National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2024

Preamble

This national policy statement sets out an objective and policies to enable the sustainable management of renewable electricity generation under the Resource Management Act 1991 ('the Act').

New Zealand's energy demand has been growing steadily and is forecast to continue to grow. New Zealand must confront two major energy challenges as it meets growing energy demand. The first is to respond to the risks of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions caused by the production and use of energy. The second is to deliver clean, secure, affordable energy while treating the environment responsibly.

The contribution of renewable electricity generation, regardless of scale, towards addressing the effects of climate change plays a vital role in the wellbeing of New Zealand, its people and the environment. In considering the risks and opportunities associated with various electricity futures, central government has changed the strategic target so that 95 per cent of electricity generated in New Zealand should be derived from renewable energy sources by 2030 and 100% renewable by 2050 (based on delivered electricity in an average hydrological year).

Development that increases renewable electricity generation capacity can have environmental effects that span local, regional and national scales, often with adverse effects manifesting locally and positive effects manifesting nationally.

This national policy statement does not apply to the allocation and prioritisation of freshwater as these are matters for regional councils to address in a catchment or regional context and the National Policy Statement, and National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Management.

In some instances the benefits of renewable electricity generation can compete with matters of national importance as set out in section 6 of the Act, and with matters to which decision- makers are required to have particular regard under section 7 of the Act. In particular, the natural resources from which electricity is generated can coincide with areas of significant natural character, historic heritage, outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna. There can also be potential conflicts with the relationship of Maori with their taonga and the role of kaitiaki. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010 also addresses these issues in the coastal environment. Increased national consistency in addressing the competing values associated with the development of New Zealand's renewable energy resources will provide greater certainty to decision-makers, applicants, and the wider community.

Title

This national policy statement is the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2022.

Commencement

This national policy statement will take effect 28 days after the date of its issue by notice in the New Zealand Gazette.

Interpretation

In this national policy statement, unless the context otherwise requires:

Act means the Resource Management Act 1991.

Decision-makers means all persons exercising functions and powers under the Act.

Distribution network means a distributor's lines and associated equipment used for the conveyance of electricity on lines other than lines that are part of the national grid.

Distributor means a business engaged in distribution of electricity.

National grid means the lines and associated equipment used or owned by Transpower to convey electricity.

Renewable electricity generation means generation of electricity from solar, wind, hydro- electricity, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, or ocean current energy sources.

Renewable electricity generation activities means the construction, operation and maintenance of structures associated with renewable electricity generation. This includes small and community-scale distributed renewable generation activities and the system of electricity conveyance required to convey electricity to the distribution network and/or the national grid and electricity storage technologies associated with renewable electricity.

Small and community-scale distributed electricity generation means renewable electricity generation for the purpose of using electricity on a particular site, or supplying an immediate community, or connecting into the distribution network.

Consumer energy generation and storage means renewable energy generation and storage that is available to consumers for their own private use, and to sell back to generation companies.

Terms given meaning in the Act have the meanings so given.

Matters of national significance

The matters of national significance to which this national policy statement applies are:

a) the need to develop, operate, maintain and upgrade renewable electricity generation activities throughout New Zealand; and

b) the benefits of renewable electricity generation.

Objective

To recognise the national significance of renewable electricity generation activities by providing for the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of new and existing renewable electricity generation activities, such that the proportion of New Zealand's electricity generated from renewable energy sources increases to a level that meets or exceeds the New Zealand Government's national target for renewable electricity generation.

A. Recognising the benefits of renewable electricity generation activities

POLICY A

Decision-makers shall recognise and provide for the national significance of renewable electricity generation activities, including the national, regional and local benefits relevant to renewable electricity generation activities. These benefits include, but are not limited to:

a) maintaining or increasing electricity generation capacity while reducing or displacing greenhouse gas emissions;

b) increasing security of electricity supply at local, regional and national levels by diversifying the type and/or location of electricity generation;

c) using renewable natural resources rather than finite resources;

d) the reversibility of the adverse effects on the environment of some renewable electricity generation technologies;

e) avoiding reliance on imported fuels for the purposes of generating electricity.

f) limited negative health impacts on people residing near generation infrastructure

B. Acknowledging the practical implications of achieving New Zealand's target for electricity generation from renewable resources

POLICY B

Decision-makers shall have particular regard to the following matters:

a) maintenance of the generation output of existing renewable electricity generation activities can require protection of the assets, operational capacity and continued availability of the renewable energy resource; and

b) even minor reductions in the generation output of existing renewable electricity generation activities can cumulatively have significant adverse effects on national, regional and local renewable electricity generation output; and

c) meeting or exceeding the New Zealand Government's national target for the generation of electricity from renewable resources will require the significant development of renewable electricity generation activities.

C. Acknowledging the practical constraints associated with the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of new and existing renewable electricity generation activities

POLICY C1

Decision-makers shall have particular regard to the following matters:

a) the need to locate the renewable electricity generation activity where the renewable energy resource is available;

b) logistical or technical practicalities associated with developing, upgrading, operating or maintaining the renewable electricity generation activity;

c) the location of existing structures and infrastructure including, but not limited to, roads, navigation and telecommunication structures and facilities, the distribution network and the national grid in relation to the renewable electricity generation activity, and the need to connect renewable electricity generation activity to the national grid;

d) designing measures that allow operational requirements to complement and provide for mitigation opportunities;

e) adaptive management measures;

f) the location of generation, and where the demand for more electricity is required;

g) the cumulative effects that the generation will have on the natural or built environment; and

h) the reduction of natural hazard risk created due to modifications to the natural environment from land-use.

