



BRF-3152

Energy Farms Limited
c/- Thomas Keogh
Reyburn and Bryant 1999 Limited
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Thomas Keogh

COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-Track Consenting) Act 2020 – Notice of Decisions (Section 25) – Marton Solar Farm Project

Thank you for Energy Farms Limited's application under section 20 of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA) seeking referral of the Marton Solar Farm Project (project) to an expert consenting panel (panel) for consideration under the FTCA.

The project is to construct and operate a solar farm on an approximately 194-hectare site at 1646 Wellington Road, Marton, and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid via existing 110kV Transpower New Zealand Limited transmission lines. The solar farm will have an approximate output of 80-110 megawatts peak.

The solar farm will comprise:

- a. approximately 230,000 solar panels, occupying approximately 154 hectares
- b. arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, underground cables and associated infrastructure
- c. 16 inverter stations, one substation and one transformer
- d. ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including an energy storage facility, roads, access, security fencing, CCTV poles and other infrastructure)
- e. underground electricity cables
- f. restoration and planting of riparian margins of streams.

The purpose of the FTCA is to promote employment to support New Zealand's recovery from the economic and social impacts of COVID-19 and to support the certainty of ongoing investment across New Zealand, while continuing to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

I can only refer the project to a panel for consideration under the FTCA if it meets the referral criteria in section 18 of the FTCA, which includes me being satisfied the project will help achieve the FTCA's purpose.

I have decided the project meets the referral criteria in section 18 of the FTCA and I consider it will help to achieve the FTCA's purpose as it has the potential to:

1. generate employment by creating approximately 445 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 24-month construction period and approximately 33 ongoing FTE jobs
2. provide infrastructure that will contribute to improving economic and employment outcomes
3. contribute to New Zealand's efforts to mitigate climate change and transition more quickly to a low emissions economy by increasing New Zealand's renewable energy generation
4. progress faster than would otherwise be the case under standard Resource Management Act 1991 process.

Any actual and potential effects arising from the project, together with any measures to avoid, remedy, mitigate, offset or compensate for adverse effects, could be tested by a panel against Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991 and the purpose of the FTCA (section 4 and clause 31 Schedule 6).

Accordingly, I have decided to accept your application for referral under section 24(2) of the FTCA and refer all of the project to a panel.

Information required to be submitted with your resource consent applications

In accordance with section 24(2)(d) of the FTCA, I have also decided that you must provide the following information with any resource consent applications for the project lodged with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under clause 2 Schedule 6:

1. a landscape and visual assessment of the proposed solar farm (including associated buildings, infrastructure and structures), that includes assessment of the cumulative effects of solar farms, on the biophysical landscape and the character of the existing rural landscape, taken from both private and public vantage points
2. a stormwater assessment of the proposed solar farm, including an assessment of pre- and post-development stormwater flows, that identifies any impacts on the operation of the flood retention dam and ponding area covered by Designation D7 – Tutaenui Dam W1 under the Rangitikei District Plan.

I draw your attention to clause 14 Schedule 6 of the FTCA that details that the above information must be provided in sufficient detail to correspond to the scale and significance of effects. You should therefore provide what you believe is a reasonable level of information, and if a panel requires further information, they can seek it from you under clause 25 Schedule 6 of the FTCA.

This information will inform a panel's assessment of the proposal's effects and whether to invite comment from persons or groups in addition to those specified in clause 17 Schedule 6 of the FTCA. This does not preclude a panel from requiring you to provide any additional information on any application lodged with the EPA under the FTCA.

Persons or groups a panel must invite comments from

In accordance with section 24(2)(e) of the FTCA, I have also decided that a panel must invite comments on any resource consent application for the project lodged with the EPA from the following persons or groups additional to those specified in clause 17 Schedule 6 of the FTCA:

1. Minister of Energy and Resources
2. Minister of Agriculture
3. New Zealand Defence Force
4. Transpower New Zealand Limited
5. Te Runanga o Raukawa Incorporated.

This will allow those parties the opportunity to have input into the consideration of the application and enable a panel to better understand the potential effects of the proposal.

These directions do not preclude a panel from inviting any other parties to comment on any application lodged with the EPA under the FTCA.

I will progress an Order in Council through the Executive Council for the project. The wording of the referral order may vary slightly from the statements and directions included in this letter, due to legal drafting requirements.

Once this Order is made you will be able to lodge your applications for resource consent with the EPA for a decision by a panel. The decision to approve or decline the resource consents is a matter for the panel appointed by the Panel Convener Judge L J Newhook. You should not take my decision to refer the project as an indication or direction that the determination of those approvals will be successful. Additionally, my decision does not in any way endorse any related planning decisions that may affect the project.

Please do not publicly release my decision or this notice until the Order in Council for this project has been approved by Cabinet and notified in the New Zealand Gazette.

The FTCA requires that:

1. I provide a copy of my decisions to the persons, entities and groups specified in section 25(1) and (2) of the FTCA
2. My decisions, the reasons for them, and the Section 17 Report will be published on the Ministry for the Environment's website in accordance with section 25(3) of the FTCA.

I have also decided to provide a copy of this decision to the following parties who are additional to those specified in the FTCA:

1. New Zealand Defence Force
2. Te Runanga o Raukawa Incorporated.

Please contact the Fast-track Consenting Team at the Ministry for the Environment (fasttrackconsenting@mfe.govt.nz) if you have any questions or wish to discuss this decision.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Parker', with a stylized, flowing script.

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment

cc Relevant Ministers of/for portfolios specified in section 21(6)(a)–(m) of the FTCA:

Arts, Culture, and Heritage; Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti; Housing; Infrastructure; Education; Transport; Land Information; Defence; Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations; Local Government; Conservation; and Climate Change

Additional relevant Ministers:

Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister of Agriculture

Local authorities:

Rangitikei District Council
Horizons Regional Council

Other parties:

Transpower New Zealand Limited
New Zealand Defence Force
Te Runanga o Raukawa Incorporated

Relevant iwi authorities:

Ngā Wairiki-Ngāti Apa Charitable Trust
Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board

Relevant Treaty settlement entities:

Te Rūnanga o Ngā Wairiki Ngāti Apa
Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa

Environmental Protection Authority

The Panel Convener