



PROACTIVE RELEASE COVERSHEET

Minister	Minister Bishop	Portfolio	RMA Reform
Name of package	Phase 2 National Direction	Date to be published	18 December

List of documents that have been proactively released		
Date	Title	Author
14 November 2025	Regulatory Impact Statement: Proposed Amendments to the National Policy Statement on Renewable Electricity Generation 2011	Ministry for the Environment Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Information redacted NO		
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Summary of reasons for redaction		
N/A		



Regulatory Impact Statement:

Proposed Amendments to the National Policy Statement on Renewable Electricity Generation 2011

Decision sought	<i>Analysis produced for final Cabinet decisions on proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation under the Resource Management Act 1991.</i>
Agency responsible	<i>Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment</i>
Proposing Ministers	<i>Hon Chris Bishop, Minister Responsible for RMA Reform and Minister for Infrastructure</i> <i>Hon Simon Watts, Minister of Energy</i>
Date finalised	<i>14 November 2025</i>

This Regulatory Impact Statement considers the regulatory impacts of proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation. The amendments are intended to provide direction to enable and protect renewable electricity generation assets and activities, whilst being consistent with RMA requirements to manage the adverse effects of inappropriate development.

This Regulatory Impact Statement follows the Interim Impact Statement on the proposal to amend the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation, issued in May 20205. Public consultation on the proposals was carried out between May and July 2025. This version of the Regulatory Impact Statement has been updated in light of the submissions received and subsequent decisions by Ministers.

Summary: Problem definition and options

What is the policy problem?

The current resource management system does not sufficiently enable and protect renewable electricity generation (REG) to the degree needed to achieve New Zealand's electrification, electricity security and emissions reduction targets.

The current National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG) was gazetted in 2011, before emission reduction plans were introduced under the Climate Change Response Amendment Act and is therefore no longer fit-for-purpose.

System users argue that it has not had a significant impact on planning outcomes, or the time, cost and complexity of obtaining consent:

Key factors that contribute to the problem include:

- Decision makers do not fully or consistently recognise the significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation in RMA decision making processes;
- There is a lack of strong and enabling policy guidance across much of New Zealand in relation to REG;
- There is no clear direction on key issues around consenting decisions for renewable electricity projects. This includes how to resolve competing national and local interests, and how to manage interactions with other values the RMA deems important – for example, protecting the country’s outstanding natural landscapes;
- There is increased uncertainty, consenting costs and resource consent conditions that can reduce the efficiency of existing renewable electricity generation and make projects difficult to consent;
- The costs and processes associated with resource consent acquisition can discourage investment in smaller-scale projects that tend to have less significant adverse effects.

What is the policy objective?

The primary objective of the proposed amendments is to enable a substantial increase in renewable electricity generation output to electrify the economy, provide greater security of electricity supply and reduce emissions, by providing a more certain and enabling consenting environment, while also managing the adverse effects on the environment.

What policy options have been considered, including any alternatives to regulation?

In June 2024, Cabinet agreed for the NPS-REG to be updated as part of the national direction phase 2 programme. Other regulatory and non-regulatory interventions are therefore not considered within scope of this interim RIS.

The policy options that have been considered are those that meet the policy intent of the coalition government’s objectives for renewable electricity generation (refer ‘policy objective’ above) and as set out in the National Party election manifesto document ‘Electrify NZ’, within the scope of the amendments to national direction under Phase 2 of the RM Reform programme

The policy options proposed in the public consultation package in May 2025 have been developed in light of the forthcoming RMA replacement legislation. The replacement legislation will likely change the regulatory impacts of these proposals to amend RMA national direction. However, pending further development of the replacement legislation, these impacts are unable to be assessed at this point in time. New national direction will be developed to align with the new legislation.

What partners and stakeholders think

There has been targeted engagement with key industry stakeholders via the Electricity Sector Environmental Group (ESEG), the New Zealand Planning Institute, the Resource Management Law Association, local government practitioners and environmental NGOs.

Industry supported proposals to strengthen the NPS-REG and recommended that REG activities be given greater status under the RMA.

Local authorities noted the need to balance national direction with retaining some ability to apply local factors in decision making.

Iwi / Māori groups are concerned about the potential impacts on values recognised as matters of national importance in section 6 of the RMA and ensuring their Treaty settlement provisions are upheld (noting that there have been further amendments to the policy proposals since the time of engagement and these risks are now substantially reduced).

Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOs) sought to ensure that the enablement of REG activities was necessary to meet the objectives, in the context of potential adverse effects on the environment and also identified the need for spatial planning to support the intent of the proposals.

Is the preferred option in the Cabinet paper the same as preferred option in the RIS?

Yes.

Summary: Minister's preferred option in the Cabinet paper

Costs (Core information)

Outline the key monetised and non-monetised costs, where those costs fall (e.g. what people or organisations, or environments), and the nature of those impacts (e.g. direct or indirect)

The main monetised costs (compared to the status quo) relate to implementation costs and opportunity costs. Non-monetised costs are environmental, social and cultural.

Implementation costs relate to the costs to local government / consent authorities that are required to make decisions and otherwise give effect to the NPS-REG. Some costs will fall to applicants; these are likely to be cost-recoverable by the consent authority (at least in part), though overall these are anticipated to be reduced.

Opportunity costs potentially exist in terms of greater enablement that the NPS amendments could have pursued. In particular, early policy development that sought to direct decision-makers on the management of adverse effects in relation to matters of national importance areas and values addressed by other national policy statements, which will now be addressed in the replacement resource management legislation. However, there are additional risks (and therefore costs) that could arise from this approach, in terms of additional uncertainty and litigation. In addition, such opportunity costs are likely to be short-lived as further amendments through the replacement RMA legislation will address some of the potential uncertainties and risks.

Non-monetised environmental costs arise from the increased potential for adverse effects on the environment of enabling REG activities. The policy proposals for the NPS-REG aim to strike a balance between the need for increased REG and the potential for such effects, particularly where those values are recognised as matters of national importance.

There are also potential non-monetised costs to iwi / Māori from the policy proposals. While there was some engagement prior to public consultation with a few interested Māori groups (Post Settlement Governance Entities, some iwi and Te Tai Kaha), further engagement was recommended with iwi / Māori in order to meet the Crown's obligations, as some Treaty settlement legislation specifically requires that local iwi / Māori are provided decision-making opportunities on matters that are addressed in the settlement legislation. Many iwi/Māori groups submitted on the proposals through the public consultation process, which has assisted MfE in meeting the Crown's obligations.

Benefits (Core information)

Potential impact of proposed amendments

The proposed amendments are intended to contribute to the coalition government's objectives for renewable electricity generation (i.e. a resilient, affordable electricity supply, an electrified economy and emissions reductions). To support these objectives, the amendments provide greater enablement and protection of REG infrastructure across the planning system.

The precise impacts will play at a project-specific, case by case level, meaning it is not possible to precisely quantify the costs and benefits. For example, it is possible that some future REG projects may be declined consent under the new national direction, or that some projects are fully capable of receiving consent under the status quo without the need for these reforms. The intent of the proposals is to 'shift the needle' of RMA decision making toward enabling REG development outcomes – resulting in a net effect of greater investment certainty. This is primarily achieved through directing decision-makers to recognise the nationally and regionally significant benefits of REG and by enabling and protecting REG assets and activities.

Balance of benefits and costs (Core information)

Does the RIS indicate that the benefits of the Minister's preferred option are likely to outweigh the costs?

Do the benefits outweigh the costs when considering quantitative and/or qualitative evidence?

- There is insufficient quantitative or qualitative evidence to accurately determine the extent to which the proposals will enable an increase in REG supply (and therefore the cost/benefit ratio); however, the proposals will provide greater direction to decision-makers to enable REG projects when considering individual consent applications. The proposal is therefore an improvement on the status quo.

How will the benefit-cost ratio change over time?

(as above)

If you are unable to make a judgement on the balance of benefits and costs, why is that?

(as above)

Implementation

How will the proposal be implemented, who will implement it, and what are the risks?

Who will be responsible for ongoing operation and enforcement of the new arrangements?

- The proposals are given effect by gazettal and will be implemented by council decision-makers on resource consent applications at a local level (or by the Environment Court on appeal or by direct referral).

- Due to the ‘plan stop’ amendments to the RMA¹, which preclude most plan changes until at least 31 December 2027, it is unlikely that there will be any plan changes to give effect to the NPS-REG amendments.

What are the implementation risks (including possible unintended consequences) and how will the risks be mitigated?

- Implementation is ordinarily prescribed by statutory process; however, due to the government’s ‘plan stop’ amendments to the RMA, the proposals included in the amendments to the NPS-REG (and other instruments) will be applied by decision-makers on resource consents, designations and private plan changes. The NPS provisions are also relevant to decision-making on Fast Track applications.
- No further plan processes are required to implement the proposals; therefore, the implementation risks are low.
- Implementation risks remain for decision-makers on resource consents, who will be required to assess the NPS-REG provisions in the first instance, i.e. without the provisions having been incorporated into local planning instruments. This increases the risk that there will be provisions in the local plans that are inconsistent or contrary to the NPS-REG provisions. However, decision-makers are frequently required to reconcile competing provisions, so the risk is manageable.

When is it planned to come into effect? Will transitional arrangements be required?

- Following gazettal, with no transitional arrangements required. Guidance will be provided by the Ministry for the Environment.

Monitoring

The NPS-REG is part of a suite of proposed new and updated national direction. The effectiveness of this suite would be difficult to measure at an ‘instrument level’ due to the collective regulatory impacts of the combined suite. At this time, MfE has not confirmed how it will monitor this national direction.

The NPS-REG amendments do not include monitoring provisions that specify a monitoring period. Due to the forthcoming RMA replacement legislation, and the new national direction that will accompany the replacement legislation, it is unlikely that the current suite of new and amended national direction will be in place for the 5-year period prescribed in the NPS-REG 2011.

While the Minister for the Environment remains responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of national direction, there is no time period prescribed in the RMA. Local authorities are required to monitor the effectiveness of polices, rules and methods in their policy statements or plans every 5 years; in the event that this exercise is undertaken prior to the replacement RMA legislation coming into force, it is likely that the effect of the new suite of national direction would inform that monitoring.

RMA decision makers will have to have regard to the NPS-REG policies when determining consent applications, plan changes and notices of requirement. The effectiveness of these policies could be measured through the monitoring of data held in the National Monitoring System (NMS), which retains data on the processing of resource consents and outline plans. The data held in this system would require further analysis as it does not categorise consent applications based on activity, but rather the type of consent applied for and its activity status.

¹ Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025

Additional information could also be obtained through surveys of infrastructure providers (and others), or from monitoring data held by local authorities.

Limitations and Constraints on Analysis

The cumulative impact of these proposals alongside the full suite of other proposals included in the national direction work programme has not been considered

At this stage we have not considered how the policy proposals for REG will be aligned across the full suite of national direction. Work to date has focussed on ensuring integration with the National Policy Statement on Electricity Networks (NPS-EN) and the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I). Analysis on the broader changes across all national direction will be included in separate analysis by the Ministry for the Environment.

Treaty of Waitangi considerations

There has been both targeted engagement and public consultation with Treaty partners and iwi/Māori to inform the proposed policy.

Pre-consultation engagement

Prior to consultation, the Ministry for the Environment held a webinar with representatives of some Post Settlement Governance Entities (PSGEs). PSGEs expressed considerable interest in the NPS-REG and support for a specific policy on Māori rights and interests, and asked questions about definitions and policies on sites of significance to Māori. Online engagement was also held with Ngai Tahu, Te Tai Kaha and Tairāwhiti and Te Matau-a-Māui iwi whose key concerns were the impact on taonga in section 6 and other sites and values of significance, rights and interests (including in geothermal and freshwater resources), and upholding Treaty settlements and other arrangements.

Due to the refined scope of policy proposals (noted above under ‘Policy Options’ and discussed in more detail below), many of the concerns of iwi /Māori are less acute than at the time of early engagement.

