



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023

Portfolio **Environment**

On 26 June 2023, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that the Minister for the Environment has decided under section 24 of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 to accept the applications for referral of the following projects to a panel:
 - 1.1 Energy Farms Limited's Marton Solar Farm;
 - 1.2 Energy Farms Limited's Ōpunake Solar Farm;
- 2 **noted** that the Marton Solar Farm project meets the eligibility criteria in section 18(3) of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020, and will help achieve the Act's purpose, as required by section 18(2) of the Act, as it has the potential to:
 - 2.1 generate employment by creating approximately 445 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 24-month construction period and approximately 33 ongoing FTE jobs;
 - 2.2 provide infrastructure that will contribute to improving economic and employment outcomes;
 - 2.3 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;
 - 2.4 progress faster using the Act's processes than would otherwise be the case under standard Resource Management Act 1991 processes;

- 3 **noted** that the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023 requires Energy Farms Limited to provide to an expert consenting panel the following information, which the Minister for the Environment specified under section 24(2) of the FTCA and outlined in the notice of decision on the referral application for the project:
- 3.1 a landscape assessment of any visual effects of the solar farm on the biophysical features and rural character of the surrounding landscape (from the vantage points of both public and private land), and any cumulative visual effects of solar farms on those features and that character;
 - 3.2 an assessment of stormwater flows onto and from the project site before and after construction of the solar farm and which identifies any anticipated effects of those stormwater flows, after the solar farm is constructed, on the operation of the detention dam (including the ponding area) that is located on part of the project site;
- 4 **noted** that the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023 requires an expert consenting panel appointed to consider Energy Farms Limited's Marton Solar Farm project to seek comments from the following additional parties:
- 4.1 Minister of Energy and Resources;
 - 4.2 Minister of Agriculture;
 - 4.3 the New Zealand Defence Force;
 - 4.4 Transpower New Zealand Limited;
 - 4.5 Te Runanga o Raukawa Incorporated;
- 5 **noted** that the Ōpunake Solar Farm project meets the eligibility criteria in section 18(3) of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020, and will help achieve the Act's purpose, as required by section 18(2) of the Act, as it has the potential to:
- 5.1 generate employment by creating approximately 306 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 24-month construction period and approximately 54 ongoing FTE equivalent jobs;
 - 5.2 provide infrastructure that will contribute to improving economic and employment outcomes;
 - 5.3 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;
 - 5.4 progress faster using the Act's processes than would otherwise be the case under standard Resource Management Act 1991 processes;

- 6 **noted** that the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023 requires an expert consenting panel appointed to consider Energy Farms Limited's Ōpunake Solar Farm project to seek comments from the following additional parties:
- 6.1 Minister of Energy and Resources;
 - 6.2 Minister of Agriculture;
 - 6.3 Transpower New Zealand Limited;
 - 6.4 Powerco Limited;
- 7 **authorised** submission to the Executive Council of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023 [PCO 25639/5.0];
- 8 **noted** that on 27 July 2020, Cabinet agreed to waive the standard 28-day rule relating to Orders in Council made under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0353];
- 9 **noted** that the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Referred Projects (Marton and Ōpunake Solar Farms) Amendment Order 2023 will come into force on 4 July 2023.

Diana Hawker
Acting Secretary of the Cabinet