

25 [RENEWABLE ENERGY]

25.1 Introduction

The RMA defines renewable energy as “energy produced from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave and ocean current sources”. The foremost international policy relating to climate change and renewable energy is the Kyoto Protocol. This was ratified by the New Zealand Government in 2002 and came into force in 2005. This is required to bring New Zealand’s greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels between 2008-2012. The New Zealand Government has set in place a policy framework and programme of action to reach these targets. This multi-faceted programme includes a focus on energy conservation, efficiency in the use of energy, and an increase in the use of energy from renewable sources.

Changes made to the Resource Management Act in March 2004 mean that energy efficiency and the use and development of renewable energy are matters to which the Council must have particular regard under Section 7 of the Act when making decisions under the Act.

Given the national context, it is increasingly important for local government to recognise the use and development of renewable energy as an important resource management issue. This issue can be taken up at the local level, and therefore can have localised effects. The Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region in Chapter 12, Energy, advocates that the region needs to aim to reduce energy demand, increase energy efficiency in energy use, manage non-renewable sources and develop renewable sources. The Policy Statement recognises that an appropriate mechanism to implement this promotion and consideration is through provisions in district plans. This is recognised in the Council’s Sustainable Development Strategy that identifies five priority action areas: sustainable transport solutions, sustainable living practices, key support elements (general Council roles and responsibilities), biodiversity, and sustainable energy solutions, with particular focus on fostering energy efficiency and the development of the Wellington City’s wind power resources.

The application of renewable energy can be in a number of different forms. At the domestic scale there are various passive approaches including correct orientation of buildings to the sun to assist passive heating cooling and natural lighting. This can be achieved through subdivision design, or energy efficiency of new dwellings through the multi-unit design guide. Significant gains can also be made through solar water heating or solar panels in dwellings. These options rely on the individual taking action, rather than relying on regulation to direct individual’s choices. Council can advocate and encourage, as well as facilitate through information sharing, but cannot regulate where no resource consent is required. The objectives and policies in the area based chapters (with the exception of Open Space and Conservation Sites) provide for the use and development of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Of the different renewable energy options available to the market, and from experience in New Zealand and overseas, the indication is that wind energy is the one that is likely to be given effect to in the coming years. There is a good wind resource in the Wellington region, as well as land capacity for wind energy facilities. Other options such as large scale solar generation, biomass or wave energy may become more viable in the future, and this chapter should be amended to address the various resource management issues that may arise as more information about these options becomes available. However, at this time wind energy facilities are the only form of renewable energy generation options currently subject to a specific rule.

Wind energy facilities can have significant environmental effects. Particular issues include landscape and amenity effects as wind energy facilities are likely to be sited in elevated locations. What some may find interesting and environmentally important, others may find intrusive and out of character and so it is important that all issues are thoroughly assessed and considered through the resource consent process.

The specific wind energy facility provisions apply only to the Rural Area as large scale wind energy developments in urban areas are not foreseen.

Small scale turbines are not provided for in this Chapter. They will be assessed under the relevant rules of the area based chapter that applies.

How this chapter is to be applied

The objectives and policies contained within this chapter apply within the Wellington City boundaries for all applications relating to or involving renewable energy irrespective of whether the application is being dealt with under the area based rules or Chapter 26 rules. The objectives and policies are to be considered in conjunction with the objective and policy provisions of the plan for the underlying area.

25.2 Renewable Energy Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVES

25.2.1 To encourage efficiency in energy use, and the development and use of energy from renewable sources.

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

25.2.1.1 Encourage the efficient use of energy and the greater use of renewable energy.

METHOD

· Advocacy

Council considers it important that the efficient use of energy is promoted at the residential level as well as on a commercial scale, and that the use of energy from renewable sources is encouraged where appropriate. This is consistent with Council’s Sustainability Framework, as well as with the wider principles of energy efficiency, conservation and increased use of renewable energy. However, the majority of small scale renewable energy use is ‘permitted’ i.e. resource consent is not required. This includes solar water heating and passive solar gain including correct orientation of dwellings to the sun. These matters are referred to in the Subdivision Design Guide and Residential Design Guide. The Council has a role in advocating energy efficient design, encouraging the use of renewable energy at the household level, and encouraging energy efficient transport decisions such as walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

25.2.1.1 Provide for renewable energy development, while:

• Avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects on the environment; and

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- **Recognising the potential renewable energy resources that exist in the Rural Area including in identified ridgeline and hilltop areas.**

METHOD

- Advocacy
- Rules

The benefits to be derived from the use and development of renewable energy are to be considered within a wider context of central government project and policy framework to address climate change, which includes a focus on both a continued improvement in energy efficiency, and an increase in consumer energy to be supplied from renewable sources. Parts of Wellington City provide a nationally significant wind resource including its coastal areas, and its ridgelines and hilltops. The City also has relatively high sunlight hours. These resources have the potential to contribute to renewable energy development in New Zealand.

Renewable energy provides recognised environmental and economic benefits. But renewable energy developments, such as wind energy facilities can have adverse effects that must be carefully considered. Wind energy facilities often need to be sited on ridgelines, hilltops or other elevated positions. This can lead to potential conflict with landscape and amenity values. It is considered that renewable energy developments such as wind energy facilities can successfully exist within the Wellington City boundary if adverse effects on the environment, including the natural character of the coast, ecological, heritage and amenity values, and cumulative impacts are avoided, remedied or mitigated. This potential conflict needs to be carefully managed and assessed on a case by case basis. The Discretionary (Unrestricted) Rule will ensure that the effects and benefits of any application are given full consideration through the resource consent process.] PC32