Public consultation and submissions

Public consultation on the proposals to amend the NPS-REG (along with all other national direction proposals) was undertaken in May 2025. Submissions received from Iwi / Māori groups through the public consultation process have informed the most recent amendments. A Treaty Impact Analysis (TIA) has been undertaken on the proposals to amend the NPS-REG. A summary of the key findings of the TIA is set out below.

Treaty Impact Analysis - Summary

Renewable electricity generation projects can have both positive and adverse effects for tangata whenua and for land, water, and other taonga. These effects must be considered in accordance with s.6 and s.7 of the RMA. While the proposals do give rise to potential impacts on taonga, decision-makers are required to consider REG benefits and other provisions alongside other relevant provisions of national direction (e.g. NZCPS, NPS-FM), regional policy statements, and regional and district plans (including any provisions that specifically provide for sites and issues of cultural significance to Māori). This helps decision-makers effectively weigh up the positive and adverse effects of REG activities when considering an application for consent.

In terms of giving effect to RMA s.8, the proposals are an improvement on the NPS-REG 2011, which does not include any policies that provide for Māori values, aspirations and engagement. The proposals are also more enabling of iwi-led REG activities, which has been a consistent request from iwi / Māori seeking greater electricity options and self-sufficiency. The proposals will not directly impact the decision-making process requirements under the RMA and Treaty settlements.

Treaty settlement agreements and legislation continue to apply. Some specific Treaty settlements require action by the Ministry for the Environment during policy development of national direction. Other Treaty settlements place obligations on Councils, including involving iwi / Māori in plan development and decision-making and inclusion of policies in plans. These obligations are not affected by these proposals. The proposals do not present a risk to existing Treaty settlement commitments.

I have read the Regulatory Impact Statement, and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the preferred option.

Responsible Managers' signature:



Managers' names and titles	Michael Tucker Manager, Urban & Infrastructure Policy Ministry for the Environment	Daniel Brown Manager, Electrify New Zealand Ministry for Business, Innovation & Employment
Date	14 November 2025	14 November 2025

Quality Assurance Statement

Reviewing Agency: Ministry for the Environment	QA rating: Partially meets
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Panel Comment:

*A quality assurance panel with members from the Ministry for the Environment and Department of Conservation has reviewed the Regulatory Impact Statement. The panel considers that it **partially meets** the Quality Assurance criteria.*

The panel acknowledges significant improvements that have been made to the RIS to make it clearer, more complete, and responsive to public consultation and the panel's comments. The RIS is comprehensive and outlines the policy problems and objectives. However, the proposal's ability to fully resolve these issues is less convincing because the options considered were limited by scope and previous decisions. Despite these challenges the authors have done well to acknowledge the limitations.

Glossary

Ancillary REG activities means an activity that supports and is subsidiary to a REG activity including but not limited to vegetation clearance and tree trimming, earthworks and land disturbance, construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of access tracks, bridges and culverts; and construction, maintenance, repair and upgrading of power supply and telecommunication cables and devices.

Community-scale REG means renewable electricity generation with the primary purpose of supplying electricity to a community.

Decision-makers means any persons exercising functions or powers under the Act.

Electricity networks has the same meaning as in the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks 2008.

EMH – Effects Management Hierarchy

Existing renewable electricity generation assets and activities means REG assets and activities that are lawfully established and constructed; or authorised by an unimplemented resource consent or designation, or by another authorisation, that has not lapsed.

Existing renewable electricity generation site (REG site) means the site or sites as defined in any applicable resource consent(s) or by another authorisation used to generate, store and convey electricity as applicable, including all REG assets and activities

Functional need – has the meaning set out in the National Planning Standards 2019 and means the need for a proposal or activity to traverse, locate or operate in a particular environment because the activity can only occur in that environment.

NMS – National Monitoring System

NPS – National Policy Statements are prepared by central government in accordance with sections 45-55 of the RMA to provide policy on matters of national significance.

NPS-EN – National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (amended version of the NPS for Electricity Transmission 2008)

NPS-FM – National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020

NPS-HPL – National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022

NPS-IB - National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity 2023

NPS-NH – National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards

NPS-REG – National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (amended version of the NPS for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011)

NZCPS – New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010.

Operational need – has the meaning set out in the National Planning Standards 2019 and means the need for a proposal or activity to traverse, locate or operate in a particular environment because of technical, logistical or operational characteristics or constraints.

PSGE – Post-Settlement Governance Entity

Renewable electricity generation (REG) means the generation of electricity from solar, wind, hydro- electricity, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, or ocean current energy sources.

Renewable electricity generation activities (REG activities) includes the full range of activities required for renewable electricity generation, including small-scale and community-scale REG, such as:

- (a) the investigation, construction, operation, monitoring, maintenance, upgrade, repowering, decommissioning and removal of REG assets;
- (b) the storage of generated electricity, whether connected to REG, the electricity network or directly to a site or community;
- (c) the conveyance of generated electricity to electricity networks or directly to end users;
- (d) all ancillary activities; but
- (e) does not include electricity network assets as defined by NPS EN

Renewable electricity generation assets (REG assets) means the physical components and structures for renewable electricity generation, including small-scale and community-scale REG, and includes the supporting infrastructure required for ancillary REG activities and to generate and store electricity, such as monitoring equipment, cabling, access tracks and roads; and the infrastructure required to convey generated and stored electricity to electricity networks or directly to end users.

Repowering means in relation to existing REG assets generating electricity from wind or solar sources, the whole or partial replacement of REG assets within an existing REG site to increase generation capacity and output and/or extend the operational life of the REG asset.

Resilience means the capacity of REG assets to absorb and recover from a shock or disruption, or adapt to changing conditions, while providing an appropriate level of service as determined by the renewable electricity generation provider.

Reverse sensitivity - is a concept that is specific to the New Zealand resource management system. It is defined in several district plans, with recent caselaw defining it as: *'sensitivity not to environmental impact, but to complaint about environmental impact. Reverse sensitivity exists where an established use produces adverse effects and a new use is proposed for nearby land. It is the legal vulnerability of the established activity to objection from the new use.'*²

RMA – Resource Management Act 1991.

Small-scale renewable electricity generation (small-scale REG) means renewable electricity generation where the primary purpose is to provide electricity for on-site use at an individual site, or to a telecommunications facility.

Upgrading means in relation to existing REG activities, improving the capacity, efficiency, safety, security, resilience, reliability, flexibility or longevity of existing REG assets.

TIA - Treaty Impact Analysis

² Auckland International Airport Limited v Auckland Council [2024] NZHC 2058

Section 1: Diagnosing the policy problem – The NPS-REG 2011 needs to be updated

Supporting climate change, energy security and economic development requires significant upscaling of electricity infrastructure

Climate change

1. To deliver on New Zealand’s climate goals, whole sectors of the New Zealand economy must switch to renewable energy, mostly in the form of electricity. Electrifying the energy and transport sectors with clean electricity could deliver almost a third of the emissions reductions New Zealand needs to reach Net Zero by 2050.
2. The Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment’s (MBIE) latest electricity demand and generation scenario (EDGS) suggests that electricity generation will need to grow between 35 to 82 per cent by 2050³ to meet future demand from electrification and provide opportunities for economic growth.
3. Modelling indicates that to meet future electricity demand and to replace existing generation, 9.4GW of new generation capacity will be required by 2050 if current trends continue. MBIE data records New Zealand’s current capacity at 9.85GW in 2022, so a 95% increase in capacity is likely to be needed.
4. To support these outcomes, the regulatory environment must enable rapid, sustained growth in renewable energy generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure.
5. An increased supply in generation also supports New Zealand’s security of electricity supply. Tight electricity supplies are currently driving high power prices, posing risks to electrification and economic growth. Forecasts by the electricity system operator suggest that the security of the electricity system over the next ten years will depend on more renewable generation projects being consented and built swiftly.

Energy security

6. Diversification of the electricity supply supports energy security and resilience, through the development of multiple (comparatively) smaller scale wind and solar farms (rather than large-scale hydro, coal fired plants etc.), as well as small and community-scale generation. By increasing the number of REG sites, and diversifying their locations, greater resilience can be achieved, especially in the event of a natural hazard event or other interruption in generation or transmission. Locating generation closer to demand allows local supply to be maintained in the event of disruption elsewhere in the network, particularly for remote communities.
7. Diversification also reduces the need for imported fossil fuels, which in turn reduces exposure to global volatility and also benefits to the trade balance.

Economic development

8. Increased electrification is also anticipated to lead to economic benefits through downward pressure on wholesale and consequently retail prices. Although it is not possible to quantify these benefits (due to unknown future uptake of generation opportunities by the private sector), failure to offer such opportunities is almost certain to

³ [Electricity Demand and Generation Scenarios: Results summary, Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment, July 2024](#).

The extent with which the demand projections range from 35.3% and 82% depend on the scenario that was modelled in the EDGS 2024. Total electricity demand peaks in the ‘innovation’ scenario (72.1 TWh) where current trends continue alongside accelerated technological uptake and learning, in contrast to a reference demand of 62.1 TWh just if current trends continue. pp 1, 8-9.

have the opposite effect on prices. Economic benefits can also be anticipated in the form of employment opportunities across the sector.

9. To support this increased level of electrification, the Government has a target to double renewable electricity generation and better enable the development of supporting infrastructure for transmission and distribution of this electricity. The Government's strategy to meet this target is to provide greater investment certainty by removing consenting barriers and making it easier and cheaper to build and maintain renewable electricity generation and electricity distribution and transmission.

Emissions reductions

10. In December 2024, the Government published the second Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP2), which sets out the Government's plan to meet the second emissions budget (EB2) for the period 2026-30. Delivering Electrify NZ to help achieve the goal of doubling renewable energy is one of the key policies in the plan. A key initiative of the Electrify NZ work programme is amendments to RMA national direction for renewable electricity generation and transmission, which is intended to provide a more certain and enabling consenting framework.⁴
11. ERP2 modelling estimates that Electrify NZ reforms could result in a 50% reduction in consenting time, which would bring forward and deliver emissions reductions of 0.1 Mt CO₂-e in EB2. This has been informed by the following expected outcomes for Electrify NZ.⁵
 - a. reduced time and cost and increased likelihood of consents and re-consents being granted for renewable electricity generation and transmission projects, and increased revenue available to support additional transmission and local lines
 - b. more support for renewables projects to become viable faster, and more existing renewables assets to stay in service for longer (for example, Waitaki and Manapouri dams). This may accelerate displacement of coal- and gas-fired generation, particularly for baseload and intermediate generation.
 - c. more renewable electricity available to support electrification of transport and process heat compared with the counterfactual, helping to mitigate price spikes or security disruptions that could affect the pace of electrification.

The status quo does not allow for renewable electricity infrastructure to be consented at the rate and scale needed

12. RMA approvals are critical to the responsiveness of the supply side of the market. If obtaining consent is difficult or slow, then the supply of renewable energy will be constrained accordingly. Without consent, new generation cannot be built or operated, and existing generation activity cannot continue. Demand may first be needed before supply comes forward. But that demand may only come forward if consumers can reasonably expect a supply of reliable, renewable, and affordable electricity – and this requires a suitable consenting environment.

⁴ Our Journey to Net Zero: New Zealand's second emissions reduction plan 2026 – 2030. Ministry for the Environment: Wellington. December 2024, p. 37.

⁵

<https://environment.govt.nz/assets/publications/climate-change/ERP2/New-Zealands-second-emissions-reduction-plan-2026-30-Technical-Annex.pdf>

13. Research into consenting of infrastructure by Te Waihanga (the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission) found that consenting costs and timeframes have been increasing over recent years. For example, the time it takes to get consent has increased by 150 percent over a 5-year period. The cost of consenting (as a proportion of a project's overall budget) has increased by 70 percent over the last 7 years.⁶ This data covers all types of infrastructure but is highly likely to be relevant to renewable electricity generation and transmission.
14. More specifically, a recent report commissioned by Te Waihanga on infrastructure consenting for climate targets⁷ modelled how long it would take to process the necessary consents under the RMA and what it might cost if New Zealand failed to develop the necessary infrastructure.
15. This report found that by 2050:
 - renewable generation capacity and storage will need to increase by 156% to meet New Zealand's net zero emissions target.
 - Most of the consent applications through to 2050 will be for new projects (including re-consenting of new projects).

