently consider Resource Consent Application RMA/2026/53160 to be a competing application as defined by the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.</li> </ol> |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

**Ministers**

*Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti and Minster for Māori Development* – commented with support for the application progressing subject to the applicant and the panel having regard to relevant Treaty settlement legislation and instruments; and any feedback received from relevant Māori groups, as set out in the Treaty settlements and other obligations (Section 18) report.

*Minister for Energy* – did not oppose referral and commented that:

- a. the project proposes an annual expected output of 1,905 GWh (approximately equivalent to the electricity used by 238,000 New Zealand households)
- b. would be one of New Zealand’s largest renewable energy projects if built. It is approximately twice the size of New Zealand’s largest existing wind farm and larger than the Contact Energy wind farm granted Fast-track approvals in April 2026. The project will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure in the form of large-scale energy generation
- c. the project will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure in the form of large-scale energy generation
- d. other Ministers and agencies are better placed to advise on other grounds for referral, such as the environmental impacts of the proposal.

*Minister for Climate Change*– commented with broad support as the project promotes the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to sustainable development, which deliver positive outcomes for New Zealand.

**Māori Groups**

*Ka Rūnaka* – did not oppose referral and commented:

- a. that Ka Rūnaka is commenting on behalf of the Ngāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnanga of Hokonui Rūnanga, Waihōpai Rūnaka, Te Rūnaka o Awarua, and Te Rūnanga o Ōraka Aparima
- b. emphasising the importance of Kā Rūnaka’s kaitiaki role, balancing development with environmental responsibility, undertaking early and meaningful engagement with mana whenua.

**Administering agencies**

*Department of Conservation (DOC)* – did not oppose referral and commented:

- a. land exchange – three wind turbines and associated infrastructure is proposed on 22.02 hectares of public conservation land (PCL), in exchange for 11.67 hectares of private land contiguous with the Hokonui Forest Conservation Park. There has been no formal application lodged yet. The applicant is seeking scope for both approvals in its referral application, with a decision to pursue concession or land exchange in its substantive application. The applicant cannot lodge a substantive application until the land exchange report has been received by them. DOC has not identified any persons or groups in addition to those listed in section 35 of the Act that will be invited to comment on any land exchange application invited to comment on any land exchange application and does not recommend that you specify a time frame for the land exchange application, noting that this is a matter that the Panel convener can specify. The section 19 report identifies concessions that apply to the Otamita Stream marginal strip and Hokonui Forest Conservation Area and confirms there are no associated management bodies and concludes any risks to the Crown from the proposed land exchange can be appropriately considered through the fast-track process.
- b. concessions are sought to construct and operate that part of the project on PCL. DOC notes a crossing will also be needed over the Otamita Stream which runs through parts of the project area, that is subject to marginal strips and will involve upgrading an existing ford to a culvert. Easements over the stream and an airspace easement for the transmission line are sought for project, outside of the fast-track process.

*Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (NZHPT)* – did not oppose referral and commented:

- a. the applicant preliminary desktop assessment identifies recorded archaeological sites within part of the project area
- b. the works proposed will have the potential to modify or destroy recorded sites and there is potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites
- c. the Hokonui Rānanga maintain a connection to the project area and the mahinga sites within it
- d. a cultural values statement has been provided with this application and supports that a Cultural impact assessment be developed
- e. anticipates ongoing engagement to ensure that if referred, the substantive application is supported by 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 proposed conditions.

We note the referral application seeks an archaeological authority as a proposed approval under the fast-track approvals process. The information requirements are specified under Schedule 8 of the Act.

**Any other persons or groups**

*Minister for Economic Growth* – did not oppose referral and commented:

