

My name is David Argyle, I am a farmer from Tokomaru. I am a member of Tararua Aokautere Guardians.

My opposition to wind farms in our region began with Te Apiti in the Manawatu Gorge. I was at that time driving through the Gorge and back almost daily. I have always enjoyed the scenery since I lived in Hawkes Bay and traveled to see my grandparents as a boy. I could not believe that the Manawatu's most significant landscape was about to be exploited for power generation. Upon reading the application I also had problems conceiving the scale. On the last day of the Tararua Council RMA hearing, six private individuals attempted to defend what they held as important to them, their landscape and their views. Their submissions took about two and half hours and the hearing was able to wind up before the afternoon break. No landscape architects were hired, or felt strongly enough to offer countering arguments. Nothing from the Regional Council to support the protected status of the landscape and DOC thought that the birds would be fine with the turbines. The Meridian Team all booked an earlier flight out of Palmerston North and the decision came a few days later.

I still enjoy visits to the Gorge, but I do feel that the windmills, particularly those above the river, detract from that landscape. They attempt to embellish an already spectacular work of nature, their size is inappropriate, and their motion reinforces their incongruity with their surroundings. They also represent a considerable distraction risk to motorists on an already dangerous road. Other windmills are too close to Ashhurst.

Shortly after, but while Te Apiti was still under construction, NZ Wind Farms applied for consent for their Te Rere Hau turbines. A group of mainly local residents formed an opposition. The Aokautere Guardians were able to hire a solicitor and mount a cohesive opposition. Concessions were won after a lengthy hearing, though these all concern proximity and noise issues, nothing for the effect upon landscape values.

These days the Te Rere Hau turbines appear the least lovely of all. They spin too fast and when stationary with their blades at 90 degrees to the mast, they resemble a row of executioner's scaffolds. They march down the hillside toward you like an approaching army. They do not sit as lightly upon the landscape as we were assured they would.

Trust Power announced plans for their T3 enhancement of their existing wind farm while the Te Rere Hau hearings were going on. This increased the numbers in the Guardians and again a case was mounted against the application. This was successful in that once again turbines in close proximity to peoples' houses were removed for noise and safety reasons. But no quarter was given to the landscape. Several expert witnesses spoke of concerns about the southern six turbines and how they were separated by distance and elevation from the rest. Even now these turbines look like an after thought.

Then came Motorimu above us at Tokomaru. New blood again joined the now Tararua-Aokautere Guardians and after a lengthy and vigorous RMA hearing and subsequent Environment Court hearing, not only were turbines removed for reasons of noise and proximity, but also because of their effect upon the landscape.

Having attended these hearings, read the applications, studied the video and photographic montages, I can say that the final appearance of a wind farm after construction is always a surprise. They look nothing like the predictions. This is because different viewing positions greatly affect what is seen of the turbines and associated roading and infrastructure. Several kilometers separate T3 and Te Rere Hau yet from the southern aspect the two wind farms are intermixed - T3's massive towers appearing to spawn the smaller Te Rere Hau turbines around them. At both hearings we were told by the applicants that the distance between them would stop any cumulative effect and they could be seen as separate wind farms. From my house all four current wind farms appear as one installation made up of different components, different heights, different speeds, different turbine layouts, some with three blades and some with two. Not so much designed, as just allowed to happen.

Mighty River Power's proposal is really an application to extend the already massive Manawatu-Ruahine-Tararua Wind Farm several more kilometers and ridgelines to the south - from many angles completing a mono-culture of turbines on all visible high ground.

At previous hearings, applications for new wind farms not yet heard were unable to be taken into account when talking of cumulative effect. Also wind farms under construction while providing justification for more turbines as an existing use in the area, were not able to be assessed for cumulative effects because they weren't built yet.

This time, however, though Te Rere Hau is only half completed, this cumulative effect is obvious and must surely be reason enough in itself to decline the application.

The notion that our New Zealand landscape is considered a “renewable resource” able to be exploited for profit with no effect on the environment or the communities within it, is immoral.

Thank you for listening to my submission.