Context – Part 2 of the RMA

16. Part 2 of the RMA outlines the purpose and principles of the Act. It comprises section 5, which defines 'sustainable management' as the purpose of the Act, and sections 6, 7 and 8, which expand the purpose and provide direction to decision-makers on how sustainable management must be achieved.
17. In 2004, section 7 of the RMA was amended to include 'the benefits derived from the use and development of renewable energy'. This change meant that decision-makers must have particular regard to the benefits of renewable energy when managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources.
18. Further direction on Part 2 can also be provided via National Policy Statements (NPSs). Many of the proposed policies addressed in this RIS aim to give effect to this direction, such that decision-makers will be better able to give particular regard to these benefits, as well as the needs of REG activities to be able to locate and operate where renewable resources are available.

The role of national direction

19. National Policy Statements (NPS) set out national objectives and policies on matters of national significance and provide the highest level of direction within the RMA framework. Lower order planning documents, such as regional policy statements or plans, must give effect to NPS and consent authorities must "have regard to" an NPS when considering resource consent applications. NPSs are not mandatory, with the exception of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (NZCPS).
20. The National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG) was gazetted in 2011. It was intended to provide clear government direction on the benefits of renewable electricity generation and require all councils to make provision for it in their plans.

⁶ Te Waihanga (New Zealand Infrastructure Commission) 2022, [New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy](#). p.136

⁷ Sapere Research Group, *Infrastructure Consenting for Climate Targets report* (2022)

Relationship between the NPS-REG and other national direction – system alignment

Relationship across all national direction

21. The NPS-REG is required to be read alongside all other national direction instruments. There is no inherent hierarchy across national direction in the RMA, and one instrument only prevails if that primacy is stated explicitly. There is no statement to that effect in the NPS-REG.
22. In that regard, decision-makers are required to determine in the context of the application (or plan etc.) which provisions are to be afforded the greatest weight. Some national direction includes highly directive language that makes that relationship clear; for example, the ‘avoid significant adverse effects’ policies of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement⁸ have been determined to require decision-makers to apply those policies over other less directive policies.
23. This approach reflects the status quo. The proposals in the package do not alter the fundamental relationship between national instruments either collectively or individually (i.e. between particular instruments); rather, all the proposals are more enabling of development than previously, and there is no ‘tension’ between instruments that was not already inherent in the decision-making framework.⁹

Relationship with the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission and the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure

24. National Policy Statements can broadly be defined as ‘development-focused’ or ‘domain-focused’; the latter being designed to manage adverse effects on particular environmental value such as the coastal environment, highly productive land, or biodiversity.
25. The NPS-REG, and the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission (NPS-EN) and the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I) are all development-focused instruments. To ensure system alignment, these three instruments have been developed in parallel, both in terms of the way they are to be applied by decision-makers and the approach taken to recognitions the benefits and requirements of infrastructure, and the management of adverse effects.
26. Note that renewable electricity generation is excluded from the application of the NPS-I.

Specific relationships between NPS-REG and other national direction instruments

NZCPS

27. The NZCPS continues to apply to REG as ‘infrastructure’ as defined in the RMA. That definition includes renewable electricity generation; however, there are no specific amendments to the NZCPS that affect REG.

NPS-NH

28. The NPS-NH does not apply to ‘infrastructure’ as defined in the RMA. This recognises that renewable electricity generation may have a functional or operational need to locate in areas subject to risk from natural hazards. The NPS-REG includes policies requiring decision-makers to recognise and provide for REG that has a functional or operational need to locate in such areas.

⁸ Polices 11, 13, 15.

⁹ Note that there are new instruments proposed as part of the current national direction package (including the NPS-I) - the ‘horizontal’ non-hierarchical structure of national direction will also apply to these new instruments.

NPS-IB

29. The NPS-IB does not apply to renewable electricity generation. This is as a result of a ‘carve-out’ (i.e. disapplication) for REG activities from the NPS-IB previously intended to allow for a bespoke effects management hierarchy (EMH) for REG activities. Following the re-scoping of the Phase 2 programme in early 2025, the EMH is now out of scope of the NPS-REG amendments. Removing the carve-out would also have been out of scope of the revised programme.

NPS-FM and NPS-HPL

The NPS-FM and NPS-HPL continue to apply to REG within the framework of infrastructure as defined in the RMA.

RM reform & Electrify NZ work programmes

30. The Government’s Electrify NZ proposals seek to reduce regulatory barriers to drive investment in renewable electricity generation, so New Zealand can double its supply of affordable, clean energy and become a lower emissions economy. The Electrify NZ work programme includes a range of regulatory initiatives focused on how renewable energy consent applications are treated under the Resource Management Act. Electrify NZ aims to:
 - significantly accelerate decision-making process for consenting of renewable electricity generation, transmission and distribution projects, so consents are made within a year
 - significantly increase the likelihood of consents being granted for renewable electricity generation and electricity transmissions compared to the status quo
 - streamline the outdated rules and regulations that govern electricity transmission and distribution infrastructure, and
 - increase investment in offshore wind generation.
31. Phase 2 and 3 of the Government’s RM reform programme will help deliver Electrify NZ. Phase 2 includes:
 - The newly enacted Fast-track approvals Act. The Act provides an alternative pathway for obtaining consent for nationally or regionally significant projects, including energy and transmission projects. The legislation lists 22 renewable generation projects, which will receive a more rapid consideration by Fast-track decision panels.
 - Updating a suite of national direction (which includes the NPS-REG, NPS-ET and NES-ETA), and
 - Amending the RMA to speed up resource consenting for energy infrastructure.
32. Phase 3 will replace the RMA and will alter the purpose and/or scope of national direction, including through its relationship with spatial planning.

Fast-Track Approvals Act

33. The Fast-Track Approvals Act came into force in December 2024. The purpose is to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits. The legislation lists 22 renewable generation and two transmission projects, which will receive a more rapid consideration by fast-track decision panels. Renewable energy developers can also apply to the Minister for Infrastructure for fast-track consideration.

34. The Fast-Track Act provides an alternative approach to obtaining resource consents and a range of other regulatory approvals. Renewable energy projects (and any other projects) may apply for fast-tracking. We expect Fast-track will go a long way to addressing the concerns raised by energy developers with the existing national direction.
35. There has been a high level of interest from energy developers to list their projects in the legislation. Listed projects may proceed directly to panel consideration, without the need for referral by the Minister for Infrastructure.
36. The fast-track regime is one Government intervention to reduce consenting barriers, provide investment certainty and reduce consenting timeframes for infrastructure projects. It is an enabling framework that is complimentary to the NPS-REG, rather than a substitute.
37. The fast-track regime will not be a feasible alternative for all electricity generators. The reasons for this include:
 - Eligibility: only projects with significant regional or national benefits are eligible for fast-track consideration. This means proposals that do not meet this criterion will be required to use the standard consenting processes (which the NPS-REG can influence).
 - Business case: Generators are likely to consider a range of factors when deciding whether or not to use the fast-track regime. Factors such as cost, existing stakeholder relationships and perceived risks are likely to influence whether or not the fast-track regime is a feasible option.

What is the policy problem or opportunity?

38. The current National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG) is not fit for purpose to enable renewable electricity infrastructure to be consented and built at the scale and rate required to meet the coalition government objectives and Electrify NZ.
39. The key issues with the existing national direction have been covered by previous reports and inquiries, including Government evaluations, the Climate Change Commission¹⁰ (and its predecessor the interim Climate Change Committee¹¹), the Productivity Commission¹², Te Waihanga (Infrastructure Commission)¹³ and the Electricity Authority^{14,15}. Their key findings and recommendations are summarised below:
 - The NPS-REG does not change the fundamental way that REG projects are treated through the consenting process. It does not appear to have had a significant impact on council planning outcomes and decision-making in relation to REG projects.
 - As a less directive instrument, the NPS-REG is given less weight in planning and consenting decisions than instruments that include more directive policies, such as the NZCPS, or restrictive policies in plans. For example, adverse effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes can restrict the development of renewable electricity generation.

10 Climate Change Commission (2021) *Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa*

11 Interim Climate Change Committee (2019) *Accelerated electrification*

12 New Zealand Productivity Commission (2018) *Low-emissions economy: Final report*

13 Te Waihanga/New Zealand Infrastructure Commission (2022) *Rautaki Hanganga o Aotearoa 2022 - 2052 New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy*

14 Electricity Authority (2022). *Promoting competition in the wholesale electricity market in the transition toward 100% renewable electricity.*

15 Concept Consulting (2022). *Generation Investment survey. Prepared for the Electricity Authority, July 2022. [PowerPoint Presentation \(ea.govt.nz\)](http://ea.govt.nz)*

- The NPS-REG has not significantly reduced the time, complexity and cost of obtaining resource consents for renewable electricity generation investments.
- The NPS-REG does not provide clear direction on key issues for consenting decisions for renewable electricity projects. Those issues include how to resolve competing national and local interests, and how to manage interactions with other issues that the RMA identifies as important – for example, protecting the country’s outstanding natural landscapes and the relationship of Māori with their taonga¹⁶.

40. If no changes are made to the status quo, these issues can be expected to continue, exacerbating the current situation.

Limitations of evidence and analysis

41. There is a lack of quantitative evidence to determine the extent to which barriers in the resource management system are constraining REG delivery. Reasons for this lack of evidence include:

- The national monitoring system for consents does not categorise consent applications based on activity, but rather the type of consent applied for and activity status. The activity status of different infrastructure activities varies between consenting authorities and between district plan zones within a district.
- There is anecdotal evidence, but there are no statistics for projects that never applied for consents. There are many reasons for projects not progressing to consent application. Information about the perceived barriers in the resource management system is therefore based on individual consent applications which may have multiple reasons for not proceeding.

42. Consent analysis undertaken by the Department of Conservation has identified that, even in areas of high environmental value, the vast majority of consents for REG activities are granted.¹⁷

43. In general, the impacts of national policy statements on consents are hard to quantify, because the RMA is subjective and complex, and every decision will be influenced by the unique aspects of the project, the location and the decision-maker.

Factors outside the resource management system influence REG development decisions

44. There are many factors that influence the business case for developing and maintaining an energy project. The resource management regulatory system is only one, albeit crucial, factor.

45. Changes to the NPS-REG (and changes to broader resource management settings) will help to rebalance the current suite of national direction toward greater enablement of REG and provide some investment certainty. However, these changes will not address other, non-RM barriers to REG development.

46. The Electricity Authority’s 2023 Generation Investment Survey¹⁸ identifies a range of economic factors outside the resource management system which are hindering faster REG development. This includes transmission capacity constraints in some areas (e.g. the Castle Hill Wind Farm consented in 2013 has yet to be built due to transmission costs), demand outlook and wholesale electricity market prices, labour and materials

¹⁶ The Resource Management Act 1991 does this in sections 6(b) and 6(e).

¹⁷ Department of Conservation, draft REG consent analysis, February 2024.

¹⁸ https://www.ea.govt.nz/documents/4414/Generation_Investment_Survey_-_2023_update.pdf (page 3)

markets and supply, exchange rates and investment barriers (e.g., Overseas Investment Office requirements).

47. These factors cannot be directly addressed through changes to the resource management system.

What objectives are sought in relation to the policy problem?

48. The primary objective of the proposed amendments is to enable renewable electricity generation in New Zealand at the rate and manner necessary to support the achievement of New Zealand's emissions reduction target and implementation of the emissions reduction plan under the Climate Change Response Act 2002, provide greater resilience to disruptions to electricity supply, and provide for the social, economic and cultural well-being of people and communities, and for their health and safety, while managing the adverse effects of REG activities.
49. The proposals aim to enable a substantial increase in renewable electricity generation output by providing a more certain and enabling consenting environment, while also managing adverse effects on the environment.

What consultation has been undertaken?

