



Report 05.583
Date 14 October 2005
File RE/02/02/04

Committee Wind Energy Subcommittee
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Summary of submissions received on wind energy development at Puketiro

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the submissions Greater Wellington has received from the public on the desirability of making Council land available at Puketiro for a wind energy development.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Greater Wellington has received 1,303 submissions from the region's public on the desirability of making Council land available at Puketiro for a wind energy development. They have been compiled into several volumes and been circulated to subcommittee members for their consideration at the meeting on 26 October and 1 November 2005. Some 29 oral submitters have also asked to be heard in support of their submission. Subcommittee members have also been provided with a separate copy of the written submissions that relate to the oral presentations.

4. Comment

Of the 1,303 submissions Greater Wellington received, 1,214 supported the proposal and 89 were against the Council making Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development.

4.1 Origin of submitters

Most submissions were from individuals in the region's community. However, twenty-two submissions were from organisations. This included two central government agencies (Ministry of Economic Development and Department of Conservation), two city councils (PCC and WCC), Greenpeace, two branches of Forest and Bird, Mighty River Power and the Plimmerton Residents' Association.

The map provided in **Attachment 1** shows the location of all those submitters who supplied contact details and indicates whether or not they support the proposal for a wind farm at Puketiro. On the whole, there was a relatively even spread across the region of those for and against the proposal. However, the ratio of those for and against the proposal does change within the 5km and 10km radius of the site (see the table below). Although, it is also interesting that those who live very close to one another often had contrasting views.

Area	Support proposal (number and %)		Against proposal (number and %)		Total
Region	1,212	93.2%	89	6.8%	1,301
5km radius	9	64.3%	5	35.7%	14
10km radius	189	87.9%	26	12.1%	215

4.2 Submitters who supported the proposal

Two hundred and eighteen of the submissions that supported the proposal to make Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development did not make any further comments on their submission form. The overall feeling from the 996 submitters that did make further comments in support of the proposal was that the negative impacts of a wind farm were either nominal or were relatively minimal when compared to the advantages of wind energy generation. Submitters generally felt that more energy generation was necessary and that wind energy was sustainable, green, clean and safe. Submitters' specific comments are discussed in more detail below.

4.2.1 Visual impact

Approximately 250 submitters commented on this visual aspect of wind farms. Many described the turbines as aesthetically pleasing and enhancing the landscape, while others commented that they were visually acceptable. Submitters also stated that they were acceptable when compared with other power source alternatives, such as nuclear stations. Another common statement was that turbines were no worse to look at than power pylons or high-rise buildings. Many submitters commented on the sight-seeing potential that wind farms could create for the region.

Submitters did, however, state that the turbines could be painted a different colour to blend in more with the landscape. This comment may have arisen because of the colour of the sky in the photo montage used in consultation documents.

4.2.2 Noise

About 50 submitters commented on the noise of wind farms. Most submitters felt the noise would be minimal. Some compared it to noise that is emitted from other infrastructure that they are close to e.g. roads, airfields, railways, which they considered to be noisier and had become used to over time. Others cited their experience of other wind farms and said they had found them to be noisy.

4.2.3 Environment

Approximately 250 of submitters stated minimal environmental impact as their reason for supporting the proposed wind farm. Many stated the fact that wind farms provide a “clean” power source. Many also commented on the fact that wind was an abundant resource in the Wellington region. A number of submitters also stated a wind-farm could be easily removed with no lingering effect on the land.

4.2.4 Location

Around 107 submitters commented on the location of wind farms. Many agreed that the chosen site was appropriate. Submitters also identified other locations which they supported wind farms being developed on, amongst those identified were Makara, Belmont, Pukerua Bay, Mt Climie, Brooklyn, Baring Head and Te Apiti. The Puketiro location was seen as close enough to save money on transmission costs while being far enough from housing.

4.2.5 Preferred way of generating energy

Approximately 130 submitters stated that wind energy was a preferred alternative to other forms of energy generation, in particular fossil fuels, nuclear and hydro. Most people stated wind energy was better than nuclear because it was safer and we didn't need to dispose of waste. It was better than hydro because of the damage to rivers and their ecosystems, and the visual and social impact. It was superior to fossil fuels because they were not renewable and emitted CO₂. Other reasons included the relatively minimal impact on recreation use of the land and no ugly pylons and power lines.

4.2.6 Birdlife

Ten submissions were received which commented in the effect of wind farms on birdlife. About half of these submissions believed that the turbines would have no effect on birdlife, stating that birds would be able to survive. The remainder of submitters on this subject stated that they believed the turbines would be a threat to birds. One submitter stated that their concern was that the wind farms would affect the hunting pattern of New Zealand falcon in the area.

4.2.7 Recognise demand for electricity

A total of 80 submissions commented on the need for more power generation and the need for a range of sources to generate it. Many recognised the growing energy consumption and the need to have security of supply to avoid an energy crisis, blackouts etc. Several submitters stated that it was imperative and urgent to erect wind farms. On the flipside there were several comments stating that the Council could have a role in promoting energy conservation.

4.2.8 Cost

About 50 people stated that wind energy was economical when compared to many other forms of energy generation. Submitters said this was because the initial capital outlay was less, the overall running costs were cheaper as only need a person onsite from time to time etc, maintenance was minimal, the power is local so there is a reduction in transmission costs and that power was cheaper to the consumer. Some even suggested that Greater Wellington should have an investment in the wind development to make a profit and to protect the energy supply to the region.

4.2.9 Other comments

Around 181 comments were classed as “other”, that is to say, they did not fit into the categories devised. A large number of comments made were to the effect that more wind farms should be built with bigger generating capacity. Submitters congratulated the Council on the proposed development, in fact many believed that the initiative was long overdue and that Greater Wellington had a role to play in harnessing energy for the region. A few submitters believed that Greater Wellington should investigate the possibility of providing subsidised power to those affected by the wind farms.

A few submitters want to ensure that the impact on use of the Battle Hill Regional Farm Forest Park is minimised.

4.2.10 Provisos

About 80 submitters who supported the proposal only did so with provisos. The main concern was that any effect visual or aural be minimised. Many stated that they would like the turbines to be painted in some way to blend in with the natural landscape. Comments were also made that the height of the turbines should be restricted where they affect views. A number of submitters stated that they would like more information or consultation. The need for the turbines to be discrete and not in residential areas was also a common statement.

4.3 Submitters who were against the proposal

Greater Wellington received 89 submissions which did not support a wind farm development at Puketiro. The overwhelming majority of submitters commented on the visual pollution that a wind farm would make in the area. Another prevalent concern was the noise which wind farms made. The effect of noise and visual pollution on property prices was also discussed.

Some submitters believed Greater Wellington should investigate other sources of energy e.g. solar and nuclear power. While other submitters thought that Greater Wellington should be trying to get people to use less energy and make their homes more energy efficient.

There was some concern that wind farms were not cost effective. The location of the wind farms was also discussed with some people commenting that regional parks should not be used for this purpose. Several submitters also said they were concerned that the parks would become industrialised.

One submitter commented that there was not enough detail in the plan. Another submitter also commented on the need for a national plan.

5. Communication

A response will be sent to submitters once a decision has been made by the Council on whether or not it will make land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development.

6. Recommendations

That the Subcommittee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

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Attachment 1: Map showing total submissions for wind farm development at Puketiro