

BRF-1923

3 August 2022

Gavin Ion  
Chief Executive Officer  
Waikato District Council  
Email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Gavin Ion

**COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020 – comments sought on referral application – Waiterimu Solar Farm Project**

The Minister for the Environment (Minister) has received an application from Waikato Solar Farms Limited and Transpower NZ Limited to refer the Waiterimu Solar Farm 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 Waikato District 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
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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?</li><li>2. What reports and assessments would normally be required by the Council for a project of this nature in this area?</li><li>3. Does the applicant, or a company owned by the applicant, have any environmental regulatory compliance history in your district?</li></ol>



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, Waikato District 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 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 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 applications, please contact the Ministry for the Environment's Fast-track Consenting Team at [fasttrackconsenting@mfe.govt.nz](mailto: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 Waiterimu Solar Farm Project to an expert consenting panel, including supporting information (Databox link)
2. Response template for written comments

## Appendix A – Details of proposed project

Project	Applicants	Details
Waierimu Solar Farm Project	Waikato Solar Farms Limited and Transpower NZ Limited	<p>The project is to construct and operate a solar farm on a 380-hectare site at 304 and 345 Waierimu Road, Waierimu, Waikato, and to connect it to the national electricity grid. The solar farm will have an approximate output of 140-Megawatt peak. The solar panels will cover approximately 63 hectares and the solar farm will comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. approximately 225,000 solar panels up to approximately 3.5 metres high</li> <li>b. inverter cabinets, arrays, mounting structures, motors and poles to support the panels</li> <li>c. a substation and transmission line to connect to the national grid</li> <li>d. an energy storage facility</li> <li>e. underground electricity cables</li> <li>f. ancillary buildings, structures and infrastructure (including roads, fencing, security lighting and for connection to existing overhead electricity lines)</li> </ul> <p>landscaping including planting and enhancement of wetlands and streams.</p>