Summary of engagement prior to public consultation

50. Draft amendments to the NPS REG were publicly consulted in 2023. These amendments strengthened the policies and objectives in the NPS to give greater weight to matters such as the benefits of REG and climate change impacts. The proposals did not address inconsistencies and overlaps with other RMA national direction. Feedback from this consultation has informed the NPS-REG proposals that are addressed in this RIS. In particular, a key message from this consultation was that the NPS was unlikely to have a significant positive impact of REG investment without better integration and alignment between all of the different national direction instruments that affect projects (in particular, direction around biodiversity, freshwater and coastal management).
51. However, in some respects, the outcomes of consultations have been superseded by the narrower scope outlined above. As the pre-consultation engagement undertaken in 2024 focused on a wider range of policy proposals, less detailed feedback was provided on the remaining policy proposals in the current national direction package.

Engagement with iwi / Māori

52. Engagement with Māori highlighted the importance of REG in meeting climate changes goals – an area of interest for Māori investment. It also was highlighted that REG projects can have considerable impact on other values of importance to Māori – such as freshwater bodies and native biodiversity.
53. Ministry officials undertook pre-consultation engagement with Treaty partners to inform the proposed policy. A webinar was held with representatives of some PSGEs, who expressed considerable interest in the NPS-REG and support for a specific policy on Māori rights and interests, and asked questions about definitions and policies on sites of significance to Māori.
54. Online engagement was also held with Ngai Tahu (29 October 2024), Te Tai Kaha (31 October 2024) and Tairāwhiti and Te Matau-a-Māui iwi (8 November 2024) whose key concerns were rights and interests (including in geothermal and freshwater resources), the impact on taonga in section 6 and other sites and values of significance, and upholding Treaty settlements and other arrangements.

Engagement with local government

55. MBIE / MfE have had several workshops with local government groups. Local government have expressed a range of views that include the benefits of having consistent national direction, as well as concerns about the loss of local perspectives and priorities in local planning instruments and processes. They also raised the costs of implementation, particularly the ‘rolling’ reviews required of them by amendments to multiple national instruments.

Engagement with NGOs and RM practitioners

56. MBIE / MfE have also met with the New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI), Resource Management Law Association (RMLA), and the Environmental Defence Society (EDS). Feedback from these groups, based on proposals at the time of engagement, related to ensuring the regulatory response appropriately responded to the extent of the problem (with respect to effectively enabling REG activities without unnecessarily allowing adverse effects on values identified as matters of national importance by section 6 of the RMA). These groups were also strongly in favour of enabling the benefits of spatial planning (which is being incorporated into the RMA reforms).

Summary of public consultation

57. Public consultation on a suite of national direction instruments opened in May 2025. This included consultation on the NPS-REG as well as amendments to the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission (NPS-ET) and a new National Policy Statement for Infrastructure (NPS-I). The NPS-ET has been expanded to include distribution and accordingly renamed as the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks (NPS-EN). Alignment between these instruments has been sought wherever possible and appropriate.
58. A large number of submissions sought amendments to the proposals, either specifically in relation to the NPS-REG, or in conjunction with the NPS-EN and NPS-I. Submitters included the electricity sector, local government, professional bodies, environmental non-governmental organisations, iwi / Māori, recreational bodies, and individuals.
59. Most submitters were supportive of the need for change, but views naturally varied on how this change should occur. There was broad support for the rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions, greater security of supply, and the transition to an electrified economy (e.g. renewably generated energy supply for an electrified transport network and industry). Some concerns were expressed at the environmental impacts of the proposals, as well as the efficacy and complexity of the proposals.
60. Further discussion of submissions is included below in relation to specific policy shifts, and in the Submissions and Recommendations report¹⁹ provided to the Minister for RMA Reform and other Ministers with relevant portfolios.

¹⁹ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – Proposed National Policy Statement for Infrastructure, and proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation and the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission, Section 3, pp.36-55.

Section 2: Assessing options to address the policy problem

Criteria for selecting options to address the policy problem

61. Options for change will be assessed using the criteria below. This set of criteria is consistent across the national direction programme and are equally weighted.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Questions to guide application of criteria</i>
Effectiveness	<p>Does the option achieve the objectives?</p> <p>Does the option provide a solution to the identified problem?</p> <p>Have trade-offs between the objectives been factored into the assessment of the proposal's overall effectiveness?</p>
Efficiency	<p>To what extent does the proposal achieve the intended outcomes/objectives at the least cost to applicants, the regulator and, where appropriate, the courts.</p> <p>Is the regulatory burden (cost) proportionate to the anticipated benefits?</p> <p>Is the option cost-effective?</p>
System alignment	<p>Does the option integrate well with other proposals and the wider statutory framework?</p> <p>What is the impact on existing objectives in current national direction instruments?</p> <p>Does the option reduce complexity and provide clarity for local government to address tensions/conflicts between ND instruments?</p>
Implementation complexity	<p>Is the option clear about what is required for implementation by local government, and can it be easily implemented?</p> <p>Does the option provide enough flexibility to allow local circumstances to be adequately taken into account / addressed at the local level?</p> <p>To what extent does the proposal present implementation risks that are low or within acceptable parameters (e.g. Is the proposal a new or novel solution or is it a tried and tested approach that has been successfully applied elsewhere?).</p> <p>To what extent can the proposal be successfully implemented within reasonable timeframes?</p> <p>Do regulated parties have the flexibility to adopt efficient and innovative approaches to meeting their regulatory obligations?</p> <p>(NB: A regulatory system is flexible if the underlying regulatory approach is principles or performance based).</p> <p>To what extent does the proposal ensure regulated parties have certainty about their legal obligations, and does the regulatory system provides predictability over time?</p> <p>Are legislative requirements clear and able to be applied consistently and fairly by regulators?</p> <p>Do all participants in the regulatory system understand their roles, responsibilities and legal obligations?</p>

Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes	Does the option take into account the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Māori rights and interests? Does the option align with the Treaty Impact Analysis (TIA)?
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What scope will options be considered within?

62. The Government has made the following decisions, which direct the scope of this work:

- In June 2024, Cabinet agreed for the NPS-REG to be updated as part of the national direction phase 2 programme. Other regulatory and non-regulatory interventions are therefore not considered within scope of this interim RIS.
- The Government has decided to address major infrastructure development interactions with natural environment features such as outstanding natural landscapes, freshwater and indigenous biodiversity in its replacement of the RMA.
- This means that in the meantime other national direction will continue to apply so other NPSs (such as the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, and the National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity) will be read alongside NPS-REG to manage effects on those values articulated in section 6 of the RMA. This approach is consistent with proposals for the NPS-Infrastructure (NPS-I) and NPS-Electricity Networks (NPS-EN).
- Note that the current National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity excludes REG and electricity transmission (ET) and that this regulatory gap will remain until a replacement RMA regime comes into force. Regional policy statements and plans continue to manage the effects of REG and ET on biodiversity in the meantime.

63. On that basis, this RIS focuses on the regulatory impacts of either retaining the status quo or amending the NPS-REG to achieve the government's objectives for REG, rather than other regulatory interventions such as amending the primary legislation, non-statutory guidance etc.

The need for integrated strategic spatial planning

64. The lack of integrated, strategic spatial planning is a barrier identified by some industry, professional bodies, NGOs and local government alike. While not within scope of the NPS-REG amendments, there are clear benefits to long-term planning for development, the infrastructure and infrastructure providers needed to support that development (including funding and financing), and identifying spatial opportunities and constraints for inclusion in local planning instruments.

65. Spatial planning reforms are best undertaken at a system-wide level and are included in the Phase 3 RMA reforms.

What options are being considered?

Overview of policy proposals

66. This RIS provides analysis only of the policy proposals that have been identified as meeting the scope for inclusion in the NPS described above (rather than analysis of 'discarded options').

67. In particular, early policy development considered addressing potential conflicts across national direction instruments, through direction to decision-makers on the management of adverse effects of REG activities on values addressed by other national policy

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statements (via an 'effects management hierarchy'). Broadly, those values are identified as matters of national importance in s.6 of the RMA (although not all s.6 matters are addressed by national direction).

68. As discussed above, Cabinet has now directed that policy development relating to the management of adverse effects on significant environmental values will form part of the RMA replacement legislation. Therefore, this RIS does not consider the regulatory impacts of those earlier policy proposals, nor their comparative benefits or costs with respect to options that have been progressed.
69. The options that have been progressed are those that will better enable REG activities and increase certainty and national consistency on decision-making and the appropriate management of effects on the environment (other than effects on values identified as matters of national importance in s.6). Additionally, the options are those considered to be within the lawful scope of an NPS and Part 2 of the RMA. Until the RMA replacement legislation is enacted, the proposed amendments to the NPS-REG will continue to be read alongside any relevant provisions of other national policy statements and applicable local planning provisions.
70. The table below provides an overview of the key issues and recommended options.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Policy proposal</i>
	<p>Amending the NPS-REG objective to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet New Zealand's legislative targets for reducing emissions, improve resilience to disruptions to electricity supply, and provide for well-being while managing adverse effects.
1. Lack of direction to decision makers to sufficiently recognise and provide for the national significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation	<p>Amending the NPS-REG to include policies that direct decision makers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and provide for the national significance and benefits of all REG activities at a national, regional and local scale. • Recognise and provide for REG activities that have an operational need or functional need to be in particular environments. • Recognise and provide for the importance of cumulative gains and losses of REG activities • Enable REG activities in areas that are not constrained by values recognised as matters of national importance provided that effects can be practicably managed • Provide for the ongoing maintenance, upgrade, reconsenting and repowering²⁰ of existing REG activities • Protecting REG activities from the adverse effects of other 'incompatible' or sensitive activities.

²⁰ Repowering, in relation to existing REG assets generating electricity from wind or solar sources, means the whole or partial replacement of REG assets within an existing REG site to increase generation output and/or extend the operational life of the REG asset.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise and provide for small-scale and community-scale REG activities
2. Lack of direction to decision makers on providing for Māori interests	<p>Inserting policies to recognise and provide for Māori interests. These provide for consideration of Māori REG aspirations and engagement with iwi/Māori in project scoping, development and decision making.</p>

Issue 1 – The existing NPS-REG does not adequately recognise and provide for the national significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation

71. The NPS-REG 2011 was developed before New Zealand’s targets for reducing emissions became law. Climate action is now urgent globally and domestically, and electrification of our economy is an important driver to decarbonise New Zealand’s energy system.
72. The NPS-REG 2011 is now outdated given the way in which NPSs are now drafted, case law interpretation of national direction, and the need to significantly increase REG to increase energy security and respond to climate change. As a result, the NPS-REG does not sufficiently direct decision makers to recognise and provide for the national significance of renewable electricity generation, nor does it contain direction on key consenting matters. Accordingly, it does not change the fundamental way that REG projects are treated through the consenting process and does not appear to have had a significant impact on council planning outcomes and decision-making in relation to REG projects.

What options are being considered?

Option 1 – Status quo: rely on existing NPS-REG objective and policies

73. Under the status quo, the existing objective and policies would be unchanged. While many of the existing policies are still relevant, they are not sufficiently directive to achieve the intended objectives for REG.

Option 2 – Strengthened objective and policy direction (preferred)

74. This option proposed amending the NPS-REG to include more enabling and directive policies. This requires strengthening the objective and existing policies and adding new policies.
75. The objective would be strengthened to direct decision-makers to enable and protect REG development, in order to electrify the economy, provide a more secure and resilient electricity supply, contribute to meeting New Zealand’s legislative targets for reducing emissions, and provide for well-being while managing adverse effects.
76. The policies, which are explained in detail below, would direct resource management decision makers to:
 - Recognise and provide for the national significance and benefits of all REG activities at a national, regional and local scale.
 - Recognise and provide for REG activities that have an operational need or functional need to be in particular environments (subject to other relevant national direction and local plan provisions addressing s.6 matters).

- Enable REG activities outside of areas constrained by values recognised as matters of national importance (under s.6 of the RMA) provided adverse effects can be practicably managed
- Provide for the ongoing operation, maintenance, upgrade, reconsenting and repowering of REG.
- Recognise other requirements for REG activities, such as protection from reverse sensitivity effects of nearby new activities.