POLICY C2

When considering any residual environmental effects of renewable electricity generation activities that cannot be avoided, remedied or mitigated, decision-makers shall have regard to offsetting measures or environmental compensation including measures or compensation which benefit the local environment and community affected. In addition, conduct consultation with

local Iwi and Hapū to ensure their Kaitiaki role in the management of the environment.

D. Managing reverse sensitivity effects on renewable electricity generation activities

POLICY D

Decision-makers shall, to the extent reasonably possible, manage activities to avoid reverse sensitivity effects on consented and on existing renewable electricity generation activities.

E. Incorporating provisions for renewable electricity generation activities into regional policy statements and regional and district plans

E1 Solar, biomass, tidal, wave and ocean current resources

POLICY E1

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of new and existing renewable electricity generation activities using solar, biomass, tidal, wave and ocean current energy resources to the extent applicable to the region or district. An increase of co-gen electricity generation will be supported by the government for commercial entities reducing the number of coal-powered boilers to drive industry, when not in use for commercial purposes, energy from these sources will be brought to the grid.

E2 Hydro-electricity resources

POLICY E2

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of new and existing hydro-electricity generation activities to the extent applicable to the region or district. Where possible, other methods of generation, rather than hydro-electricity will be preferred to reduce the reliance on catchments, and to provide resilience against “dry-years”.

E3 Wind resources

POLICY E3

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of new and existing wind energy generation activities to the extent applicable to the region or district. Consents granted for large-scale wind energy production, will be required to be

forfeited after 5 years if there is not a sufficient reason that the construction of the wind energy has not commenced. This consent will be available for other entities to construct if lapsed.

E4 Geothermal resources

POLICY E4

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of new and existing electricity generation activities using geothermal resources to the extent applicable to the region or district. Due to a large part of the productive geothermal power sources being owned by Iwi, proper consultation will need to take place with hapū and iwi to ensure that all generation upholds the principles of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

F. Incorporating provisions for small and community-scale renewable electricity generation activities into regional policy statements and regional and district plans

POLICY F

As part of giving effect to Policies E1 to E4, regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for the development, operation, maintenance and upgrading of small and community-scale distributed renewable electricity generation from any renewable energy source to the extent applicable to the region or district. Affected parties to consent applications for sources of renewable energy as outlined in policies E1 to E4, will be limited, and consideration of the surrounding areas will not factor into the decision for the granting of a resource consent, or for the appeal for such a resource consent at the Environment Court.

G. Enabling identification of renewable electricity generation possibilities

POLICY G

Regional policy statements and regional and district plans shall include objectives, policies, and methods (including rules within plans) to provide for activities associated with the investigation, identification and assessment of potential sites and energy sources for renewable electricity generation by existing and prospective generators or the government.

H. Time within which implementation is required

POLICY H1

Unless already provided for within the relevant regional policy statement or proposed regional policy statement, regional councils shall give effect to Policies A, B, C, D, E, F and G by notifying using Schedule 1 of the Act, a change or

variation (whichever applies) within 24 months of the date on which this national policy statement takes effect.

POLICY H2

Unless already provided for within the relevant regional or district plans or proposed plans, plan changes or variations, local authorities shall give effect to Policies A, B, C, D, E, F and G by notifying using Schedule 1 of the Act, a change or variation (whichever applies) within the following timeframes:

a) where the relevant regional policy statement or proposed regional policy statement already provides for the Policies, 24 months of the date on which this national policy statement takes effect; or

b) where a change or variation to the regional policy statement or proposed regional policy statement is required by Policy H1, 12 months of the date on which the change or variation becomes operative.

Monitoring and reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of the national policy statement

To monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of this national policy statement in achieving the purpose of the Act, the Minister for the Environment should:

- in collaboration with local authorities and relevant government agencies collect data for, and, as far as practicable, incorporate district and regional monitoring information into a nationally consistent monitoring and reporting programme, including monitoring the performance of local authorities against the timeframes for giving effect to this national policy statement;
- utilise other information gathered or monitored that assists in measuring progress towards the Government's national target for the generation of electricity from renewable sources;
- ensure that consideration of Iwi viewpoints is implemented in the development of policy as outlined by this National Policy Statement
- within five years of its taking effect, and thereafter as considered necessary, assess the effect of this national policy statement on relevant regional policy statements and regional or district plans, resource consents and other decision-making; and
- publish a report and conclusions on matters above.

Explanatory note

This note is not part of the national policy statement but is intended to indicate its general effect.

This national policy statement takes effect 28 days after the date of its issue by notice in the *New Zealand Gazette*. It recognises renewable electricity generation activities and the benefits of renewable electricity generation as matters of national significance under the Resource Management Act 1991.

This national policy statement is to be applied by all persons exercising powers and functions under the Act. The objective and policies are intended to guide

applicants and decision-makers on applications for resource consent, in making decisions on the notification and determination of resource consent applications, in considering a requirement for a designation or a heritage order, in considering an application for a water conservation order and when exercising other powers as required by the Act. Regional policy statements, regional plans and district plans must give effect to this national policy statement.

This national policy statement requires regional councils, unless they have already provided for renewable electricity generation activities, to give effect to its provisions by notifying changes to existing or proposed regional policy statements within 24 months of the date on which it takes effect. In the case of district plans, proposed plans or variations, local authorities are required to give effect to its provisions by notifying changes within the following timeframes: 24 months of the date on which this national policy statement takes effect where the regional policy statement or proposed regional policy statement already provides for the policies; or, where a change or variation to the regional policy statement or proposed regional policy statement is required, within 12 months of the date on which the change or variation becomes operative.