- a. the proposal is potentially one of New Zealand’s largest wind farms by generation capacity. The proposal includes associated infrastructure and ancillary activities to connect to the national and local grids, as well as consents to carry out the wind farm’s end-of-life decommissioning
- b. based on the applicant’s economic assessment, the construction period from 2029 to 2032 is expected to generate approximately \$136.5 million in GDP value-add and support 185 to 250 direct FTE roles in total and inject \$455 million into the local economy. When operational, the wind farm is expected to inject \$18 million per year into the local economy and support 24 to 33 ongoing FTE roles.
- c. in the short to medium term, the primary benefits relate to construction activity, including employment and economic output. Over the longer term, the principal benefit is increased renewable electricity generation to meet growing demand associated with electrification. By supplying additional electricity to the National Grid, the project may support regional economic activity, contribute to security of supply and place downward pressure on prices. It may also support electricity-intensive industries, including recently consented developments in Southland such as the Datagrid Data Centre Park, an artificial intelligence facility in the region.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><i>Minister for Regional Development</i> – did not oppose referral and commented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>based on the analysis provided, the proposed project is expected to offer notable employment opportunities for the region during the three-year build period. The ongoing regional GDP impact may be considered modest – Southland’s total GDP for year ending March 2024 was around \$8.839 billion (data from MBIE), meaning the project’s average annual contribution once operational is expected to reach the equivalent of around 0.2 per cent of the region’s GDP.</li> <li>an increase in electricity generation is generally beneficial to regional New Zealand, as a more reliable electricity supply may support business investment and economic activity. Southland has a history of annual electricity demand exceeding local generation and has recently consented energy-intensive developments, including a data centre near Invercargill. The proposed project would help meet both Southland and national electricity demand by increasing renewable electricity generation capacity.</li> <li>comment on the impact from the proposed project on New Zealand’s energy system should come from the Minister for Energy.</li> </ol> <p><i>Transpower New Zealand Limited</i> – supports referral and commented:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the project proposes to connect to either, or both, of Transpower’s 220kV Invercargill – Roxburgh A and B transmission lines. In this regard, Transpower is an occupiers of land subject to the project area, as there is Transpower networks and infrastructure traversing the project area. The applicant discussions with Transpower in relation to connection to the National Grid are expected to continue.</li> <li>Transpower supports the project as it proposes renewable electricity generation, it will support climate change mitigation, and it will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure.</li> <li>Transpower’s recent Security of Supply Assessment highlights that, as a country, we need to pick up the pace and move planned projects through consenting to build and commissioning phases.</li> </ol> |
| Minister must decline an application if the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity [section 21(3)(b)]                                                                                                                     | <p>We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity because it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>would not occur in a customary marine title area or protected customary rights area – and is land-based</li> <li>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 and will not occur in an aquaculture settlement area</li> <li>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</li> <li>would not be prevented by section 165J, M, Q, ZC or ZDB of the RMA – because it will not occur in the CMA</li> <li>would not occur on Schedule 4 land – as confirmed by the records of title referred to in the application</li> <li>would not occur on a national reserve – as confirmed by the records of title referred to in the application</li> <li>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 applicant’s evidence of consultation</li> <li>is not a prohibited activity or decommissioning activity under the EEZA, 15B or 15C of the RMA – and as no such activities are proposed</li> <li>is not for the purpose of an offshore renewable energy project – and as no such activities are proposed.</li> </ol> <p>No comments raised by parties invited to comment have indicated that the project would be ineligible for referral.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Minister must decline an application if the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision [section 21(3)(c)]                                                                                                            | <p>We consider you have adequate information to inform your decisions on the referral application.</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>We have not identified any matters under section 16 of the Act that apply to your consideration of the referral application.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Section 22 assessment criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]                                                                                                                      | <p>You <u>must</u> consider a relevant Government policy statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]</p> <p>No GPS has been identified by the applicant as being relevant to the application.</p> <p>You <u>may</u> consider any of the following matters, or any other matters you consider relevant:</p> <p><i>The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

The applicant considers that while the project is not specifically identified, it will indirectly contribute to and aligns with some of the Government’s strategies and policies, such as: contributing to the greenhouse gas emission reduction target of net zero by 2050 for long-lived gases, established in the Climate Change Response Act 2002, by contributing to the objective to double renewable energy generation by 2050 as set out in the Electrify New Zealand policy and is consistent with the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011 by increasing renewable electricity generation capacity and output.

We consider as the project has not been identified as a priority project, it **does not satisfy the criterion**. We do not recommend that you refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this with a substantive application to assist a panel in understanding the extent of the project’s significant regional or national benefits.

*Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]*

The applicant considers the project will deliver a new regionally or nationally significant source of renewable electricity, with an annual expected output of 1,905 GWh, which is sufficient to power up to 238,000 homes, which also meets the definition of ‘regionally significant infrastructure’ in the Southland Regional Policy Statement.

SRC state the proposal is not inconsistent with regional planning documents and considers the project is likely to have regional and national benefits.

The Minister for Energy states the project will deliver new nationally significant infrastructure in the form of large-scale energy generation.

The Minister for Regional Development states the proposed project would help meet both Southland and national electricity demand by increasing renewable electricity generation capacity.

