Proposed Southland Wind Farm

Slopedown Hill, Southland

contact.co.nz/southlandwindfarm

November 2025

About the project

Contact Energy is developing a pipeline of wind and other generation projects to help meet Aotearoa New Zealand's growing demand for more renewable electricity.

The proposed Southland Wind Farm site is located on Slopedown Hill (Pawakataka) in eastern Southland, approximately 25km southeast of Gore and 15km east of Wyndham. The proposal consists of 55 wind turbines, each up to 7MW in capacity, with a tip height no higher than 220m. It is expected to generate approximately 1,200 GWh per year – an equivalent to the annual electricity demand of around 150,000 homes; providing a significant contribution to the energy needs of Southland and New Zealand. We believe this project is essential for strengthening New Zealand's, but in particular, Southland's, electricity supply; whether it be in our homes, or for the industries that support the economy and the communities in which we operate.

A detailed map showing the wind farm layout, turbine locations and simulations of what the site will look like is available on the project website.

Wind farm approval process

The concept of a wind farm on Slopedown Hill was first proposed over 15 years ago, however it was more recently that Contact became interested in the opportunity.

There are a few stages to go through before the wind farm gets approved for construction. The first step is obtaining resource consents and other permits. The second step is for the Contact board of directors to approve the financial commitment to the project – this is known as the financial investment decision (FID).

Applying for consent

In December 2023 Contact lodged a consent application to seek approval to construct and operate a 55-turbine wind farm on the site. In March 2025 our application for this project was declined. We disagree with this decision and remain committed to the benefits that the wind farm at the site will provide. Following approval to use the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 we have submitted a new consent application.

Our new application is similar to the previous one in that it seeks consent for 55 wind turbines – of the same size and locations on the site.

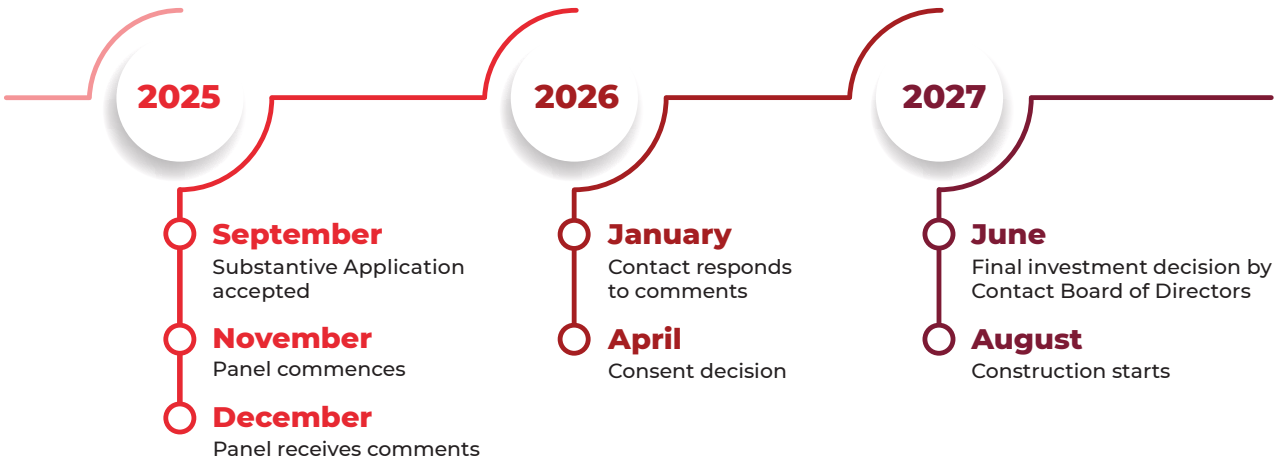
The new application includes further information from recently completed studies and investigations which addresses concerns made previously and further supports the benefits of the project.

This fast-track process is a relatively new pathway created to enable approvals for regionally and nationally significant projects to be obtained in a timely way.

You can find out more about the Fast-Track process at: **fasttrack.govt.nz**

Estimated timeline of approvals

While there is no set timeframe on the process, to help keep everyone informed, we have prepared an indicative timeline below with estimated dates.



New Zealand's energy supply and demand

In New Zealand, our natural gas is running out faster than expected, and with electricity demand continuing to grow, we urgently need more ways to generate power. Our renewable energy projects are in a great position to help meet that need.

Transpower (the national grid owner and operator) forecasts electricity demand will increase by 68% by 2050 and that 40 new large-scale generation and battery projects such as the Southland Wind Farm will be required before 2035.

This increase in demand will largely be driven by the increased use of electricity for heat in industrial processes and transport electrification such as electric vehicles. Southland is already a region of high electricity demand and this is forecast to increase, as new industry and the electrification of existing industries takes place.

This conversion process is already underway. In 2024 Mataura Valley Milk completed the conversion from a coal-fired manufacturing process to one powered by renewable electricity. In addition, Fonterra recently started its first new electrode boiler at their Edendale dairy factory, and confirmed investment in two more as it moves away from using coal at this site. The electricity demand from the conversion of the Fonterra boilers alone could consume the equivalent of one third of the electricity generated by the Southland Wind Farm.

It's important that New Zealand has a diverse mix of renewable sources like wind, solar, and hydro, and that these are spread across different parts of the country. That way, we're not relying too heavily on any one location, or type, of generation. Contact's own existing and proposed new renewable generation projects, including solar, wind, battery, geothermal and hydro, span the length and breadth of the country from north of Auckland all the way down to Southland.

The more energy we can add to the system; the more affordable electricity can be for industry, businesses and every day New Zealanders. We believe it is essential for strengthening New Zealand's electricity supply and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels – whether it be in our homes, or for the industries that support the economy and the communities in which we operate.

