

PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143 Website: www.mfe.govt.nz Freephone: 0800 499 700

BRF-2282

12 October 2022

Chris McLay Chief Executive Waikato Regional Council email: ^{s 9(2)(a)}

Dear Chris McLay

COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 – comments sought on referral applications – Waerenga Solar Farm Project and Rangiriri Solar Farm Project

The Minister for the Environment (the Minister) received applications to refer the following two projects to an expert consenting panel (a panel) for consideration under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 (FTCA):

- 1. Waerenga Solar Farm Project from Waerenga Solar Farm Limited and Transpower New Zealand Limited
- 2. Rangiriri Solar Farm Project from Rangiriri Solar Farm Limited and Transpower New Zealand Limited

The projects are described in Appendix A and the application documents are in Attachments 1 and 2.

Under delegated authority from the Minister and pursuant to section 21(2) of the FTCA, I invite Waikato Regional Council to provide written comments on the referral applications. A template is provided for this purpose in Attachment 3. 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 applications.

Specific questions on the applications

Waerenga Solar Farm Project:

- 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?

Rangiriri Solar Farm Project:

- 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 applications or request for comments to anyone outside your organisation.

If the Minister accepts the applications and the projects are referred to panels, Waikato 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 panels and determine the RMA approvals for the projects. The applicants 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 panels.

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 applications, 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 projects

Attachments:

- 1. Application to refer the Waerenga Solar Farm Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
- 2. Application to refer the Rangiriri Solar Farm Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
- 3. Response template for written comments

Appendix	A –	Details	of	proposed	pro	jects
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Project	Applicants	Details
Waerenga Solar	Waerenga	The Waerenga Solar Farm project is to construct and
Farm Project	Solar Farm	operate a solar farm on a 385-hectare site at 3
	Limited	properties located on Waerenga Road, Keith Road
	_	and Awariki Road, Waerenga, Waikato, and to
	Iranspower	connect to and supply electricity to the national grid.
	New Zealand	I ne solar farm will have an approximate peak output
	Limited	01 180 Megawalls.
		The solar farm will comprise.
		a. approximately 290,000 Solar parlets,
		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
Den siriri Calan Farm	De re crimini	Waterways
Rangiriri Solar Farm	Rangiriri Solor Form	The Rangiriri Solar Farm Project is to construct and
Project	Project	comprising 4 properties on Glop Murray Poad
	FIOJECI	Rangiriri West Waikato (the primary address is 241
	Transpower	Glen Murray Road) and the adjacent road reserve
	New	and to connect to and supply electricity to the
	Zealand	national electricity grid. The solar farm will have an
	Limited	approximate peak output of 130 Megawatts.
		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
		a. 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