

FTC #162: Application for referred project under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 – Stage 1 decisions

Application 2022-106 Rangiriri Solar Farm Project Application 2022-107 Waerenga Solar Farm Project

Date submitted:	6 October 2022	Tracking #: BRF-2282	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment	Decision on recommendations in Table A	To be advised

Actions for Minister's Office staff	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Return the signed briefing to MfE. Send attached letter (if signed) with accompanying template and links to application documents.
Number of attachments: 4	<p>Attachments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Application documents for Rangiriri Solar Farm Project (Databox link) Application documents for Waerenga Solar Farm Project (Databox link) Letter to Ministers – inviting comments on Rangiriri Solar Farm Project and Waerenga Solar Farm Project referral Template for ministerial comment

Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Authors	Alison Grayston, Max Gander-Cooper		
Acting Manager	Madeleine Berry	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Acting Director	Matthew Barbati-Ross	s 9(2)(a)	

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Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your initial decisions on two applications to refer the following projects to an expert consenting panel (a panel) under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA):
 - a. Rangiriri Solar Farm Project, from joint applicants: Rangiriri Solar Farm Limited and Transpower New Zealand Limited (Transpower)
 - b. Waerenga Solar Farm Project, from joint applicants: Waerenga Solar Farm Limited and Transpower
2. The Rangiriri Solar Farm Project is to construct and operate a solar farm on a 275-hectare site comprising 4 properties on Glen Murray Road, Rangiriri West, Waikato (the primary address is 241 Glen Murray Road), and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid. The solar farm will have an approximate peak output of 130 Megawatts.
3. The solar farm will comprise:
 - a. approximately 200,000 solar panels, occupying approximately 58 hectares
 - b. arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, and associated infrastructure
 - c. a 220kV substation and transmission line to connect to the national grid
 - d. an energy storage facility
 - e. underground electricity cables
 - f. ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including roads, access, culverts, cabling, fencing, CCTV poles and other infrastructure)
 - g. landscaping including planting, boundary screening and enhancement of streams and waterways
4. The project will require land use consents under the Operative and Proposed Waikato District Plan; land use consent, water permits and discharge permits under the Waikato Regional Plan; 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).
5. The project site is in the Rural zone under the Operative Waikato District Plan and General Rural zone under the Proposed Waikato District Plan and, subject to confirmation by Waikato District Council through a request for further information, will have discretionary activity status under those plans. The applicants note the project is considered 'specified infrastructure' and will have overall discretionary activity status under the NES-F relating to construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure in a natural wetland.
6. The Waerenga Solar Farm Project is to construct and operate a solar farm on a 385-hectare site at 3 properties located on Waerenga Road, Keith Road and Awariki Road, Waerenga, Waikato, and to connect to and supply electricity to the national grid. The solar farm will have an approximate peak output of 180 Megawatts.
7. The solar farm will comprise:
 - a. approximately 290,000 solar panels, occupying approximately 81 hectares
 - b. arrays and mounting structures, inverter cabinets, and associated infrastructure

- c. a 220kV substation and transmission line to connect to the national grid
 - d. an energy storage facility
 - e. underground electricity cables
 - f. ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including roads, access, culverts, cabling, fencing, CCTV poles and other infrastructure)
 - g. landscaping including planting, boundary screening and enhancement of streams and waterways
8. The project will require land use consents under the Operative and Proposed Waikato District Plans; land use consent, water permits and discharge permits under the Waikato Regional Plan and resource consent under the NES-CS and the NES-F.
 9. The project site is in the Rural zone under the Operative Waikato District Plan and General Rural zone under the Proposed Waikato District Plan and, subject to confirmation by Waikato District Council through a request for further information, will have discretionary activity status under those plans. The applicants' note the project is considered 'specified infrastructure' and will have overall discretionary activity status under the NES-F relating to construction, maintenance and operation of infrastructure in a natural wetland.
 10. We have undertaken an initial (Stage 1) analysis of the two referral applications and this is presented along with our recommendations in Table A.
 11. The two projects meet all the eligibility criteria in section 18(3) of the FTCA, but more analysis is needed before we can advise you if they meet the purpose of the FTCA (thus satisfying section 18(2) of the FTCA) and advise you on matters in section 23(5) which may influence your referral decision.
 12. We recommend you progress consideration of the two applications to the next stage of analysis (Stage 2) and invite comments from Waikato District Council, Waikato Regional Council and specific Ministers listed in section 21(6) of the FTCA.
 13. We recommend that you invite comments from the Minister of Energy and Resources as an additional Minister under section 21(6)(n) of the FTCA.

