



Report **05.611**
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Committee **Policy, Finance and Strategy**
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Wind Energy Submissions

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of the key issues raised in submissions on the Council's proposal to make its land at Puketiro available 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

The Wind Energy Subcommittee meeting on 26 October and 1 November 2005 completed Greater Wellington's consultation on the desirability of making Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development. The consultation undertaken by the Council was closely aligned to the special consultative procedure set out in the Local Government Act 2002. It was not a legislative requirement to follow this procedure, but the Council recognised the importance of the decision and promised the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Wellington Regional Water Board Functions Act 2004 that it would undertake comprehensive consultation with the region's public.

Greater Wellington received 1,303 written submissions on the desirability of making Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development. The Wind Energy Subcommittee considered these submissions, along with 26 oral presentations, at its meeting on 26 October and 1 November 2005. This report advises the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee of the key issues that arose from those submissions. An officer's report (Report 05.651), which addresses many of these issues, has also been submitted to the Policy, Finance and Strategy Committee meeting on 15 December 2005. There is also a report (PE 05.652) which discusses some of the commercial aspects of a development.

The matters raised in all of these reports should be considered by the Council, along with any other relevant issues, when deciding whether or not to proceed with making Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development.

4. Comment

Of the 1,303 written submissions Greater Wellington received, 1,214 (93.2%) supported the proposal to make Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development and 89 (6.8%) were against it.

This result is somewhat reflective of the scientific survey of 750 New Zealanders from across the whole country that was commissioned by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA). While EECA’s survey asked different and more general questions, it still provides an interesting comparison.

When respondents to the EECA survey were asked generally about the different types of electricity generation they supported, wind power recorded the highest approval ratings (82%). When respondents were asked about having a wind farm built in their local area 60% were in favour, 20% were neutral and 18% were opposed to the idea. This outcome is more exaggerated for the Council’s proposal where 76.1% of submitters within a 10 km radius of the proposed wind farm at Puketiro support the proposal and 23.9% are against the proposal (see table under section 4.1).

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), EECA, Greenpeace, two branches of Forest and Bird, two developers (Mighty River Power and Wind Energy Developments), Airways New Zealand 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
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4.2 Submitters supporting 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 the 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, often 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 not found them 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, 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 said 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 the use of Battle Hill Regional Farm Forest Park is minimised.

4.2.10 Conditional support

About 80 submitters who supported the proposal only did so with provisos.

An important issue was the effect of wind farms on radar transmissions and telecommunications. Airways New Zealand said that wind farms can interrupt scramble signals, having dire consequences. They noted, however, that most of the time these issues can be mitigated, as long as the developer works with infrastructural providers from early on in the design process.

The other key request was that any effect visual or aural be minimised. Many submitters 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. The need for the turbines to be discreet and not in residential areas was also a common statement.

4.3 Submitters against the proposal

Greater Wellington received 89 submissions which did not support a wind farm development at Puketiro.

4.3.1 Visual and noise pollution

The overwhelming majority of submitters against the proposal commented on the visual pollution that a wind farm would make in the area. Some oral submitters said they had moved to the area specifically for the beautiful landscape and a wind farm would destroy the views from their house or community and affect their wellbeing. Another prevalent concern was the noise which wind farms made. The effect of noise and visual pollution on property prices was also discussed.

4.3.2 Planned approach necessary

Some submitters were concerned that a planned approach wasn't being taken in the erection of wind farms and that this could result in too many wind farms in one area or region. They stressed the need for a national or regional plan that sited the location and size of potential wind farms and balanced them with the

landscape values of the region e.g. unbroken skyline. They wanted a plan that would provide them with the assurance that they would not see a proliferation of wind farms on the region's skylines or marching down hillsides.

4.3.3 Location

Some people commented that regional parks should not be used for wind farms. Several submitters said they were concerned that the parks would become industrialised. When relevant oral submitters were advised that this area was not a regional park, but was a plantation forest situated adjacent to a farm forest park, many still felt that the site was too close to Pauatahanui Inlet, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and the native bush on the Akatarawa Ranges.

4.3.4 Ecological effect

Some submitters discussed the effect of sedimentation from the earthworks on the delicate ecosystem of the Pauatahanui Inlet and one submitter pointed out that a wind farm could remove the possibility of establishing a wildlife corridor that joined the Kapiti Coast corridor.

4.3.5 Alternative energy sources

Some submitters believed Greater Wellington should investigate other energy sources e.g. solar, photo-voltaic and nuclear. There was some concern that wind farms were not cost effective. One oral submitter made the point that other renewable energy sources, such as solar and photo-voltaic, will decrease in price in the future and will be much more accessible and far less intrusive.

4.3.6 Energy conservation

Other submitters thought that Greater Wellington should be concentrating on trying to get people to use less energy and make their homes more energy efficient.

5. Communication

A response will be sent to all submitters once a decision has been made by the Council on whether or not it will proceed with its proposal. Those submitters who made an oral submission, or wrote a long and detailed submission or oppose the final decision of the Council will receive a more detailed response. It is suggested that responses be sent from the Council Chairperson.

6. Recommendations

That the Committee recommends that Council:

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

3. *Takes into account the submissions made by the region's public when making its decision on whether or not to proceed with making Council land at Puketiro available for a wind energy development.*

Report approved by:

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Councillor Laidlaw

Chair of the Wind Energy Subcommittee

Councillor Shields

Member of Wind Energy Subcommittee

Attachment 1: Map showing location and indicating opinion of submitters