



BRF-2939

ROOPU Whakarite Mahi Limited Partnership  
c/- Stuart McDonnell  
Manager Major Capital Projects, Drilling and Geothermal Reservoirs  
Eastland Group Limited  
s 9(2)(a)

Dear Stuart McDonnell

**COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-Track Consenting) Act 2020 – Notice of Decisions (Section 25) – Taheke Geothermal Project**

Thank you for ROOPU Whakarite Mahi Limited Partnership's application under section 20 of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA) seeking referral of the Taheke Geothermal Project (project) to an expert consenting panel (panel) for consideration under the FTCA.

The project is to construct, operate and maintain a geothermal power station with an output of approximately 25 to 40 megawatts net at various locations 18 kilometres north-east of Rotorua and 2 kilometres north-east of Okere Village above the Taheke geothermal field. The project involves the take and reinjection/injection of approximately 10,000 tonnes of geothermal fluid per day from the geothermal field and will include installation of approximately 8 production wells and approximately 6 reinjection 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 a new pipeline extending across or under State Highway 33.

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 120 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 5-year design and construction period and approximately 10 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.

*Information required to be submitted with your resource consent applications*

In accordance with section 24(2)(d) of the FTCA, I have also decided that you must provide the information listed in Appendix A of this letter with any resource consent applications for the project lodged with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under clause 2 Schedule 6 of the FTCA.

I draw your attention to clause 14 Schedule 6 of the FTCA that details that the above information must be provided in sufficient detail to correspond to the scale and significance of effects. You should therefore provide what you believe is a reasonable level of information, and if a panel requires further information, they can seek it from you under clause 25 Schedule 6 of the FTCA.

This information will inform a panel's assessment of the proposal's effects and whether to invite comment from persons or groups in addition to those specified in clause 17 Schedule 6 of the FTCA. This does not preclude a panel from requiring you to provide any additional information on any application lodged with the EPA under the FTCA.

*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 applications for the project lodged with the EPA from the persons and groups, additional to those specified in clause 17 Schedule 6 of the FTCA, who are listed in Appendix A of this letter.

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.

### *Timeframes for a panel to make their decision*

In accordance with section 24(2)(f) of the FTCA, I have also decided that a panel must issue its final decision on any resource consent application lodged with the EPA for the project no later than 50 working days after the date specified for receiving comment under clause 18 of Schedule 6 of the FTCA rather than 25 working days after the date specified for receiving comments as described in clause 37(2)(b)(i), with the option to extend the period for issuing its final decision by up to a further 50 working days rather than the 25 specified in clause 37(3)(b)(i). This will enable a panel to source relevant expertise to assist in their decision-making and provide sufficient time for a panel to consider the project and hold a hearing if necessary.

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 or concurrent planning decisions such as zoning 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.

I have also decided to provide a copy of this decision to the following parties who are additional to those specified in the FTCA:

1. Civil Aviation Authority
2. Air New Zealand Limited
3. Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited
4. Te Maru o Kaituna River Authority
5. Ngāti Pikiao Iwi Trust
6. Te Arawa Lakes Trust
7. Tapuika Iwi Authority
8. Te Maru o Ngāti Rangiwewehi Iwi Authority.

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  
Minister for Māori Development

Local authorities:

Rotorua Lakes District Council  
Bay of Plenty Regional Council

Other parties:

Civil Aviation Authority  
Air New Zealand Limited  
Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited  
Te Maru o Kaituna River Authority  
Ngāti Pikiao Iwi Trust  
Te Arawa Lakes Trust  
Tapuika Iwi Authority

Te Maru o Ngāti Rangiwewehi Iwi Authority

Relevant iwi authorities and Treaty settlement entities:

Te Pūmautanga o Te Arawa Trust  
Ngāti Māhino Iwi Authority

Environmental Protection Authority

The Panel Convener



## **Appendix A – Requirements specific to referral of the Taheke Geothermal Project**

### ***Information required to be submitted with resource consent applications to a panel***

In accordance with section 24(2)(d) of the FTCA, I have also decided that you must provide the following information with any application:

- i. an aeronautical study of the effects of the project, prepared in consultation with Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Rotorua Regional Airport Limited, Civil Aviation Authority, Air New Zealand Limited and Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited, which includes:
  1. modelling of well-testing plumes and steam plumes from cooling towers
  2. assessment of whether Civil Aviation notification thresholds will be exceeded by discharge from the activities involved in the project
- ii. an assessment of effects on the sustainable use of the geothermal resource, including:
  1. modelling and analysis of the geothermal reservoir including reservoir geochemistry and geophysics
  2. assessment of effects on other geothermal users
- iii. a flood hazard assessment, including:
  1. modelling that accounts for the effects of climate change
  2. confirmation of whether the project site is subject to flooding in a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) or 0.2% AEP flood event
  3. assessment of whether the geothermal power station will be able to operate during, and after a flood event
- iv. an assessment of the potential greenhouse gas emissions from the activities involved in the project on a per annum basis, compared with other methods of power generation in New Zealand

### ***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 consent application for the project from the following additional persons or groups:

- i. Minister of Energy and Resources
- ii. Minister of Agriculture
- iii. Minister of Māori Development
- iv. Rotorua Regional Airport Limited
- v. Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency
- vi. Transpower New Zealand Limited
- vii. Civil Aviation Authority
- viii. Air New Zealand Limited
- ix. Airways Corporation of New Zealand Limited
- x. Te Maru o Kaituna River Authority
- xi. Ngāti Pikiao Iwi Trust
- xii. Te Arawa Lakes Trust
- xiii. Tapuika Iwi Authority
- xiv. Te Maru o Ngāti Rangiwewehi Iwi Authority