

BRF-2937

Fiona Aitken
Chief Executive
South Taranaki District Council
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Fiona Aitken

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

The Minister for the Environment (Minister) has received an application from Energy Farms Limited to refer the Opunake 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 South Taranaki District 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
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 district?

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, South Taranaki District 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 Opunake Solar Farm Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
2. Response template for written comments

cc: Liam Dagg
Group Manager, Environmental Service
s 9(2)(a) [REDACTED]

South Taranaki District Council Planning Team
Email: planning@stdc.govt.nz

Appendix A – Details of proposed project

Project	Applicant	Details
Opunake Solar Farm Project	Energy Farms Limited	<p>The project is to construct and operate a solar farm on an approximately 188-hectare site comprising 2 properties at 574 and 575 Kina Road, Opunake, Taranaki, and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid via existing 33kV Powerco Limited (Powerco) transmission lines. The solar farm will have an approximate installed capacity of between 80-110 peak Megawatts.</p> <p>The solar farm will comprise approximately 152,000 solar panels occupying approximately 180 hectares, arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, and associated infrastructure, 11 inverter stations, one substation and a battery storage facility, ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including a storage building, roads, access and other infrastructure), underground electricity cables, including within the Kina Road road reserve and enhancement of wetlands and streams.</p> <p>The project will require land use consents under the South Taranaki District Plan (STDP), water and discharge permits under the Taranaki Regional Freshwater Plan (TRFP), and resource consents under the Resource Management (National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health) Regulations 2011 (NES-CS) and the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020 (NES-F).</p>