Recognising the significance and benefits of REG activities

77. The NPS-REG 2011 includes policies that identify some of the benefits of REG activities and requires decision-makers to recognise and provide for those benefits. Therefore, the status quo does not require wholesale change to achieve the objectives, and the regulatory impact is accordingly limited in scale, except to the extent that decision-makers are required to consider some of these policies in relation to locations that would otherwise have been inaccessible due to the protective policies in other national direction or plans. For the avoidance of doubt, the NPS-REG proposals would not prevail over the protective policies but would form part of the decision-maker's overall consideration.
78. The key substantive changes proposed are to recognise the benefits of REG activities, resilience and energy security through diverse REG sources and locations, and to emphasise the positive effects of REG activities including climate emissions reductions.
79. Additional policies are proposed to recognise health and safety benefits, the benefits of maximising existing REG assets, and the benefits of locating new REG activities near to existing demand and transmission / distribution.
80. Collectively, these policies provide a comprehensive supporting policy framework that more accurately identifies the benefits of REG activities to a human and natural environment which is facing new and increased challenges from the effects of climate change and natural hazards, and electricity supply instability.

Post-consultation proposed amendments

Objective²¹

81. In response to submissions, officials recommend amendments to clarify the intent of the objective, making it more directive, and to align with the proposed NPS-EN and proposed NPS-I wherever possible. However, the objective should remain high-level with the detail provided by policies, and should only align with the NPS-I and NPS-EN where appropriate.
82. The recommendations are to amend the objective to ensure that it achieves the intent of the proposal and provides for:
 - a. the national significance of REG and its national, regional and local benefits
 - b. the maintenance and increase of REG capacity and output, and avoids losses
 - c. security of electricity supply and resilience for all people and communities
 - d. protection of REG from adverse effects of other activities

Policy A²² - National significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation

83. In response to submissions, officials recommend linking the benefits of REG to climate change statutory targets and plans, include the displacement of greenhouse gas emission

²¹ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.39-40

²² Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.41-42

from the existing NPS-REG 2011, clarify the benefit of electricity storage in diverse locations, and identify the benefit of avoiding reliance on both imported and domestic fossil fuels.

84. The recommendations are to amend proposed Policy A to include:

- a. all benefits in the proposed provision in one list at the same level, and ensure each benefit listed is a distinct topic
- b. displacing greenhouse gas emissions
- c. electricity storage in diverse locations
- d. not using domestic and imported fossil fuels

Recognising that REG activities may have functional or operational need to locate in sensitive areas

85. The NPS-REG 2011 also includes policies that recognise that REG activities need to locate where the resource is available (functional need), the need to connect to the national grid, and the specific requirements of existing REG activities in terms of maintenance and upgrading (including access requirements, operational need).

86. The existing NPS-REG does not specifically address the issue that REG activities may sometimes need to locate in sensitive environmental areas (including areas comprising values identified as matters of national importance in section 6 of the RMA).

87. However, there must be a balance between enabling REG activities and ensuring that the identified matters of national importance are sufficiently protected, in accordance with the significance afforded to them by their inclusion in section 6, and the sustainable management purpose of Part II of the Act.

88. Where REG activities are enabled by this NPS, the regulatory impacts of these policies on the values identified in section 6 must be carefully considered alongside the benefits that these policies seek to achieve. This is particularly important where the values are finite in nature, and even more so where these values are already under significant pressure, such as threatened indigenous species.

89. The consideration is made more challenging by the fact that many of these values are difficult to quantify, and in many cases, there is insufficient data to effectively understand the extent and implications of the potential impacts.

90. For these reasons, any existing national direction on section 6 values, as well as provisions addressing these values in local plans (e.g. outstanding natural landscapes), will continue to apply and be read alongside the provisions of the NPS-REG.

91. Unless national direction or plans require avoidance of adverse effects on these values, these supporting policies will allow decision-makers to consider the benefits of REG activity against the values in the local context. As noted above, national direction that addresses the relationship between REG activities and s.6 matters will be considered as part of the Phase 3 reform package.

Post-consultation proposed amendments

Policy C1²³ - Operational need or functional need for REG assets and activities to be in particular environments

²³ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.44-45

92. In response to submissions, officials recommend amending Policy C1 to explicitly state that there is no requirement to assess potential alternative sites as part of meeting this policy. In other words, applicants need not demonstrate that they have identified and assessed alternative sites in order to demonstrate to a decision-maker that there is a functional or operational need to locate on the site that is the subject of the application.
93. These proposed amendments will provide greater certainty to applicants, submitters and decision-makers and ensure that applications are not subject to tests that are not intended under Policy C1. We note that an assessment of alternatives may still be otherwise required, including under Schedule 4 of the Act or any applicable local planning provisions. Other proposed policies in the NPS-REG address how effects are to be managed.
94. Officials also recommend minor amendments to Policy C2 to qualify that decision-makers must consider the need to connect to electricity networks, and need only consider 'reasonably foreseeable' future REG activities,

Providing for the suite of REG activities including maintenance, upgrade and repowering

95. The NPS-REG 2011 includes policies that require decision-makers to have particular regard to the needs of REG activities with respect to maintenance, operation and upgrading, and the impacts. However, these policies are targeted at locational aspects of the REG activities, ensuring that REG capacity is not reduced, rather than actively requiring decision-makers to enable these 'ongoing' activities to occur.
96. The proposals include requiring decision-makers to recognise and provide for existing activities (including upgrading/repowering) and ancillary activities, to have particular regard to the efficiencies of increasing output from existing REG activity on the same site, and limiting consideration to the changes to the effects of the existing consented activity.
97. Collectively these policies support existing REG activities and assets by actively requiring decision-makers to enable existing REG activities to operate, upgrade or repower. This approach is significantly more enabling and supportive than the NPS-REG 2011.
98. From a regulatory impact perspective, these policies will therefore increase certainty for REG providers, both in terms of initial investment and investment in continuing existing operations. Where extensive upgrades or repowering would have significant environmental impacts, the proposals also provide a nationally consistent process for managing effects and reaching consistent decisions.
99. The proposals seek to manage the environmental impacts by placing guardrails around the extent of 'allowable' changes to existing operations. In particular, the proposals provide for changes to activities within the same or similar footprint rather than attempting to define whether upgrades etc. are major or minor.
100. However, the proposals also limit considerations to the additional effects of the change (i.e. accepting the existing REG infrastructure as part of the current environment).

Post-consultation proposed amendments

Policy P3- providing for the operation and maintenance of existing REG²⁴

101. In response to submissions, officials consider that no amendments are required to the proposed policy which already covers effects of operation and maintenance of existing REG activities on section 6 values and, except to make it clear that it applies to both REG

²⁴ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.46-48

assets and activities. Officials do not recommend amendments to include minor upgrades in areas with s.6 values.

Policy P4 - Reconsenting, upgrading and repowering existing REG assets and activities ²⁵

102. Officials recommend amending the policy by directing decision-makers to recognise that existing REG assets (i.e. the structures) form part of the existing environment. Recognising existing REG assets is only relevant when seeking to renew an expired regional consent. This policy does not require existing water takes and diversions to be considered part of the existing environment.
103. Officials also recommend several minor amendments to clarify that the policy includes both REG assets and activities, and both REG capacity and output. We also recommend deleting the words ‘seek to’ to provide greater certainty of direction when providing for flexibility in consent conditions.
104. Officials recommend amending Policy P4(b) to remove ‘only consider’ and replace it with ‘take into account’ which is well understood by decision-makers and applicants and requires a contextual assessment to give it whatever weight is appropriate in the circumstances (subject to final drafting). Variations to existing consent conditions under section 127 of the RMA continue to apply.

Recognising other requirements of REG activities

105. Existing and consented REG activities can be negatively impacted by other activities, and future REG activities can benefit from strategic spatial planning.
106. The NPS-REG 2011 includes policies relating to reverse sensitivity, and this policy approach will continue. Additional proposed policies require decision-makers to consider the benefits of locating REG activities close to electricity demand and transmission or distribution networks, co-locating with other appropriate REG and infrastructure activities and assets, locating REG activities and assets to minimise effects on other activities, and locating where there can be an appropriate buffer between the REG activities and other ‘incompatible’ activities.
107. As with the other recognised benefits and requirements of REG activities addressed above, the regulatory impact of these proposals largely builds on existing policies, providing greater certainty and consistency by ensuring that decision-makers actively consider these policies when making decisions on resource consents. The policy framework will also ensure that regional and district plans give effect to these policies at the plan-making level.
108. Regulatory impacts also include greater certainty for other parties seeking to undertake land uses in areas where there may be conflicts with REG activities, on the basis that when consenting REG activities, decision-makers will need to consider these potential conflicts.
109. The regulatory impacts on the environment of this package of policies is limited as the policies apply to other land use activities rather than environmental values. However, there are benefits to the environment from reducing the distance from electricity demand to REG activities, from REG activities to transmission and distribution, and reducing the overall development footprint by co-locating REG activities and other infrastructure.
110. Conversely, there may be negative impacts on other land users arising from restrictions on land uses that would otherwise be available as of right (i.e. in accordance with the underlying zoning).

²⁵ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.46-48

Post-consultation proposed amendments***Policy D– protecting existing REG assets from other activities²⁶***

111. In response to submissions, officials recommend amending this policy to specify that lawfully established REG activities that must be protected (along with assets) and limiting the effects to be considered to those directly impacting REG assets and activities (including reverse sensitivity effects).
112. Officials recommend changes to proposed policy P4 to clarify that decision makers maintain the ability for cumulative effects to be managed. Officials also recommend the deletion of definition D16 ‘reverse sensitivity’ as the term is well understood in case law and risks causing uncertainty (see section 3.1 definitions).

Directing decision-makers to enable REG activities where effects can be practicably managed

113. In areas that do not comprise values identified as matters of national importance under s.6 of the Act, but which are nonetheless ‘protected’ by local plan provisions, REG activities can benefit from strengthened national direction.
114. By directing decision-makers to enable REG activities provided that adverse effects are ‘avoided, remedied or mitigated, where practicable’, the proposals provide a nationally consistent, more enabling framework.
115. In this context, decision-makers will consider the applicable provisions of regional policy statements, and regional and district plans, but will be strongly directed by the NPS-REG to enable REG activities provided the adverse can be practicably managed.
116. This framework is consistent with the purpose of the Act, as it does not contradict the protections inherent in s.6 or in established national direction such as the NZCPS, NPS-FM or NPS-IB. It also builds on the sustainable management purpose of the Act in s.527 and the general duty in s.17 of the Act to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects, by providing more specific (and enabling) direction to decision-makers on REG activity applications. As noted above, national direction that addresses the relationship between REG activities and s.6 matters will be considered as part of the Phase 3 reform package

Post-consultation proposed amendments***Policy P2– Managing adverse effects²⁸***

117. In response to submissions seeking more explicit direction on the matters decision-makers should consider when enabling REG activities, officials recommend that drafters consider how best to draft the combination of proposed policies across the NPS and to consider alignment across NPS-I and NPS-EN.
118. In response to submissions seeking the inclusion of effects management aspects from NPS-I, officials have received advice that these would be substantial changes from the proposals consulted on and would require re-consultation to ensure all affected parties had the opportunity to submit. Therefore, no change is recommended at this stage.
119. We recommend separating out the enabling part from the effects management part of the policy. For the enabling part of the policy, officials agree that the existing guidance on the use of adaptive management measures would be beneficial and recommend a provision is included in the updated NPS-REG.

²⁶ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.46-48

²⁷ s.5(2)(c)

²⁸ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations – pp.46-48

120. For the effects management part of the policy, officials agree that the existing guidance on offsetting and compensation would be beneficial for decision makers, REG applicants, submitters and local communities. In response to submissions, officials recommend amending this policy to specify that lawfully established REG activities must be protected (alongside REG assets) and limiting the effects to be considered to those directly impacting REG assets and activities (including reverse sensitivity effects).

How have the criteria been applied in the context of Issue 1?

