

BRF-2849

7 March 2023

Fiona McTavish
Chief Executive
Bay of Plenty Regional Council
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Fiona McTavish

COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 – comments sought on referral application – Taheke Geothermal Project

The Minister for the Environment (Minister) has received an application from ROOPU Whakarite Mahi Limited Partnership to refer the Taheke Geothermal 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 Bay of Plenty Regional 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. What reports and assessments would normally be required by the Council for a project of this nature in this area?
3. Does the applicant, or a company owned by the applicant, have any environmental regulatory compliance history in your region?

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, Bay of Plenty Regional 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.

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



Madeleine Berry
Acting Manager, Fast-track Consenting Team

Appendix:

A. Details of proposed project

Attachments:

1. Application to refer the Taheke Geothermal Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
2. Response template for written comments

cc: Julie Bevan, Policy and Planning Manager, s 9(2)(a)

Appendix A – Details of proposed project

Project	Applicant	Details
Taheke Geothermal Project	ROOPU Whakarite Mahi Limited Partnership	The project is to construct, operate and maintain a geothermal power station with an output of approximately 25 to 40 Megawatts net (18 kilometres north-east of Rotorua and 2 kilometres north-east of Okere Village). The project involves the take and reinjection/injection of approximately 10,000 tonnes of geothermal fluid per day from the Taheke geothermal field and will include installation of approximately ten production wells, construction of pipelines, underground and overhead transmission lines for supplying electricity to the national grid, and other ancillary infrastructure and structures. The project includes two options for the design of the geothermal power station, either a conventional geothermal steam turbine or an organic Rankine cycle plant. The project seeks to enable either option, with the final option being selected through detailed design. The project will involve activities such as removing vegetation, carrying out earthworks, upgrading existing roads, constructing and operating a power station, constructing roads and culverts, constructing infrastructure, taking, using and discharging geothermal fluid, taking and using surface water and groundwater, discharging stormwater (which may contain contaminants) onto land, and discharging contaminants to air and onto land.