Statutory framework summary

14. You are the sole decision maker for the two referral applications as the projects will not occur in the coastal marine area.
15. You may decline a referral application before seeking comments from the relevant local authorities and any relevant Ministers:
 - a. if you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in section 18 of the FTCA, (which include helping to achieve the purpose of the FTCA) (see sections 18(2) and 23(1) of the FTCA)
 - b. for any other reason (see section 23(2) of the FTCA).
16. If you do not decline a referral application at this stage:
 - a. you must provide the application to, and invite comments from, the relevant local authorities and the relevant Ministers prescribed by section 21(6) of the FTCA
 - b. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
17. You are also able to request further information from the applicant or any relevant local authority at any time before you decide to decline or accept the referral application (see section 22 of the FTCA).

Action sought

18. Please indicate your decisions on the recommendations in Table A.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MB', is written on the line.

Madeleine Berry
Acting Manager – Fast-track Consenting

Project to progress

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Project details	Project description	Project funding	Is project eligible for referral? [section 18(3)]	Will project help to achieve the purpose of the FTCA? [section 18(2)]						Recommendations	Minister's decisions
				Economic benefits and costs for people or industries affected by COVID-19 [section 19(a)]	Effect on social and cultural wellbeing of current and future generations [section 19(b)]	Likelihood project will progress faster under the FTCA than would otherwise be the case [section 19(c)]	Public benefit [section 19(d)]	Potential for significant adverse environmental effects, including greenhouse gas emissions [section 19(e)]	Any other relevant matters [section 19(f)]		
	<p>infrastructure (including roads, access, culverts, cabling, fencing, CCTV poles and other infrastructure)</p> <p>g. landscaping including planting, boundary screening and enhancement of streams and waterways</p> <p>The project will require land use consents under the Operative and Proposed Waikato District Plan, land use consent and water and discharge permits under the Waikato Regional Plan, 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 Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020 (NES-F).</p>	require OIO approval.								<p>h. Sign the attached letters to Ministers.</p> <p>i. Note that while awaiting comments from invited parties, the Ministry for the Environment will, in consultation with the Office of Māori Crown Relations – Te Arawhiti, prepare a report for the purpose of section 17 of the FTCA.</p>	Yes/No

Project details	Project description	Project funding	Is project eligible for referral? [section 18(3)]	Will project help to achieve the purpose of the FTCA? [section 18(2)]						Recommendations	Minister's decisions
				Economic benefits and costs for people or industries affected by COVID-19 [section 19(a)]	Effect on social and cultural wellbeing of current and future generations [section 19(b)]	Likelihood project will progress faster under the FTCA than would otherwise be the case [section 19(c)]	Public benefit [section 19(d)]	Potential for significant adverse environmental effects, including greenhouse gas emissions [section 19(e)]	Any other relevant matters [section 19(f)]		
	<p>planting, boundary screening and enhancement of streams and waterways</p> <p>The project will require land use consents under the Operative and Proposed Waikato District Plans, land use consent and water and discharge permits under the Waikato Regional Plan and resource consent under the NES-CS and the NES-F.</p>										

Signed:

Hon David Parker
Minister for the Environment

Date: