

Speaking notes for Gregory Visser, Akuo Energy New Zealand Limited

1. My full name is Gregory Visser, I am the Country Manager and Director of Akuo Energy New Zealand (Akuo) and authorised to provide evidence on this project.
2. I hold a Bachelors degree in Engineering and a Bachelors degree in Commerce. I have been working in the energy sector globally for the last 30 years with the last 20 years of that spent in New Zealand. I have been involved in the renewable energy sector since 2013 and prior to my role at Akuo worked as the CEO for Infratec Limited who is a solar and battery Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractor that has designed, engineered and constructed several large-scale solar farms in the Pacific Islands and New Zealand. I have first hand experience of what it takes to deliver these projects and what makes them successful.
3. Akuo will be the developer and ultimate operator of the solar farm. Akuo is a subsidiary of Akuo Energy SAS which is headquartered in Paris and develops, builds, owns and operates renewable energy assets globally. It employs over 450 people of which approximately 200 are experienced solar professionals and operates in more than 20 countries. Thus far, the company has constructed more than 50 large scale solar projects worldwide.
4. The site at Mangamaire road is perfect for solar development. There are a number of factors that need to overlap to make a site even feasible for solar. A site needs:
 - a) To be in an area with good solar radiation. This area compares very well to our other projects in Europe.
 - b) To be relatively flat in terms of slope, north facing and in a large contiguous block preferably with one landowner which this property is.
 - c) It needs to be close to infrastructure to connect to the electricity grid – connecting over distance vastly increases the cost and complexity of the project. The Powerco connection assets are in very close proximity to the array.
 - d) The project needs to be close to a population centre or existing industry which will utilise the supply of renewable electricity as well as provide a base for construction of the project. This project is close to both Palmerston North as well as large industrials like the dairy factory at Pahiatua.
 - e) The land should have a willing seller.
 - f) The effects of a project should be minor on both the environment as well as the community – this project is ideal in this regard and will be further mitigated by planting and landscaping consideration.
5. The Government's 2050 vision for energy and industry is for New Zealand to have a highly renewable, sustainable and efficient energy system that supports a low-emissions economy. Renewable electricity – both generating it and transmitting it – is a key part of achieving that future. To meet NZ's 2050 legislated net zero emissions target (excluding biogenic methane) and our energy and electricity targets, rapid expansion and major acceleration of renewable electricity infrastructure is required.
6. Renewable electricity generation needs to increase by an estimated 50 per cent to 70 per cent by 2035, and increase by 170 per cent by 2050. This requires maintaining the existing renewable generation and an average annual increase in generation capacity of around 400 to 500 MW per year until 2050.
7. This project is a key step in New Zealand's climate change journey to 2050.

8. The Project will provide infrastructure that will contribute to improving economic and employment outcomes and will generate approximately 60 direct full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs over a 12-15 month construction period and approximately 5 ongoing FTE jobs. Another key benefit is the significant capital investment associated with the project – this is expected to be in the region of NZ\$70-80million.
9. Akuo embraces agri-energy as a foundation for all our solar farms where conditions allow. This is using the land for both energy and agriculture at the same time. We would intend to either graze or crop around the solar panels. In our experience this offers significant synergies in terms of site maintenance with less grass and a more optimal use of the land. Many of our projects are installed on island nations where energy competes directly with available land and that sites need to be optimised in terms of food and energy outputs.
10. Our foundation platform "Akuo Foundation" delivers projects in the nearby environment of Akuo's powerplants in order to contribute to the maximization of the environmental and social impacts already inherent to Akuo's way of doing business. Our wide scope of actions enables us to co-create a response to any local need, turning it into a true climate change solution.
11. For this project, we would focus primarily on education and look to set the site up to host schools and other educational facilities. We can also involve schools and local organisations in planting activities around the wetlands and site boundaries.
12. This project will provide excellent climate change and social outcomes for New Zealand and the community and Akuo is very excited to be part of it.