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Application of criteria</i>
Effectiveness	<p>Explicitly requiring decision-makers to recognise the significance, benefits and functional and operational requirements of REG activities achieves the objectives (in part) and is a solution to the identified problem that the NPS-REG 2011 polices are insufficiently directive to enable REG activities, particularly in areas that comprise values identified as matters of national importance under s.6 of the RMA.</p> <p>The polices also identify the necessary ancillary activities (maintenance) and further development to increase the output of the REG assets (upgrade and repowering).</p> <p>There are clear trade-offs required between achieving the objective of enabling REG delivery and being consistent with the sustainable management purpose of the RMA by protecting matters of national importance. Those trade-offs have been considered to reduce significant impacts on the natural environment while meeting the government's direction on enablement.</p> <p>However, the overall impact of these enabling policies on the natural environment (including people's relationship with the environment and economic benefits from the environment) cannot be quantified at this point, as the impacts will vary case-by-case and depend on a range of factors such as project location, or environmental mitigation measures.</p> <p>The recommendations made in response to submissions increase the effectiveness of the proposals by providing stronger direction to decision-makers on the benefits of REG, particularly in relation to the importance of REG in meeting emissions targets and increasing security of supply.</p> <p>Amendments that clearly identify electricity storage as a component of electrification also increase effectiveness, by enabling electricity generated during peak generation periods to be stored and used during times of peak demand or low resource availability. This is particularly important to reduce the impacts of power 'shocks', for example, when lake levels are low or if other generation or network disruptions occur.</p> <p>The proposed amendments also increase the effectiveness of the proposals by providing greater protection to both existing REG assets and activities, acknowledging their importance in achieving the objective. The amendments also increase effectiveness by limiting reverse sensitivity effects to those directly impacting REG assets and activities.</p>

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Efficiency	<p>The group of policies, in conjunction with the other policy proposals, will increase efficiency of consenting by reducing uncertainty in the preparation of the application and decision-making process. This will also reduce the likely number of submissions and appeals.</p>
	<p>The proposed approach is designed to reduce regulatory costs by providing strengthened direction that leads to greater enablement of REG activities. However, this must be considered in the context of a potential reduction in the protection of the natural environment values that the RMA identifies as nationally important. This approach seeks to ensure that the regulatory burden (i.e. cost) is proportionate to the anticipated benefits of enabling REG activities.</p>
	<p>Collectively, the policy proposals create greater cost-effectiveness than the status quo by increasing enablement of REG activities and increasing certainty in the consenting process.</p>
	<p>In response to submissions, further amendments are recommended that will improve the overall efficiency of the NPS-REG proposals. These include providing greater clarity to applicants and decision-makers on the requirements and considerations to demonstrate a functional or operational need to locate new REG assets in particular environments (i.e. environments that raise particular consenting issues).</p>
	<p>Further amendments to the policy managing adverse effects separating out the enabling provisions from the effects management provisions will improve clarity.</p>
	<p>For the enabling part of the policy, reintroducing the use of adaptive management measures will improve efficiency by increasing flexibility. For the effects management part of the policy, reintroducing the existing guidance on offsetting and compensation would also increase flexibility for applicants and provide assurances to submitters and local communities regarding local biodiversity.</p>
System alignment	<p>The proposal to strengthen the supporting policy framework for REG activities aligns well with the existing RMA system and national direction. The intent of most of the proposed policy amendments is already present in the NPS-REG 2011; however, the proposed amendments take this intent further by more explicitly requiring decision-makers to apply the intent in decision-making.</p>
	<p>The proposed policy framework is intended to align with the approach taken in other 'activity-based' national direction; in particular, the NPS for infrastructure (NPS-I) and the NPS for electricity networks (NPS-EN).</p>
	<p>Through the public consultation and submission process, there have been substantial amendments to the consultation draft in order to maximise alignment across the 3 instruments, within the scope provided by the consultation documents and dependent on the distinct nature and requirements of REG, EN and general infrastructure.</p>

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	<p>The alignment between the NPS and other national direction instruments remains broadly the same as the status quo (i.e. that all instruments are read together, with the exception of the NPS-IB which disappplies REG activities from its application).</p>
Implementation complexity	<p>The purpose of including these strengthened policies in the NPS-REG as proposed is to reduce local flexibility i.e. increase national consistency and certainty. Therefore, there is limited local flexibility. However, these policies will need to be read alongside policies included in local planning instruments that reflect matters of importance to the local community.</p> <p>As noted above, the purpose of a national policy statement is generally to provide a nationally consistent, mandated approach. Therefore, there is limited scope for flexibility for regulated parties. There will still be some flexibility in terms of the applicable plan objectives and policies, though these will need to be consistent i.e. not conflict with the NPS.</p> <p>The proposed policy package increases certainty and provides predictability about regulatory requirements. It does this through strengthening nationally consistent policies. This consistency benefits applicants, local authorities and decision-makers. It also provides greater certainty for affected parties who may wish to submit on a resource consent application. Collectively, this certainty is also likely to result in fewer appeals.</p> <p>Each consent application for REG activities will have site-specific context. Therefore, there is always the potential that there will be some degree of variability in the application of the policy package proposed for the NPS-REG, the purpose of the proposals is to remove inconsistency in the way that REG consent applications are considered.</p> <p>Due to the recent ‘plan stop’ amendments under the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025, local authorities will be neither permitted nor required to undertake plan changes to give effect to the NPS amendments as would ordinarily be required under the RMA, unless a statutory exemption applies. This means that implementation complexity is reduced, although there may still be some interpretation issues and reconciliation may be required between some NPS and plan provisions.</p> <p>There are no other proposals to change roles, responsibilities or legal obligations.</p>
Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes	<p>The option aligns with the Treaty Impact Analysis (TIA) at the time of writing. As noted in the TIA prepared prior to consultation, there had not been comprehensive consultation with PSGEs or iwi / Māori, and therefore the proposals could be considered to be consistent with the principles of te Tiriti. This inconsistency has been partially addressed through engagement with PSGEs, and broader consultation with iwi / Māori through public consultation.</p>

How do the options compare to the status quo/counterfactual?

	Option 1 – Status quo	Option 2 – Recognise benefits and requirements of REG activities
Effectiveness	0	+
Efficiency	0	+
System alignment	0	+
Implementation complexity	0	+
Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes	0	0
Overall assessment	0	+

What option is likely to best address the problem, meet the policy objectives, and deliver the highest net benefits?

121. Option Two is likely to best address the problem, as it would provide greater consistency across the planning system, as well as clarity and certainty that in turn could reduce the time and costs associated with planning and consenting processes and reduce the risk of litigation.

Issue 2 - Policies that relate to Māori values, engagement and aspirations**Context - Māori-Crown partnership and Te Tiriti obligations and commitments***Māori interests in renewable electricity generation and electricity transmission*

122. Renewable electricity generation and electricity transmission projects can have both positive and adverse effects for tangata whenua and for the land, water, and other taonga that are sacred to them. For example, feedback from iwi on MBIE's discussion document Accelerating Renewable and Energy Efficiency indicated strong support for the growth of community-scale renewable generation. Some iwi submissions also indicated support for the role of renewable electricity generation in reducing emissions, with one stating "As kaitiaki, we also think it is incredibly important we play our role in reducing emissions and addressing the climate crisis."

123. Iwi / Māori interest in small and community-scale renewable energy can also be seen in applications to the Māori and Public Housing Renewable Energy Fund administered by MBIE. Since 2021, this has funded numerous iwi / Māori organisations for a range of renewable energy projects, including solar generation for Māori housing in more remote locations, and feasibility studies for community-scale generation for Māori households.

124. Some successful geothermal generation projects have also been developed by iwi in partnership with other companies e.g. Tuwharetoa produces renewable energy from the Kawerau Geothermal System, while many of the electricity-producing geothermal systems have been developed in partnership with Māori trusts.

125. Conversely, renewable electricity generation and electricity transmission projects can adversely affect Māori rights and interests and cultural values, particularly where these are located in areas of significance to tangata whenua. For example, in the case of a recent Transpower realignment proposal in Rangataua Bay, in Tauranga Harbour: the High Court found that the proposal would have significant adverse effect on an area of cultural significance. More recently, iwi have raised concerns about approval for a wind energy facility in Kapuni, in south Taranaki. The decision-making panel for the proposal noted the significance for local iwi of the maunga affected by the proposal.

Treaty of Waitangi Settlements

126. There are some significant cultural concerns and historical grievances associated with existing hydro and geothermal generation schemes, and these are reflected in several Treaty Settlements. These settlements have included the Crown acknowledging the impact of the construction of hydro and geothermal schemes on affected iwi through causing significant, and generally irreversible, changes in waterbodies and widespread environmental degradation, and with limited or no engagement with iwi. All waterbodies affected by the large hydro schemes are taonga to tangata whenua and are subject to various obligations in Treaty of Waitangi and Settlement legislation.

127. During consultation on the proposed 2023 NPS-REG and NPS-ET, some iwi raised these historical grievances, including both economic constraints and the cultural and environmental impacts of these schemes, as well as the impact on their role as kaitiaki. Some expressed a desire to see changes in how water in the awa is used.

128. The proposed NPS-REG does not make it easier to ‘reconsent’ hydro schemes or establish new ones in relation to the allocation of water. The allocation of freshwater falls under the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management (noting that the Government is proposing to amend the NPS-FM).

What options are being considered?

Option 1 – Status quo: rely on existing NPS-REG objective and policies

129. There are no policies specific to Māori interests and aspirations in the NPS-REG 2011

Option 2 – Strengthened objective and policy direction (preferred)

130. This option proposes amending the NPS-REG to include policies that provide for Māori values, engagement and aspirations.

Policy proposals

131. The NPS-REG 2011 does not include any policies that specifically provide for Māori values, engagement and aspirations. The 2023 consultation draft included policies to address Māori values, interests and engagement, and we propose further amendments so that these matters are addressed at the appropriate (national and local) level and the NPS-REG better reflects the purpose and principles of the RMA.

132. The proposed policy included in the consultation package was based on a similar policy in the NPS on Urban Development, with amendments to reflect the objectives of the NPS-REG. The consultation proposal was:

Decision makers must recognise and provide for Māori interests in relation to REG activities, including by:

a) taking into account the outcome of any engagement with tangata whenua on a resource consent, notice of requirement, or request for a private plan change

- b) *recognising the opportunities tangata whenua may have in developing and operating their own REG at any scale or in partnership*
- c) *providing opportunities in appropriate circumstances for tangata whenua involvement in decision-making, including in relation to sites of significance to Māori and issues of cultural significance*
- d) *operating in a way that is consistent with iwi participation legislation, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe and Joint Management Agreements.*²⁹

133. Many Treaty settlements include statutory obligations to involve Māori in resource management processes. These requirements apply either at the consent decision-making stage which include requirements for decision-makers to have regard to, or recognise and provide for, strategy documents or values in the settlement, or at the plan making stage which generally require councils to incorporate strategies or values into council plans.³⁰

134. Mana Whakahono ā Rohe also provide for iwi and hapū to have participation arrangements with councils relating to both plan making and consent decision making.

135. The proposals will not directly impact these decision-making process requirements under the RMA, Treaty settlements, the Takutai Moana Act, and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act.

136. However, further work will be required (post-consultation) to ensure these mechanisms are upheld.

Early engagement with tangata whenua

137. The intent of this policy is to direct decision-makers to (actively) consider the outcomes of any engagement undertaken with iwi / Māori. The purpose of this policy direction is two-fold – to give effect to the principles of te Tiriti in accordance with section 8 of the RMA, and to ensure there is a meaningful opportunity and rationale for iwi / Māori to identify and provide information on local sites and values of significance to them.

138. This policy does not require engagement (i.e. it does not impose a duty to consult) but it does require decision-makers to recognise and provide for the outcomes identified in any engagement that has occurred.

139. While this is generally considered good practice by the electricity sector, including this provision in the NPS implements local planning provisions that identify the circumstances in which, and with whom, applicants should engage prior to making an application (or other parties such as requiring authorities or private plan change requestors).

Taking into account the values and aspirations of tangata whenua for REG activities at any scale

140. The purpose of this policy is to provide direction where iwi / Māori wish to undertake commercial opportunities for REG developments, either on their own or in collaboration with other parties. The policy does not limit the scale of such opportunities.