We consider the project will deliver new regionally and nationally significant infrastructure benefits and **satisfies the criterion**. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

*Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [s22(2)(a)(iii)]*

The applicant considers that while not increasing housing or within an urban area, that indirectly, electricity is critical to housing needs and the functioning of urban environments which are both reliant on electricity supply that the project will deliver.

We consider the applicant’s quoted benefits are project specific, rather than significant regional benefits in themselves and **does not satisfy the criterion**. We do not consider you should refer the project on this basis.

*Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]*

The applicant considers the project will deliver significant economic benefits both regionally and nationally, and that the most enduring economic benefit is the utilisation of the wind resource to produce electricity, contributing to the increase in renewable electricity capacity. The project will generate approximately \$136.5 million direct benefits to the region and approximately 185–250 full-time equivalent (FTE) direct construction jobs over the development period and 24-33 FTE once operational. The project will deliver \$256.7 million in total direct expenditure for the construction period and, once operational, up to \$18 million into the local economy annually.

The Minister for Economic Growth states that in the short to medium term, the primary benefits relate to construction activity, including employment and economic output. Over the longer term, the principal benefit is increased renewable electricity generation to meet growing demand associated with electrification.

We consider the project will deliver regionally significant economic benefits in the construction phase and **satisfies the criterion**. 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 by providing a secure electricity supply as New Zealand’s primary industries reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

We consider the applicant’s quoted benefits are project specific, rather than significant regional benefits in themselves and **does not satisfy the criterion**. We do not consider you should refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this with a substantive application to assist a panel in understanding the extent of the project’s significant regional or national benefits

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

The applicant considers that utilising wind to generate electricity is an efficient use of natural resources, which will support the primary sector and extractive industries by providing a reliable electricity supply

We consider the applicant’s quoted benefits are project specific, rather than significant regional benefits in themselves and **does not satisfy the criterion**. We do not consider you should refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this with a substantive application to assist a panel in understanding the extent of the project’s significant regional or national benefits

*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 by generating an annual output of up to 1,905GWh of renewable electricity, providing greater flexibility (alongside geothermal and hydro sources) in responding to short-term electricity demand.

Based on the application information, at this high-level stage of consideration it is not sufficiently clear how the project will reduce or remove greenhouse gases and as such **does not satisfy the criterion**. We do not recommend that you refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this, that a panel is able to consider when presented with a substantive application, if referred to the fast-track process.

*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 strengthen New Zealand’s resilience to the effects of climate change by increasing the supply and diversity of electricity generation sites, which will aid recovery from events caused by natural hazards.

