



Topic 8: Energy

Introduction

As part of the District Plan Review, Timaru District Council has commissioned a Discussion Document on energy to stimulate discussion and form a basis for public consultation. This can be found at www.timaru.govt.nz/dpr.

It identifies three main issues with how the current District Plan manages energy, establishes potential options to address these issues and discusses the associated strengths and weaknesses. We seek your feedback on the issues and options.

Issues and Options

Issue 1

To what extent should the District Plan encourage renewable energy generation and the transmission of electricity to give effect to national and regional planning documents?

National and regional level planning documents provide clear direction as to the benefits and needs for renewable energy generation and transmission. This includes recognition that such generation has to necessarily be located where the resource is in terms of water or wind sources, and that existing infrastructure needs to be protected from sensitive activities locating adjacent to generation plants or transmission corridors.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions; or (ii) amend the District Plan to provide more explicit policy direction and a more enabling rule framework to provide for the development, maintenance, upgrading, and operation of electricity infrastructure. This can range from large-scale renewable energy power plants down to domestic-scale solar panels.

This summary outlines the issues our district faces in relation to energy.

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Damon Odey
Timaru District Council Mayor





Issue 2

Should the District Plan pro-actively recognise and provide for the specific requirements and adverse effects of energy generation and transmission infrastructure, in contrast to other land uses generally?

Energy generation and transmission infrastructure provides essential services to the community and businesses, enabling social, economic, cultural and health benefits. Such infrastructure can be visually dominant, generate substantial noise and earthworks, or traverse a number of sensitive environments (such as the coast, residential areas, or important landscapes or heritage areas).

The implications, and adverse environmental effects from energy generation and transmission can be variable. However often their location, scale and character is determined by the economic and operational necessities of their provision. Often, it is difficult or impossible to mitigate or avoid the adverse effects from such infrastructure. Once established, existing infrastructure needs to be protected from sensitive activities locating adjacent to them in a manner that would reduce their efficient and effective operation.

The adverse effects of energy generation and transmission infrastructure should be considered against their social and economic benefits to the people and community of the Timaru District. This would result in a planning approach where the benefits of energy generation and transmission infrastructure are recognised in terms of the extent to which their adverse effects on the environment are to be avoided or managed.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions; or (ii) amend the District Plan to provide more explicit policy direction and a rule framework that is specifically tailored to managing the potential environmental effects of large-scale generation and transmission activities, whilst permitting such activities where they are unlikely to result in unacceptable effects.

Issue 3

To what extent should the District Plan regulate energy conservation and efficiency of energy use?

District Plans can promote and regulate for increased energy efficiency. Such methods can extend from broad urban form and growth decisions around the location of new urban areas, down to including rules requiring the provision of solar panels on new dwellings or the orientation of new buildings to face north.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions; or (ii) amend the District Plan to provide more explicit policy direction regarding urban growth and a more directive rule framework that is focussed on improving the energy efficiency and performance of new buildings. A variation to option (ii) is rather than regulating for increased energy efficiency through the District Plan, the Council instead facilitates and promotes information to building owners on energy-efficient options that they could voluntarily incorporate into new building designs.