We're working on a range of projects to support a more secure and affordable electricity supply. That includes upgrades to our hydro assets, building new geothermal stations, developing wind and solar farms, and investing in battery storage. Our focus is on making sure New Zealand has a secure, sustainable, and affordable energy future.

Electricity demand is expected to increase by 68% by 2050.

To read more about renewable projects, visit: **contact.co.nz/about-us/sustainability/our-projects**

Why wind?

As part of our commitment to a diverse renewable energy mix, the proposed wind farm is a key project for strengthening New Zealand's energy security and helping to stabilise electricity prices.

Hydroelectricity will remain the backbone of our electricity system, but it's widely accepted that it is unlikely to grow much further. Most large-scale hydro opportunities have already been developed, new projects are usually more expensive than other generation options, and the environmental impacts make consenting new hydro developments increasingly difficult. Likewise, the scope for further baseload geothermal energy developments is constrained by the extent and capacity of the geothermal reservoirs.

Wind power is one of the most cost-effective forms of new electricity generation and is expected to play a growing role in New Zealand's energy future.

Right now, wind contributes around 10 percent of the total electricity supply and as demand for electricity grows, wind offers a reliable and affordable way to meet that need. Southland is especially well-suited for wind generation and wind measurements on the proposed Southland Wind Farm site show consistently strong and favourable wind conditions.

Project benefits

The wind farm will provide regional and national economic benefits and a range of environmental benefits.

Economic benefits

The Southland Wind Farm will bring significant economic activity to Southland, including:

Contribute $250-$430m to the local economy

during construction, with a substantial portion spent locally on civil works, engineering, and labour.

Support 10-14 full-time jobs during operation

plus additional contractor roles for maintenance, pest control, and site services

Create 180-300 jobs during construction

with a peak work force of around 200, equivalent to 3% of Gore's workforce.

Generate $13-28m in operating costs

per annum, much of which will be spent in the Southland Region.

Community initiatives

Before we start construction, we will establish a **Community Liaison Group**, and a **Community Benefit Fund**.

The purpose of the Community Liaison Group is to enable conversation between the community and Contact. The Group will also decide where and how the Community Benefit Fund will be allocated, ensuring these grants are directed towards meaningful community initiatives.

The Community Benefit Fund is designed to support local initiatives and deliver lasting benefits to the community. It will start with an initial contribution of $200,000. After that, an annual contribution will be made throughout the construction and operation of the wind farm. This will have a base contribution of $70,000 per year, plus $250 for every megawatt (MW) of installed capacity above 200MW. For example, if the wind farm has a total installed capacity of 300MW, the annual contribution would be: $70,000 + ($250 × 100MW) = $95,000 per year.

Environmental measures

We've pulled together a comprehensive suite of environmental measures to reduce plant and animal pests, both on the site and beyond. This will create ecological enhancement areas, some of which will be fenced and provide long-lasting protection of key species. This will not only address the adverse environmental effects of the wind farm, but help also to improve the overall environment.

As part of our consent application, independent experts have carried out site investigations and surveys to understand the potential effects of building and operating the wind farm, and to determine how best to avoid, reduce, and offset them.

We've taken a careful look at the impacts and proposed a range of offset and compensation measures that not only respond to adverse effects but also create improvements to the environment on-site and in the wider area. These include:

- **Ongoing pest and predator control** across a 1400ha area of Jedburgh Station.
- **Creation of an *Ecological Enhancement Area* or Sanctuary** around a 245ha area of Mānuka and indigenous forest and wetland habitat on Jedburgh Station, and excluding all stock. Feral animals will be eradicated, restoration planting and pest and predator control will be undertaken over the life of the wind farm.
- **Intensive pest and predator control** over a 55ha area at the southern end of the wind farm site to improve the habitat and biodiversity, referred to as the *Fauna Enhancement Area*.

- **Wetland revegetation and restoration** of an area exceeding 10ha to compensate for the loss of up to 2.5ha of wetland (mainly fen and bog) on the wind farm site.
- **Fencing around an eight-hectare area of copper tussock within the Matariki plantation forest** to help protect and support the recovery of the local tussock skink population and protect an area of copper tussock.
- **Funding to assist the Department of Conservation** in undertaking ground-based pest control over a 10,000ha area of the Catlins Conservation Park. This will support existing known bat populations and provide significant benefit to avifauna as well.
- **Riparian planting** to enhance stream habitat.
- **Ongoing weed control** over the life of the wind farm.

Independent experts agree that the proposed measures will create improvements to the environment on the wind farm site.

About Contact

Contact Energy is one of New Zealand's largest energy generators and retailers. We have more than 645,000 customer connections with electricity, gas, broadband and mobile plans.

Contact is helping customers cut energy costs through time of use plans, offering free power during off-peak hours. Today more than a third of Contact customers are on Good Nights or Good Weekends plans, with more than 260 million hours of free electricity received so far.

We operate 12 power stations across New Zealand, using geothermal, hydro and thermal energy to generate electricity. We acquired Manawa Energy in July 2025, which operates 25 hydro schemes. Contact is building renewable energy at pace, committing more than $2 billion into renewable energy projects over the past four years, including three new geothermal power stations, a grid-scale battery and solar farm.

Want to know more about this project?

Visit: contact.co.nz/southlandwindfarm (includes video overview)

Email: windprojects@contactenergy.co.nz

Call: 0800 268 236 (this goes to a member of the project team)

Keen to join our community email list?
Just get in touch via email or phone and let us know you want to be added to our community email list. We send out emails regularly to provide updates on the project.

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