Providing opportunities for Māori involvement in decision-making, including in relation to sites of significance to Māori and issues of cultural significance

²⁹ Iwi participation legislation is defined in s.58L of the RMA as ‘legislation (other than this Act), including legislation listed in Schedule 3 of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, that provides a role for iwi or hapū in processes under this Act.’

³⁰ An example of this requirement is s.137 of the Ngāti Rangitīhi Claims Settlement Act 2022 which requires local authorities in preparing, approving, varying, or changing a regional policy statement, regional plan or district plan, to recognise and provide for the common vision, objectives, and desired outcomes contained in the Strategy Document. The local authority must comply with this each time it proposes a change to a relevant plan, which would be overridden in the case of NPS provisions being directly incorporated into the plan.

141. Some Treaty settlement legislation specifically requires that local iwi / Māori are provided decision-making opportunities on matters that are addressed in the settlement legislation. This policy restates that requirement, but also goes further to direct decision-making opportunities where values local of significance to local iwi / Māori may be impacted.

Operating in a way that is consistent with iwi participation legislation Mana Whakahono a Rohe and Joint Management Agreements.

142. Sections 58L-58N of the RMA set out core provisions relating to Mana Whakahono a Rohe.
143. Section 58L includes the following definitions:

iwi participation legislation means legislation (other than this Act), including any legislation listed in Schedule 3 of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, that provides a role for iwi or hapū in processes under this Act

Mana Whakahono a Rohe means an iwi participation arrangement entered into under this subpart

144. Section 58M of the RMA provides that:

The purpose of a Mana Whakahono a Rohe is—

- (a) to provide a mechanism for iwi authorities and local authorities to discuss, agree, and record ways in which tangata whenua may, through their iwi authorities, participate in resource management and decision-making processes under this Act; and
- (b) to assist local authorities to comply with their statutory duties under this Act, including through the implementation of sections 6(e), 7(a), and 8.

145. Inclusion of a specific policy in the NPS-REG is intended to clarify that the NPS-REG does not purport to prevail over arrangements made under iwi participation legislation / Mana Whakahono a Rohe.

Limitations on policy proposals

Engagement

146. There was limited engagement with tangata whenua and PSGEs carried out for these options. Most of the engagement for this workstream was carried out in 2023, prior to the NPS-FM being amended and when the new RM system (under the Natural and Built Environments Act and Spatial Planning Act) was expected to be implemented. The options presented above were not suggested at that time.
147. Engagement in 2024 occurred during the policy development stage and was carried out during a workshop with PSGEs that wanted to attend as well as online engagement with Ngai Tahu, Te Tai Kaha and Tairāwhiti and Te Matau-a-Māui iwi whose key concerns were the impact on taonga in section 6 and other sites and values of significance, rights and interests (including in geothermal and freshwater resources), and upholding Treaty settlements and other arrangements.

Waitangi Tribunal cases

148. The Waitangi Tribunal inquiry (Wai 2358) into water and geothermal resources is still underway and could have significant implications for the NPS-REG and NPS-ET workstreams. These proposals are likely to go through cabinet before the inquiry runs its course.
149. Prior to final decisions, consultation with Māori and PSGEs would reduce the risk of negative Treaty impacts from the proposals outlined above.

Post-consultation - proposed amendments*Submissions from iwi / Māori*

150. There was a substantial volume of submissions from iwi / Māori submitters on the consultation proposals. Key areas of interest included:

- Support for the proposals to improve Māori engagement, development aspirations and opportunities for involvement in decision-making
- Lack of consultation on the proposals
- Lack of environmental protections
- Greater recognition of the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Stronger requirements to engage with mana whenua
- Incorporation of Mātauranga Māori into decision-making
- Including outcomes of Waitangi Tribunal recommendations
- Conflicts with or frustration of outcomes of Treaty Settlement legislation
- Matters outside the scope of the proposals, such as Takutai Moana claims
- Decommissioning and disposal requirements
- Bonds, insurance and liability guarantees

151. Many of these submissions addressed matters that were unable to be addressed within the narrow scope of the proposals. Others were contradictory to the outcomes sought by other submitters or were contrary to the outcomes sought by the government. The key areas of divergence were in relation to the managing the effects of REG projects while reducing consenting requirements for new and existing REG, and increasing engagement with Treaty partners and iwi/Māori.

152. For submissions seeking greater direction regarding Māori interests, officials note that the NPS-REG policies will not override the local plan controls in place for sites of significance to Māori. When determining a resource consent application, a decision maker must have regard to the policies in the NPS-REG (as well as the policies in any other relevant national direction) along with the relevant plan provisions.

153. In addition, the NPS-REG proposals will not directly impact the decision-making process requirements under the RMA and Treaty settlement legislation where Māori participation is concerned, nor the role of mana whakahono ā rohe agreements.

154. Officials agree that the weight of the sub-clauses is unclear and the policy is not intended to conflict with sections 6 to 8 of the RMA. Officials agree with submitters that deleting 'in appropriate circumstances' from part c) of the policy will provide more clarity and certainty.

155. Officials do not consider that further direction or amendments are required as the policy does not restrict or prohibit engagement with iwi / hapu / Māori beyond tangata whenua (although it does not require it). Officials also do not propose to restructure this policy in line with the NPS-IB, noting that these two instruments have different purposes; the NPS-IB being protective, while the NPS-REG is enabling of development (like the NPS-UD).

How have the criteria above been applied in the context of Issue 2?

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Application of criteria</i>
Effectiveness	<p>The overall policy objective focuses largely on enabling delivery of REG activities at pace. The inclusion of Māori-related policies in the NPS-REG is therefore more related to exercise of the Crown’s obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi as well as the additional considerations of taonga and kaitiakitanga, which are required under Part 2. To that extent, the proposed policies to address Māori engagement, values and aspirations give strong direction to decision-makers to consider any engagement undertaken ‘at place’ with iwi / Māori on a case-by-case basis. The extent to which this satisfies expectations and obligations for engagement will depend on the actions of applicants, implementation by local government and consideration by decision-makers.</p> <p>The option does not directly respond to the identified problem for REG but responds to system-wide requirements and objectives around Māori engagement, partnership and protection.</p> <p>To an extent, these policy proposals have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of some of the other policy proposals, by introducing additional information requirements on applicants and further considerations for decision-makers. This could be considered a ‘trade-off’ between recognising Māori in the consent process and expediting the consent decision. In some circumstances, it might also create grounds for appeal.</p> <p>In particular, in some circumstances, applicants would need to engage with local iwi / Māori groups for whom the land that is the subject of the consent application comprises values of significance. Arguably this is not an additional regulatory burden, as engagement is already required in other circumstances by the Act and Treaty settlements, and many REG developers advise that is considered good practice in any event. Engagement, particularly pre-application, can also reduce costs and delays at the back end of the consent process (i.e. when the application is under consideration), because applicants have had the opportunity to address potential issues raised by iwi / Māori groups and propose conditions to address those issues. This approach also reduces the likelihood of appeal by affected iwi / Māori groups.</p> <p>Separately, these policies contribute to achieving the objectives by supporting iwi / Māori to realise opportunities for self-development, including in partnerships.</p> <p>In response to submissions, the proposed amendments include the removal of the qualifier ‘in appropriate circumstances’ from the policy relating to opportunities to provide tangata whenua involvement. This amendment will make the policy more effective by providing greater certainty to applicants, decision-makers and iwi / Māori.</p>
Efficiency	<p>As discussed immediately above, engagement with iwi / Māori can increase upfront costs and require time to undertake, which does not appear to align with the objectives for increasing REG capacity at pace.</p>

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However, effective early engagement can increase efficiency by reducing applicants' costs overall, may reduce processing time frames and can lower costs and avoid resourcing implications for local authorities, and the Courts on appeal.

System alignment

The policies recognising Māori engagement, values and aspirations reflect the objectives to an extent (and are therefore generally aligned with the proposals), but also address distinct issues such as obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi.

For example, there are existing tensions within the objectives and even within a single objective, such as the tension between achieving the increase in REG while also managing adverse effects on the environment.

In that regard, policies that flow from the objectives need not achieve all the objectives at once, but must be read together in the context of the particular application (or plan decision).

The proposed policies in this group integrate well with the statutory framework, and in particular Part 2 of the Act, which seeks to provide for social, cultural and economic well-being while managing adverse effects on matters of national importance and give effect to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Two of these policies are drawn directly from existing policies in the National Policy Statement for Urban Development (with minor alteration to fit the NPS-REG framework) so there is increased alignment in this regard.

System alignment is also improved by the removal of the qualifier 'in appropriate circumstances' from the proposed NPS-I and NPS-EN.

Implementation complexity

This relatively discrete nature of these policies means that they are more likely to be easily integrated into existing plans and are likely to reflect the policy framework in many local plans with respect to engagement and values in particular.

The intent of this policy group is likely to align relatively closely local planning processes, which means that there has been local decision-making on the values of greatest importance to local iwi / Māori.

As noted above, the purpose of a national policy statement is generally to provide a nationally consistent, mandated approach. Therefore, there is limited scope for flexibility for regulated parties. There will still be some flexibility in terms of the applicable plan objectives and policies, though these will need to be consistent i.e. not conflict with the NPS.

This group of policies increase certainty and provide predictability about regulatory requirements. It does this through providing nationally consistent policies. This consistency benefits iwi / Māori applicants, local authorities and decision-makers. It also provides greater certainty for affected parties who may wish to submit on a resource consent application. Collectively, this certainty is also likely to result in fewer appeals.

Each consent application for REG activities will have site-specific context. Therefore, while there is always the potential that there will be some degree of variability in the application of the policy package proposed for the NPS-REG, the purpose of the proposals is to remove inconsistency in the way that REG consent applications are considered.

Existing provisions in local planning instruments will assist in providing clarity as to obligations, though not national certainty.

As discussed above, there is some variation in local context, which may create minor change to roles, responsibilities or legal obligations.

Removal of the qualifier ‘in appropriate circumstances’ reduces implementation complexity by clarifying the interpretation of the policy directing opportunities for tangata whenua involvement.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes	<p>This group of policies is specifically designed to promote the principles of participation and active protection.</p> <p>As noted in the TIA prepared prior to consultation, there had not been comprehensive consultation with PSGEs or iwi / Māori, and therefore the proposals could be considered to be consistent with the principles of te Tiriti. This inconsistency has been partially addressed through with PSGEs, and broader consultation with iwi / Māori through the release of the discussion document.</p>
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How do the options compare to the status quo/counterfactual?

	Option 1 - Status quo	Option 2 – Include proposed policies
Effectiveness	0	+
Efficiency	0	+
System alignment	0	+
Implementation complexity	0	-
Te Tiriti o Waitangi outcomes	0	+
Overall assessment	0	+

What option is likely to best address the problem, meet the policy objectives, and deliver the highest net benefits?

156. Option 2, which addresses early engagement, recognising Māori aspirations and values and opportunities to be involved in decision making, is considered most likely to address the wider policy objectives, and deliver the highest net benefits.

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157. Although the proposals create some change to the status quo, these policies integrate with other proposed national direction amendments and there are clearly identifiable overall benefits to applicants and iwi / Māori.

What are the marginal costs and benefits of the proposed NPS-REG amendments?

Affected groups	Impact	Comment	Evidence Certainty
Additional costs of the preferred option compared to taking no action			
Local government / regulators	<p>Due to the recent ‘plan stop’ amendments under the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025, local authorities will be neither permitted nor required to undertake plan changes to give effect to the NPS amendments as would ordinarily be required under the RMA.</p> <p>Direct insertion is not being progressed through this process due to implementation complexities.</p> <p>Operational costs may occur for local authority staff to become familiar with new policy requirements the NPS is gazetted (including transitional requirements). Consenting costs to councils are unknown but are typically charged back to the consent applicant (and therefore form part of the project cost).</p> <p>The options aim to make the consenting process quicker and provide more clarity around the consenting process, although these costs are unlikely to substantially differ from existing consenting costs in any event.</p>	<p>The plan stop amendments reduce implementation costs, although there will still be some operational costs arising from interpretation issues and reconciliation between some NPS and plan provisions.</p>	Low – this approach was not part of the consultation process
Electricity sector	Relatively minor additional engagement requirements with iwi / Māori.	The costs to REG providers will lessen overall due to increased certainty regarding application requirements and the increased likelihood of applications gaining consent.	Medium – the extent to which the NPS amendments will result in additional REG supply are unknown, however gaining consent will become easier and therefore cheaper.

