



Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet

Our Policies

Renewable Energy Policy

The Guardians of Pāuatahanui Inlet (GOPI) opposes any activity associated with renewable energy resources that may potentially have a negative impact on the ecology of the Inlet. GOPI will advocate for the prevention, or mitigation of, potential adverse effects during all stages of construction and operation of such resources, including accessory activities such as access roading and transport movements.

GOPI will not take a strong position regarding potential adverse impacts of renewable energy resources on the landscape and amenity values of the Inlet. It will, however, monitor developments and argue, if necessary, to keep these to a minor level where this will not affect the viability of the operation of the energy infrastructure.

Policy formulated May 2008 as Wind Farm Policy and amended August 2009.

Now updated, August 2023, to include other renewable energy proposals.

Relevance to the Guardians' aims and objectives

The outflow of sediment and other pollutants from any earthworks required to build and maintain renewable energy resources, including, but not limited to, wind farm turbine sites and the prominent roads necessary to service them, are potential risks to Inlet ecology and environment. Stormwater drainage from new hard surfaces is a further risk.

Because of wind-flow requirements, wind turbines are likely to be sited in prominent positions with resultant impact on the landscape and on the aesthetic and visual values of the Inlet catchment basin.

The Rules of the Guardians of the Pāuatahanui Inlet state that the objectives of the society shall include:

- 3(a) Consistent with its ecological values, to encourage, promote, protect, maintain and foster the natural, historic and cultural values of the Pāuatahanui Inlet.
- 3(b) To represent all members of the Society and the views and interests of the citizens of the region in matters affecting the Inlet.

Note, there is nothing explicit in the GOPI rules about amenity values with aesthetic and visual dimensions.

In December 2007 members were asked for their opinions on wind farms in general and the conditions with which they would accept wind farm development within the Inlet catchment.

The survey found that there was an overwhelming desire from the members for GOPI to oppose any significant effects on the Inlet and, especially, any deterioration of the ecological values of the Inlet.

It was equally clear that opinion among members was widely divided about the need for GOPI to strive with similar vigour to protect landscape and amenity values.

On the basis of this 2007 survey, it was decided that GOPI would not take a strong position regarding potential adverse impacts of wind farms on the landscape and amenity values of the Inlet. On this basis, the original Wind Farm Policy was developed.

The Wind Farm Policy has now been extended to include other forms of renewable energy.

The Management Committee will continuously review the Renewable Energy Policy if plans to develop wind farms or any other renewable energy proposals in the Inlet catchment eventuate.

If any renewable energy proposals of a reasonable scale evolve, and they are likely to adversely affect the Inlet, we will ask members their views on any such proposals before making submissions.

Background to the policy

There have been historical proposals for wind farms in the Pāuatahanui Inlet catchment, although there are no currently notified proposals in progress.

In 2005 Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) put forward a proposal to build a wind farm in the Puketiro Forest - the [Puketiro Wind Farm](#). This proposal would have placed large wind turbines on the hills in the north-east area of the Pāuatahanui Inlet catchment and was expected to provide power for 13,000 houses. As of June 2011, the project was not expected to proceed.

As a result of this proposed project, however, GOPI developed a Wind Farms Policy. The Management Committee committed to a continuous review of the policy as plans developed and more information became available.

The Porirua City District Plans

There are two district plans in the pipeline.

- Operative District Plan (ODP) – the current plan under which Porirua City operates. The original ODP became operative in November 1999. It did not provide for any other renewable electricity generation activities other than commercial-scale wind farms.
- Proposed District Plan (PDP) – looking to the future.

In response to the proposed Puketiro Wind Farm proposal the ODP went through a plan change process which included provisions limited to providing for wind farms within the rural zone subject to significant setbacks.

In June 2019 Porirua City Council declared a climate change emergency stating:

'The use and development of renewable electricity generation is an important strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation. Renewable electricity generation within the City may also contribute to energy resilience through a more localised, distributed electricity generation.'

Earlier, in November 2011 the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011 (NPS REG) came into effect. It sets out the objectives and policies for renewable electricity generation under the Resource Management Act 1991.

In July 2023 the Natural Resources Plan (NRP) came into effect. This plan recognises the benefits of renewable energy generation activities and allows for their construction including access roads.

Clearly, the ODP was prepared prior to both these new documents. Therefore, there is significant national and regional direction for renewable electricity generation activities that the PDP must give effect to. This includes providing for small-scale and community-scale renewable electricity generation activities.

The current ODP only provides mainly for commercial-scale wind farms.

The PDP provisions will provide a more permissive regime for small-scale and community-scale activities, while maintaining a similar restriction to large-scale wind generation activities in the majority of the rural zones.

The PDP has introduced a greater number of zones within the City compared with the ODP, with differing characters and amenity values associated with these areas. The inclusion of a number of overlays within the PDP, including Natural Hazards, Significant Natural Areas, Outstanding Natural Features or Landscapes and Coastal High Natural Character Areas, means that changes are required to address how renewable electricity generation is addressed in these more sensitive areas.

The proposed objectives within the PDP are:

- REGO1: Recognises the benefits of renewable electricity generation. The significant local, regional and national benefits from the use and development of renewable electricity generation activities, and their operational needs and functional needs, are recognised.
- REGO2: Provides for renewable electricity generation activities. These activities are able to establish and operate within the City, while:
 - 1. Minimising adverse effects on the anticipated amenity and character of the zone and the surrounding environment;
 - 2. Protecting the values and qualities of any overlay.
- C4.2A OBJECTIVE: Recognizes the potential of the Rural Zone for renewable energy development, in particular wind farming, while ensuring adverse effects on the environment are appropriately avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Both the ODP and the PDP quote renewable energy as being from solar, wind and biofuel sources. They do not address hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal wave and ocean current sources.

The parts of the ODP relating to renewable energy can be seen at Sections B13 and C4 at:

storage.googleapis.com.

The parts of the PDP relating to renewable energy can be seen at:

[Part 2 Energy, Infrastructure and Transport - REG Renewable Energy](#).

The inclusion of a number of overlays within the PDP, including Natural Hazards, Significant Natural Areas, Outstanding Natural Features or Landscapes, and Coastal High Natural Character Areas, plus climate change effects, ensures that any projects will be assessed with these in mind.
