

BRF-2937

Michael McCartney
Chief Executive Officer
Horizons Regional Council
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Michael McCartney

COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 – comments sought on referral application – Marton Solar Farm Project

The Minister for the Environment (Minister) has received an application from Energy Farms Limited to refer the Marton Solar Farm Project (project) to an expert consenting panel (panel) for consideration under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA).

The project is described in Appendix A and the application documents are in Attachment 1.

Under delegated authority from the Minister and pursuant to section 21(2) of the FTCA, I invite Horizons Regional Council to provide written comments on the referral application. A template is provided for this purpose in Attachment 2. Comment is sought on the specific matters outlined in the table below, and on any other matter you consider relevant to the Minister's decision on whether or not to accept the application.

Specific questions on the application
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Are there any reasons that you consider it more appropriate for the project, or part of the project, to proceed through existing Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) consenting processes rather than the processes in the FTCA?2. Does the applicant, or a company owned by the applicant, have any environmental regulatory compliance history in your region?3. The project site is partly covered by designation D7 - Tutaenui Dam (Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council (Horizons Regional Council)) under the Rangitikei District Plan. The applicant notes the project has been designed to avoid the designation and written consent has therefore not been sought. Comment on whether you consider the project will require written consent from Horizons Regional Council as the requiring authority under section 176 of the RMA.

The above information is provided to you in confidence and as part of the statutory process set out in the FTCA. Please do not forward the application or request for comments to anyone outside your organisation.

If the Minister accepts the application and the project is referred to a panel, Horizons Regional Council will have the opportunity to nominate a local authority representative (who could be a councillor or independent hearings commissioner) to sit on the panel and determine the RMA approvals for the project. The applicant will provide a detailed assessment of environmental effects and cultural impact assessments at this stage and the council will have the opportunity to provide further comments to the panel. The Ministry for the Environment has prepared guidance on local authority involvement with fast-track consenting projects which you can access on the Ministry for the Environment website.

Please provide comments via return email within 10 working days to ensure that the Minister takes them into consideration when making his decision. Note that the Minister is not required to consider any comments provided after this time.

If it is more efficient for you to discuss the application, please contact the Ministry for the Environment's Fast-track Consenting Team at fasttrackconsenting@mfe.govt.nz to arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely



Rebecca Perrett
Acting Manager, Fast-track Consenting Team

Appendix:

- A. Details of proposed project.

Attachments:

1. Application to refer the Marton Solar Farm Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
2. Response template for written comments

cc: Greg Bevin
Regulatory Manager
s 9(2)(a)

Appendix A – Details of proposed project

Project	Applicant	Details
Marton Solar Farm Project	Energy Farms Limited	<p>The project is to construct and operate a solar farm on an approximately 194-hectare site at 1618 Wellington Road, Marton, and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid via existing 110kV Transpower New Zealand Limited (Transpower) transmission lines. The solar farm will have an approximate installed capacity of 80-110 peak Megawatts.</p> <p>The solar farm will comprise approximately 230,000 solar panels, occupying approximately 154 hectares, arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, underground cables and associated infrastructure, 16 inverter stations, one substation and one transformer, ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including a storage building, roads, access, security fencing, CCTV poles and other infrastructure) and underground electricity cables.</p> <p>The project will require land use consent under the Rangitikei District Plan (RDP), land use consent and a water permit under the Horizons Regional One Plan (HROP), and resource consent under the NES-CS and NES-F. The project site is in the Rural zone under the RDP and will have overall discretionary activity status under the plans and regulation.</p>