



BRF-3151

Enery Farms Limited  
c/- Thomas Keogh  
Senior Planner  
Reyburn and Bryant  
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Thomas Keogh

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

Thank you for Energy Farm Limited's application under section 20 of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA) seeking referral of the Opunake 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 188-hectare site comprising 2 properties at 574 and 575 Upper Kina Road, Opunake, Taranaki, and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid via existing 33kV Powerco Limited transmission lines. The solar farm will have an output of approximately 80-110 peak megawatts peak.

The solar farm will comprise:

- a. approximately 152,000 solar panels occupying approximately 180 hectares
- b. arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, and associated infrastructure
- c. 11 inverter stations, one substation and a battery storage facility
- d. ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including an energy storage facility, roads, access and other infrastructure)
- e. underground electricity cables, including within the Upper Kina Road road reserve
- f. enhancement of streams and natural inland wetlands.

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 306 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 24- month construction period and approximately 54 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.

*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. Transpower New Zealand Limited
4. PowerCo Limited

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.

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



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:

South Taranaki District Council  
Taranaki Regional Council

Other parties:

Transpower New Zealand Limited  
PowerCo Limited

Relevant iwi authority and Treaty settlement entity:

Te Kāhui o Taranaki Trust

Environmental Protection Authority

The Panel Convener