

**IN THE ENVIRONMENT COURT
AT WELLINGTON**

**I TE KŌTI TAIAO O AOTEAROA
KI TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA**

IN THE MATTER of a direct referral of applications for resource consents s 87G of the Resource Management Act 1991 to establish and operate a 175-megawatt (peak) solar farm at 415 Moroa Road, Greytown, 312 Bidwills Cutting Road, Greytown; and 18 Pharazyns Road, Featherston

BETWEEN FAR NORTH SOLAR FARM LIMITED

(ENV-2023-WLG-0000014)

Applicant

AND SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consent Authority

AND ELIZABETH CREEVEY AND OTHERS

Section 274 Parties

**MINUTE OF THE ENVIRONMENT COURT
(9 JULY 2024)**

[1] The Court adjourned this hearing on Thursday 4 July 2024 to enable the Applicant to provide further information on a range of topics that had arisen during the course of the hearing.

[2] While it is a matter for the Applicant to determine what additional information

it provides, the Court has identified the following matters where we consider further information would assist our determination.

Additional Plans

- Additional plans and maps showing the position of the following in relation to the site:
 - (i) The Papawai fault line; and
 - (ii) The underlying aquifer.
- A comprehensive site plan showing the site boundaries (ie the area to be leased), the ownership of land on all boundaries of the site, the location of all section 274 parties homes/businesses, the distance to the closest properties (not the subject of written approvals), the location of properties for which written approvals have been provided and the dimensions of all setbacks.

Landscaping and Planting

- Cross sections of current planting width and type and setbacks to panels;
- Proposed methodology for consulting adjacent property owners regarding amendments to proposed boundary planting, updating landscape mitigation plan and obtaining Council approval to the same.

Fire Risk Assessment

- Assessment of fire risk from the construction and operation of the solar farm itself and from adjoining rural/domestic activities in the context in which it is located;
- Assessment of any additional risk associated with screen planting;
- Mitigation proposals to reduce identified risks;
- Protocols for fire containment depending on source and site factors;
- Protocols for communication/warning in event of fire.

Contamination Risk Assessment

- Assessment of soil/groundwater contamination risk from the solar farm construction and operation including the use of the inverters, transformers, switchyard, galvanised support structures and any photovoltaic panel wear discharges;
- Proposed mitigation including baseline monitoring requirements and remedial actions.

Revised Conditions

[3] During the course of the hearing the Court (and a number of witnesses) identified that many of the proposed conditions would benefit from further attention.

[4] While not exhaustive, the Court noted that it might expect to receive further clarification on:

- An Operations Management Plan;
- The establishment and operation of a Community Liaison Group including the purpose and expected outcome of such a group, its proposed membership and structure (Council involvement?), any financial/ management support to be provided and the like;
- A complaints protocol (which might be linked to the CLG above);
- The time period for bat monitoring and the information sought from such monitoring;
- The measures to be included in a Bat Management Plan should bats be present including possible mitigation measures and monitoring of effectiveness;
- Further information on bird collision including frequency of monitoring requirements and remedial actions;

- Radio Frequency Interference – options for mitigation if identified
- Decommissioning – whether a bond is appropriate (it is noted that the AEE references a decommissioning bond as part of the lease arrangements) and further clarity on the target condition of the soil post decommissioning;
- Further details on the outcomes expected from each of the management plans proposed;
- Clarification of the thresholds and standards set in the conditions which the management plans are there to implement;
- Clarification as to the appropriate author for each management plan (“suitably qualified and experienced persons”);
- Triggers for the exercise of a review conditions eg in the event of ground contamination, bird/bat strike, unacceptable noise or a fire.



L J Semple
L J Semple
Environment Judge

Issued: 9 July 2024