

Updating National Direction: Changes to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation

December 2025

Recent changes have been made to national direction under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) to make the resource management system work more effectively.

This amended national direction will make it easier to consent and develop renewable electricity generation projects, better recognise Māori interests, and better align with other national direction to support emissions reductions and energy security.

Context

The National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG) came into effect in 2011. While it provided an objective and policies to enable the sustainable management of renewable electricity generation, it has not produced the intended levels of enablement and protection for renewable electricity generation in New Zealand. The result has been inconsistent decision-making, higher consenting costs and barriers to investment – hindering progress towards national electrification, energy security and emissions reduction targets.

Amending the NPS-REG will help achieve the Government's objective to significantly increase the supply of renewable electricity in New Zealand, which is needed to achieve energy security and our climate goals. Electrifying the energy and transport sectors could deliver almost a third of the emissions reductions New Zealand needs to reach net zero by 2050.

The amendments to the NPS-REG aim to:

- accelerate renewable electricity development to meet climate and energy security goals
- reduce consenting barriers for both large- and small-scale projects
- improve certainty for investors, councils and communities
- strengthen Māori engagement, provide development opportunities and support protection of cultural values
- balance environmental protection with the need for rapid and renewable electrification.

Key changes

Key changes to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation

- Strengthen policy direction to recognise the significance of renewable electricity.
- Provide a more certain consenting environment, including for small-scale initiatives.
- Recognise Māori interests.
- Protect renewable electricity generation from reverse sensitivity.
- Recognise the operational and functional need to locate renewable electricity generation where a renewable resource is available.
- Align with other national direction.

The NPS-REG does not apply to:

- the electricity transmission network and electricity distribution network activities and assets managed under the National Policy Statement for Electricity Transmission and its amendments (now renamed as the National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks)
- infrastructure that is managed under the National Policy Statement for Infrastructure
- the allocation and prioritisation of freshwater, because these are matters for regional councils to address in a catchment or regional context.

Stronger policy direction

The amendments aim to make the NPS-REG more directive to better enable new renewable electricity generation and to protect existing renewable electricity generation. Decision-makers will be explicitly required to recognise the national significance and benefits of renewable electricity activities at all scales (national, regional and local).

The NPS-REG policies apply across all environments. However, these must be read in conjunction with other national and local planning documents that recognise the values of national importance identified in section 6 of the RMA. Where these values are unaffected, adverse effects should be avoided, remedied or mitigated wherever practicable.

A more certain consenting environment, including for smaller-scale renewable electricity generation

Providing more certain and enabling consenting for renewable electricity generation projects will reduce the uncertainty, time and costs associated with the consenting process. There will be nationally consistent direction to decision-makers to recognise and provide for the national benefits of renewable electricity generation, to recognise that it may need to locate in particular areas (where the resource is available and where it can connect to the electricity network), and the ongoing operational and maintenance requirements of existing renewable electricity generation are met.

The amendments will explicitly support small-scale and community-scale renewable electricity generation, making it easier for such projects to be consented and developed.

Recognising Māori interests

Decision-makers will need to recognise and provide for Māori interests. These include Māori development aspirations, considering the outcomes of engagement with iwi/Māori on renewable electricity generation proposals, and on sites and issues of cultural significance. The amendments respond to feedback from iwi/Māori, aiming to uphold Treaty settlement provisions and provide opportunities for Māori-led activities.

Local authorities must comply with their responsibilities under other legislation, including the Local Government Act 2002, Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993, Treaty settlement legislation and iwi participation legislation, and under the Treaty of Waitangi. Obligations under Mana Whakahono ā Rohe agreements with relevant hapū and iwi must also be observed.

Protecting renewable electricity generation from reverse sensitivity

Strengthened protections for existing renewable electricity assets and activities from adverse effects of other incompatible or sensitive activities (described as ‘reverse sensitivity’¹) will support ongoing operation and investment certainty.

Recognising operational and functional need

As with other infrastructure activities, the NPS-REG recognises that renewable electricity generation may have a functional or operational need to locate in particular environments such as in the coastal marine area. Applicants will not be required to assess alternative sites to demonstrate functional or operational need.

Aligning with other national direction

Amendments to the NPS-REG align with other national policy statements (eg, for electricity networks and infrastructure) but these amendments will not override protections in other instruments for values of national importance under the RMA.

No national policy statement supersedes another; all relevant statements must be considered in the decision-making process.

Implementation considerations

Immediate steps

Once the NPS-REG comes into effect, decision-makers must apply it when making decisions on resource consents.

Due to the RMA ‘Plan Stop’ amendments passed in August 2025, plans and policy statements will not be updated to give effect to the NPS-REG until the new planning system is intended to be in effect (unless a relevant exemption applies).

¹ Reverse sensitivity is when new activities introduced near existing renewable electricity generation assets become sensitive to their effects, potentially leading to restrictions on the operation of those existing assets.

Transition to the new planning system

All existing national direction under the RMA will be reassessed and restructured to ensure it aligns with the goals and framework of the new planning system that will be established by the Planning and Natural Environment Bills.

The policy intent of the changes to national direction under the existing RMA will be transferred to the new system as appropriate.

For further information

For more information, see this website.

Ministry for the Environment. [National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation](#).

