

16 February 2022

Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
WELLINGTON 6143

Attention: Stephanie Frame

COVID-19 RECOVERY (FAST-TRACK CONSENTING) ACT 2020 – COMMENTS SOUGHT ON REFERRAL APPLICATION – TE RERE HAU WIND FARM REPOWERING PROJECT

Introduction

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the application for referral (the Application). These comments are provided by the Palmerston North City Council and the Horizons Regional Council jointly ("**the Councils**").
2. The Councils consider that the Te Rere Hau Wind Farm Repowering Project may be appropriate for consideration under the processes under the FTCA, provided that such a process can sufficiently accommodate fair opportunities for the views of those persons potentially directly affected by the project to be heard or considered.

General Comment – Potential Benefits

3. The Councils acknowledge the potential benefits associated with the increased operational efficiency and increased capacity for renewable electricity generation. Subject to careful analysis of any technical information relating to noise impact, the Councils are hopeful that the proposed removal and replacement of the existing 2-blade turbines will benefit the local community by alleviating existing noise issues. The Councils consider that the removal and replacement of the existing turbines may also have some benefit in terms of the landscape and visual impact of the existing wind farm. The Councils also recognise the potential local economic benefits associated with the project.

General Comment – Significant Issues

4. The Council does not know what the significant issues with the project are without opportunity to review the application or associated materials, however the issues most likely to require careful consideration for this project are:

- a. the acoustic impact of the project on the local community (positive or negative);
- b. the effects on the transportation network;
- c. visual and landscape impact.

Question: What is the status of Plan Changes in process which relate to the Project Site?

- 5. Neither Council is progressing plan changes of any specific or direct relevance to the issues raised by this project.

What reports and assessments would normally be required by the council for a project of this nature in this area?

- 6. The reports expected by the Councils for this project would be:
 - a. A detailed assessment of environmental effects that includes consideration of all relevant provisions in the District Plan, Regional Plan, Regional Policy Statement, and all relevant national policy statements and environmental standards;
 - b. A traffic impact assessment;
 - c. A landscape and visual impact assessment;
 - d. A noise impact assessment;
 - e. A geotechnical assessment;
 - f. Cultural impact assessment;
 - g. Ecological impact assessment;
 - h. An erosion and sediment control plan, biodiversity and terrestrial ecology management plan, avifauna management plan, clean fill management plan, dust management plan, stormwater management plan, aquatic management plan.

Question: Does the applicant, or a company owned by the applicant, have any environmental regulatory compliance history in your district?

- 7. Regulatory compliance in respect of the Te Rere Hau wind farm has been the subject of scrutiny over the life of its consent. The performance of the Wind Farm in relation to its conditions of consent relating to noise was considered at the Environment Court following many complaints

from affected residents. Further appeals to the High Court and Court of Appeal (resulting in *Palmerston North City Council v New Zealand Windfarms Ltd*¹) determined that the Wind Farm was not breaching its conditions.

8. Since then, a PNCC initiated review of conditions of consent addressed various noise conditions occurred in 2017, with some conditions changed as a result. PNCC has received relatively fewer complaints regarding wind farm noise between 2018-2022.
9. Considering the history of complaints, the potential noise impacts of this project (positive or negative) will be of significant interest to affected residents in the vicinity of the wind farm, and to PNCC in relation to its consent monitoring and compliance functions. Therefore, if the project is accepted to the fast track, PNCC would expect a process that enables comment on and careful consideration of noise related issues including potential conditions of consent.

Question: Are there any ongoing environmental compliance issues related to the project site?

10. No. However, environmental compliance in relation to noise effects remains as a concern to the affected local community.



Simon Mori
Planning Services Manager
Palmerston North City Council



Greg Bevin
Regulatory Manager
Horizons Regional Council

¹ [2014] NZCA 601.

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Comments on applications for referral under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020

This form is for persons requested by the Minister for the Environment to provide comments on an application to refer a project to an expert consenting panel under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020.

Organisation providing comment	Transpower New Zealand Limited
Contact person (if follow-up is required)	Jo Mooar
	Senior Corporate Counsel
	s 9(2)(a)

Comment form

Please use the table below to comment on the application.

Project name	Te Rere Hau Wind Farm Repowering
General comment	Transpower has been identified as an “other person” for the purpose of section 21(3) of the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-Track Consenting) Act 2020 (Act). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments about the Project, and its potential impact on National Grid assets. Transpower supports the application as it “contribut[es] to New Zealand’s efforts to mitigate climate change and transition more quickly to a low emissions economy (in terms of reducing New Zealand’s net emissions of greenhouse gases)” (section 19(d)(vii) of the Act). Transpower is not aware of any reason for the application to be declined. Transpower has had preliminary discussions with the applicant about connecting to the Grid, and the implications of that. In particular, the existing transmission line may need to be upgraded or a new line connection constructed. Both broad options are feasible, subject to significant detailed work. We have provided a high-level timeline for any contracting, investigations into connection options for the connection, consenting, and delivery of any works. Provided appropriate management occurs, including time to carry out necessary investigations, the Project would not be inconsistent with Policy 10 (in particular) of the National Policy Statement on Electricity Transmission (section 23(5)(c) of the Act). We do not consider these issues are a reason to decline the application for the Project to be referred to an expert panel.
Other considerations	N/A
[Insert specific requests for comment]	N/A

Note: All comments, including your name and contact details, will be made available to the public and the applicant either in response to an Official Information Act request or as part of the Ministry’s proactive release of information. Please advise if you

object to the release of any information contained in your comments, including your name and contact details. You have the right to request access to or to correct any personal information you supply to the Ministry.

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