|                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                              | <p>Based on the application information, the large-scale project will support climate change adaptation or support recovery from natural hazard events by providing an alternative energy source and as such <b><u>does satisfy the criterion</u></b>. We recommend that you can refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this, that a panel is able to consider when presented with a substantive application, if referred to the fast-track process.</p> <p><i>Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]</i><br/>The applicant considers that climate change is a significant environmental issue addressed by the project providing a significant new source of renewable electricity, which supports decarbonisation, reduces reliance on coal combatting the effects of climate change.</p> <p>We consider the applicant's quoted benefits are project specific, rather than significant benefits in themselves and <b><u>does not satisfy the criterion</u></b>. We do not consider you should refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this with a substantive application to assist a panel in understanding the extent of the project's significant regional or national benefits</p> <p><i>Will promote competition in the grocery industry [s22(2)(a)(ixa)]</i><br/>The applicant considers that indirectly, the grocery industry is reliant on access to electricity to operate and the project will contribute to the continued efficient operation of the grocery industry.</p> <p>We consider the applicant's quoted benefits are project specific, rather than significant benefits in themselves and <b><u>does not satisfy the criterion</u></b>. We do not consider you should refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this with a substantive application to assist a panel in understanding the extent of the project's significant regional or national benefits</p> <p><i>Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]</i><br/>The applicant considers the project is consistent with local or regional planning documents including spatial strategies – Southland Regional Policy Statement, Proposed Southland Water and Land Plan, Regional Air Plan, Environment Southland Renewable Energy Position Statement, Southland District Plan, Gore District Plan, Proposed Gore District Plan, Operative Gore District Plan.</p> <p>SRC state the Southland Regional Spatial Plan is currently in pre-planning stages of development, so there is no regional spatial strategy to be consistent with. SRC also commented that the proposal is not inconsistent with regional planning documents.</p> <p>We consider it likely that the project is broadly consistent, however at this high-level stage of consideration it is not sufficiently clear if it is consistent with the full range of planning documents and as such <b><u>does not satisfy the criterion</u></b>. We do not recommend that you refer the project on this basis. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this, that a panel is able to consider when presented with a substantive application, if referred to the fast-track process.</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b><br/>Overall, we consider the project is an <b><u>infrastructure and development project</u></b> that would have <b><u>significant regional and national benefits</u></b> aligned 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 satisfies 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> |
| Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)] | <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><br/>The applicant considers the use of the fast-track process to authorise the project will facilitate the delivery of the project in a more timely and cost-effective manner than would otherwise occur under the standard processes, which under the standard consenting process would likely be publicly notified, result in submissions and likely lead to a hearing process and likely appeal to the Environment Court, adding additional time and cost to the consenting process. The fast-track process will therefore significantly reduce the processing timeframe for the project and the associated cost that would occur with consenting under the standard consenting process.</p> <p>DOC commented that a land exchange (<i>within scope</i>) process under the Conservation Act 1987 can take several months or longer to process and is dependent on staff availability and competing priorities. While the land exchange under the fast-track approvals process is likely to also take several months, the prescriptive pathway under the fast-track process provides increased certainty and process efficiencies for the applicant and DOC. The applicant will have a better understanding of the merits of their land exchange proposal by the time it needs to decide whether to apply for a land exchange or concession in its substantive application.</p> <p>Based on the application, and DOC's comments, we consider 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 because it precludes public and limited notification in an RMA context and enables multiple approval types under specific Acts to be considered under a singular process, and appeals under the Act are only to the High Court and limited to points of law. We recommend that the project <b><u>satisfies the criterion</u></b> and that you can refer the project on this basis.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i><br/>The applicant considers the project is not overly complex, is for a development of which the effects are largely understood and can be addressed through the implementation of appropriate management measures, as has occurred for the development of other wind farms around the country. Independent technical reports that will support the substantive application are being prepared and engaging with key stakeholders throughout preparation of the substantive application will ensure the application can be processed in an efficient manner and will therefore not materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process.</p> <p>We consider projects of this scale and nature are consistent with the types of nationally significant developments the fast-track approvals process was established for, noting the project is neither novel in the New Zealand context nor beyond the scope of what a panel would typically assess where multiple approval types are sought under the fast-track approvals process. We recommend that the project <b><u>satisfies the criterion</u></b> and that you can refer the project on this basis.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| Reasons to decline                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minister <u>must</u> decline [section 21(3)]               | <p>You <u>must</u> decline a referral application if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>the application may not be accepted under subsection 1 (meets referral criteria)</i> – We consider the project meets the referral criteria.</li> <li>b. <i>the Minister is satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity</i> – We have not identified any ineligible activities included in the project scope.</li> <li>c. <i>the Minister considers that they do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section</i> – We consider you have adequate information to inform your referral decisions.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, we do not consider that you must decline the application under this section.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Minister <u>may</u> decline [section 21(4) and 21(5)(a-h)] | <p>You <u>may</u> decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not it meets the criteria in section 22.</p> <p>Reasons to decline a referral application under subsection 4 include, without limitation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <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 inconsistencies have been identified, including within the section 18 Treaty report or from Māori groups invited to comment.</li> <li>b. <i>it would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts</i> – No reports or comments received have indicated this is the case.</li> <li>c. <i>the project may have significant adverse effects on the environment</i> – The applicant summary of adverse effects concludes there are no significant issues that will result from the project and that any adverse effects can be mitigated. Mitigation measures are proposed to prevent and reduce actual and potential effects of the activity.<br/>We do not consider the adverse effects significant enough to decline to refer the project and note these are matters that a panel is able to consider when presented with a comprehensive substantive application, if referred to the fast-track process.</li> <li>d. <i>the applicant has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals</i> – No such history has been noted.</li> <li>e. <i>the project area includes land that the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations considers necessary for Treaty settlement purposes</i> – No such land has been identified.</li> <li>f. <i>the project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991</i> – The project does not include any such activity.</li> <li>g. <i>a substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications</i> – No competing applications have been identified at this stage. We note the EPA is required to check prior to providing a substantive application to the panel convener.</li> <li>h. <i>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)</i> – No such resource consents have been identified, including by the applicant and relevant local authorities.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, we do not recommend that you decline the application.</p> |

## 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.