

Media Release

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Ngawha Power Station expansion consent denied

The Northland Regional Council has today released the report of the Commissioners who heard Top Energy's applications for continuation and expansion of the Ngawha Geothermal Power Station.

The Company had applied to continue to operate the existing 10 MW power plant and these consents have been granted for another 15 years.

Top Energy also applied for consents to expand the Power Station output to 25 MW and sought a variety of consents to allow this to proceed, however the Commissioners have declined critical consents which would allow additional geothermal fluid to be used in an expanded plant.

Roger de Bray, Top Energy Chief Executive, said "We are disappointed by the decision and the time taken to reach it. The provision of additional power generation is a serious issue - not only for Northland but for the whole of New Zealand - and consideration of any proposal needs to take account of the benefits to the wider community."

The Commissioners' decision states that evidence was not produced by Top Energy that an increased geothermal fluid take would not lead to significant changes to the hot springs at Ngawha. Mr de Bray disagrees. "Our submissions contained extensive research, geothermal field monitoring and data modelling supporting our contention that the springs would not be adversely affected beyond natural variations. No evidence was produced by opponents to suggest that any such changes would in fact take place".

The Commissioners' decision also notes that many submitters expressed concerns about the possible effects on Ngawha Springs. However, the fact that submissions in opposition were outnumbered 10 to 1 by submissions in favour of the application, on the basis of concerns about security of electricity supply. These seem to have only been taken into account in a minor way.

Mr de Bray stated "The full report is a significant and detailed document. We are currently reviewing it and will determine our course of action within the 15 day period allowed for an appeal." END.

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