

Proposed National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation

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. In October 2007 the government adopted the New Zealand Energy Strategy, which states that 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, the government has determined that 90 per cent of electricity generated in New Zealand should be derived from renewable energy sources by 2025 (based on delivered electricity in an average hydrological year).

Development that increases renewable electricity generation capacity can, however, have environmental effects that span local, regional and national scales, often with adverse effects manifesting locally and positive effects manifesting nationally. 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, significant amenity values, historic heritage, outstanding natural features and landscapes, significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna. Adopting a nationally consistent approach to balancing 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 may be cited as the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation.

Commencement

This national policy statement comes into force on the day after which it is notified in the Gazette.

Matter of national significance

The matter of national significance to which this national policy statement applies is the need to develop, upgrade, maintain and operate renewable electricity generation activities throughout New Zealand.

Objective

To recognise the national significance of renewable electricity generation by promoting the development, upgrading, maintenance and operation of new and existing renewable electricity generation activities, such that 90 per cent of New Zealand's electricity will be generated from renewable sources by 2025 (based on delivered electricity in an average hydrological year).

Recognising the national significance of the benefits of renewable electricity generation activities

Policy 1

The benefits of renewable electricity generation activities, at any scale, are of national significance. Decision-makers must have particular regard to the national, regional and local benefits relevant to renewable electricity generation activities. These benefits may include, but are not limited to:

- i. maintaining or increasing electricity generation capacity while avoiding, reducing or displacing greenhouse gas emissions
- ii. maintaining or increasing security of electricity supply at local, regional and national levels by diversifying the type and/or location of electricity generation.

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

Policy 2

When considering measures to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse environmental effects of renewable electricity generation activities, consent authorities must have particular regard to the constraints imposed on achieving those measures by:

- i. the nature and location of the renewable energy source
- ii. logistical or technical practicalities associated with developing, operating or maintaining the proposed renewable electricity generation activity
- iii. the nature and location of existing renewable electricity generation activities
- iv. the location of existing structures and infrastructure including, but not limited to, roads, navigation and telecommunication structures and facilities, the local electricity distribution network, and the national grid.

Having regard to the relative reversibility of adverse effects associated with particular generation types

Policy 3

When considering proposals to develop new renewable electricity generation activities, decision-makers must have particular regard to the relative degree of reversibility of the adverse environmental effects associated with proposed generation technologies.

Enabling identification of renewable electricity generation possibilities

Policy 4

By 13 March 2012, local authorities are to notify, in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Act, a plan change, proposed plan or variation to introduce objectives, policies and, where appropriate, methods, into policy statements and plans to enable activities associated with:

- i. the identification and assessment by generators of potential sites and energy sources for renewable electricity generation
- ii. research-scale investigation into emerging renewable electricity generation technologies and methods.

Supporting small and community-scale renewable electricity generation

Policy 5

By 13 March 2012, local authorities are to notify, in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Act, a plan change, proposed plan or variation to introduce objectives, policies and, where appropriate, methods, into policy statements and plans to enable activities associated with the development and operation of small and community-scale distributed renewable electricity generation.

Interpretation

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

“**Act**” means the Resource Management Act 1991.

“**Application**” means any application for resource consent or consents or application under section 127 of the Act. Applicant has the corresponding meaning.

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

“**Local electricity distribution network**” means the system of electricity conveyance that connects individual electricity users with the national grid and electricity generation facilities.

“**National grid**” means the assets used or owned by Transpower NZ Limited.

“**Renewable electricity generation**” means generation of electricity from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, or ocean currents resources.

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

“**Small and community-scale distributed renewable electricity generation**” means renewable electricity generation projects with an installed electricity generation capacity of less than four megawatts and excludes offshore wind, tidal and wave generation.

Explanatory note

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

This national policy statement comes into force on the day after which it is notified in the Gazette. It provides that renewable electricity generation is a matter 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 when making applications for resource consent, in making decisions on the notification and determination of resource consent applications, in drafting policy statements and plans that relate to renewable electricity generation activities, and when exercising other powers under the Act.

The national policy statement requires local authorities to give effect to its provisions in plans made under the Resource Management Act 1991 by initiating a plan change, proposed plan or variation by 13 March 2012.