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Affected groups	Impact	Comment	Evidence Certainty
Local communities	Impacts on local environment values (including amenity) – note that other national direction that protects environmental values continues to apply.	The policy proposals strengthen the enablement of REG activities over local environmental values to the local community.	Low – evidence of current REG consents shows local concern about impacts on environmental values of new REG projects but there is not yet any evidence of the effects of these proposals.
Iwi/Māori	The proposals may impose some additional monetised and non-monetised costs on iwi / Māori.	These costs include potential additional resourcing costs to engage in consenting processes, and potential impacts on environmental values considered as taonga.	Low-medium – no direct evidence available prior to policies becoming operative.
Environmental costs			
Environment	The overall costs will be highly dependent on the nature of each specific project and its adverse effects. However, the proposals increase the likelihood of adverse effects on the environment, including biodiversity. Other potential environmental costs include impacts on landscapes and natural features, increased freshwater degradation (though this is not anticipated to increase significantly).	The policy proposals prefer the enablement of REG activities over environmental values, although existing national direction protects some environmental values recognised in s.6 RMA as matters of national importance.	Low - There is a lack of information on the extent to which the proposed amendments are likely to impact environmental values. .
Total monetised costs	<i>Low - Medium</i> <i>Costs will generally fall to local government and regulators but some costs will be recoverable from applicants.</i> <i>Costs to other parties (iwi/ Māori, ENGOs) will remain similar to status quo but may slightly increase.</i>		
Non-monetised costs	<i>Low-Medium</i> <i>Environmental costs may increase in some respects (e.g. impacts on landscapes, biodiversity impacts) but the proposals will have positive effects on climate mitigation and resilience.</i>		

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Additional benefits of the preferred option compared to taking no action			
Affected groups	Impact	Comment	Evidence Certainty
Electricity sector	<p>A more enabling and nationally consistent consenting process for new renewable energy activities is expected to reduce ongoing consenting costs for industry.</p> <p>The quantum of impact will vary for each new investment and the specifics of the build.</p>	<p>The focus of the amendments is providing a strengthened, nationally consistent, set of policies that better enable REG activities.</p> <p>The proposals will provide greater certainty for generators, Transpower and other interested parties.</p> <p>This will increase predictability for applicants and other interested parties improving efficiency and timeliness for all parties.</p>	Low-Medium – the extent to which the NPS amendments will result in additional REG supply are unknown, however gaining consent will likely become easier and therefore cheaper.
Iwi/Māori	The proposals may give rise to some additional monetised and non-monetised benefits to iwi / Māori.	These benefits include potential additional engagement opportunities, including potential financial support (or compensation) for information provision, and potential additional development opportunities that provide financial and social support (via employment and security / affordability of supply).	Low-medium – no direct evidence available prior to policies becoming operative.
Wider government	<p>Collectively, the NPS-REG proposals are expected to contribute to the shift to renewables over the next 10 years. In modelling this policy, there is a baseline assumption that new electricity generation and transmission infrastructure will be built to meet demand.</p> <p>Lower consenting costs are expected to flow through to lower wholesale prices, and to affect electricity demand relative to other energy sources. These effects are calculated using the ENZ model to estimate slightly lower emissions.</p> <p>Employment opportunities are also likely to arise from new roles in the REG sector,</p>	<p>The proposed policy choices place rapid increase in generation at the centre of the rationale for change. All additional REG capacity (and support for existing REG) is considered beneficial.</p> <p>Emissions reductions will occur from the transition from fossil fuel sources to renewable energy sources (but will not necessarily occur only from additional electricity generation).</p>	Medium - Estimates assume a reduction in consenting costs (which are about 2 to 5 per cent of capital costs) for renewables generation, but no change to completion time of new build. <p>This is because the models assume that generation is built to meet demand, consistent with market participants currently making</p>

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	<p>in terms of both the skilled and (comparatively) unskilled work force.</p>		<p>investment decisions that account for consent delay.</p>
Wholesale electricity consumers	<p>Reductions in wholesale electricity costs derived from more renewable energy plants being built 6 months earlier compared with the CCC's demonstration path. Building renewable energy plants 6 months earlier than the CCC's demonstration pathway is estimated to reduce future wholesale electricity costs resulting in PV savings of \$4,858m across the 2023-2035 period, based on expected demand.</p>	<p>The proposed policy choices place secure and affordable electricity supply at the centre of the rationale for change. All additional REG capacity (and support for existing REG) is considered beneficial.</p>	<p>Medium- Estimates on electricity demand and wholesale electricity prices come from the CCC modelling for their ERP advice.</p>
Retail consumers	<p>As emissions prices are expected to increase over time, electricity from fossil fuels will pass these costs onto consumers.</p> <p>Recent reports have estimated that the levelised cost of energy (LCOE, the average wholesale electricity price required over a plant's lifetime for the investment to break even) has been decreasing significantly for renewable energy, with wind and solar decreasing by around 50%-65% over the 2013-2020 period.^{31,32}</p> <p>According to the Electricity Authority, generation makes up 32% of the average electricity bill for residential consumers, with distribution and transmission making up another 27% and 10.5% respectively.</p> <p>Assuming a competitive retail electricity market, retail prices should reflect the underlying costs, so reductions in wholesale electricity prices should flow-on to reductions in retail electricity prices.</p> <p>Therefore, greater amounts of low emission generation from renewable sources will reduce the overall costs passed on to consumers.</p> <p>Displacing fossil generation with renewables also improves air quality (reduces particulates) which in turn has significant health co-benefits.</p>	<p>The proposed policy choices place secure and affordable renewable electricity supply at the centre of the rationale for change. All additional REG capacity (and support for existing REG) is considered beneficial.</p>	<p>Low – the extent to which the NPS amendments will result in additional REG supply are unknown. While gaining consent will become easier and therefore cheaper, the extent to which savings will be passed on to consumers is unclear.</p>

Environmental benefits

³¹ Transpower, Electrification Roadmap, 2021

³² The future is electric: A Decarbonisation Roadmap for New Zealand's Electricity Sector. Boston Consulting Group

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Environment	<p>Making the consenting process more enabling for new renewable energy activities is expected to reduce total carbon emissions produced from electricity generation over time.</p> <p>CCC modelling estimates a reduction of 1.98 MtCO₂e in total emissions produced over the 2023-2035 period under the scenario where new renewable energy plants are built 6 months earlier compared with the demonstration path.</p>	<p>The proposed policy choices place emissions reductions at the centre of the rationale for change (alongside affordability / resilience / security of supply).</p> <p>Impacts on other environmental values (i.e. excluding climate change mitigation) are likely to increase rather than realise benefits.</p>	<p>Medium – modelling scenarios may differ from actual outcomes.</p>
Total monetised benefits	<p><i>Medium</i></p> <p><i>Increasing REG supply can be anticipated to providing significant monetised benefits, in terms of incentivising REG developments, retail affordability, and employment benefits.</i></p>		
Non-monetised benefits	<p><i>Medium</i></p> <p><i>Increasing REG and transitioning to an electrified economy will reduce dependence on fossil fuels and thereby reduce associated emissions.</i></p> <p><i>Diversification of electricity generation will also increase security of supply and resilience.</i></p>		

Section 3: Delivering an option

How will the proposal be implemented?

This RIS informs Cabinet decisions on options that will be included in a discussion document for statutory public consultation

158. Following Cabinet approval, the proposals were released for public consultation in May 2025. The submissions that were received, and recommended amendments, are addressed in the Submissions and Recommendations Report and Appendices.³³ Ministers have reviewed the recommendations and Cabinet paper will consider the recommendations in December 2025. Gazettal is anticipated in early 2026.
159. Ordinarily, If the NPS-REG is silent on the matter of implementation, RMA Schedule 1 applies. This means that each regional and territorial authority must go through a plan change process to amend its plan to give effect to this NPS-REG. The plan change process that involves community consultation, hearings and rights of appeal. Each local authority would develop their own policy wording for consultation with their community.
160. However, due to the recent ‘plan stop’ amendments under the Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act 2025, local authorities will be neither permitted nor required to undertake plan changes to give effect to the NPS amendments as would ordinarily be required under the RMA (unless a statutory exemption applies). This means that implementation complexity is reduced, although there may still be some interpretation issues and reconciliation may be required between some NPS and plan provisions.
161. Consent decisions must nonetheless be consistent with NPS-REG from the date of gazetting. This means that decision-makers may have a more significant role than usual in implementation, as they will be required to reconcile tensions between plan provisions and the NPS-REG (where it is not clear that the NPS-REG prevails on account of its primacy in the RMA framework).
162. There is some risk that non-complying activity REG applications will not be able to be consented in some parts of New Zealand. This is because under s 104(d) of the Act, such projects cannot be consented if they have more than minor adverse effects and are contrary to the objectives and policies of the operative Regional or District Plan.

The extent to which this will be an issue for REG consenting is unclear (absent a specific ‘at place’ application). The regulatory impact of this risk (which is no greater than the status quo) needs to be viewed in the context of forthcoming RMA replacement legislation, which is expected to reduce the number of activity statuses, raise the acceptable threshold of adverse effects, and include new national policy direction. In that regard, the proposed NPS-REG amendments are only expected to be in effect for a few years at most.

How will the new arrangements be monitored, evaluated, and reviewed?

Monitoring of RMA national direction – overview

163. Section 24(f) of the RMA states that the Minister for the Environment has the function of ‘monitoring of the effect and implementation of this Act (including any regulations in force under it), national policy statements, national planning standards and water conservation orders’.

³³ Refer Stage 2 Report on Submissions and Recommendations - 3. Part B: Proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation, pp. 36-58

164. Monitoring and evaluation provide information to assess the impact the national direction is having in the resource management system. The information is necessary to understand how the national direction is being implemented by councils and other stakeholders, and whether it is achieving the outcomes it has been designed to.
165. Monitoring is the regular measurement of progress towards the national direction's intended outcome. This is difficult to measure directly, so a set of indicators are needed to understand whether the outcome is being achieved. Data on these indicators is then collected and tracked through monitoring. Information collected through monitoring can:
 - a. show implementation progress over time
 - b. be used in evaluations of the instrument
 - c. inform future interventions, if needed.
166. Evaluation is the exercise of forming judgements about a national direction instrument. It may assess the effectiveness of implementation of an instrument (for example, is the instrument well understood and being implemented consistently around the country). An evaluation can also look at the 'big picture' to ask how successful an instrument has been in achieving its policy outcomes.
167. While the Minister for the Environment remains responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of national direction, there is no time period prescribed in the RMA. Local authorities are required to monitor the effectiveness of policies, rules and methods in their policy statements or plans every five years and to date MfE has also monitored national direction instruments at five-yearly intervals.

Monitoring the NPS-REG

168. The NPS-REG does not include monitoring provisions that specify a monitoring period. Due to the forthcoming new resource management system (new primary legislation, national instruments, regional spatial plans, and combined land use plans), it is unlikely that the current Phase 2 national direction will be in place five years after they come into force. Nor is it expected that there will be further updates or changes to existing RMA national direction, including to the NPS-I.
169. Although the new resource management system will include national instruments, at this stage the extent to which NPS-REG content is directly relevant and could transfer over it is not known. Many of the problems the NPS-REG seeks to address (e.g. greater recognition of the benefits of REG) may be resolved in the primary legislation and not require all the NPS-REG policies to be transferred to a new national instrument. This places a significant constraint on the direct relevance of any NPS-REG monitoring results to the new resource management system.
170. Monitoring also requires significant resource commitments, and it may not be efficient to undertake monitoring given the short timeframe before the introduction of the new resource management system. However, if the amended NPS-REG continued to have legal force, then consistent with other RMA national direction, officials would support a monitoring and evaluation of the NPS-I occurring five years after it comes into force.