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Renewable Energy Technology Options for Parihaka Papakāinga

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Abstract

The Parihaka Papakāinga Trust - the administering body of communally owned Māori land at Parihaka, Aotearoa New Zealand - initiated university research into sustainable energy practices and technologies within a context of community and infrastructure development. As one part of this wider research topic, various renewable energy conversion technologies were compared in terms of cost, effect on increasing the energy independence of the papakāinga (excluding transport, covered elsewhere), and reducing papakāinga greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Consumption of electricity, LPG and firewood was assessed in 14 study buildings over 12 months. Energy demands both now and also for hypothetical scenarios 20 years in the future were proposed, taking into account energy efficiency opportunities, low energy housing design and potential electric vehicle charging loads from parallel research.

The local solar, wind and hydro potentials were assessed over 12 months, and estimations of the long-term resources were made using long-term reference data from the region. An estimation was also made of land area requirements to support a short rotation coppicing (SRC) fuelwood plantation.

The technical and economic performance of a range of electricity and heat generation technologies was modelled, both on an individual building basis and on a community-wide basis.

The technologies with the largest expected economic benefits (after energy efficiency and building design) were a grid-connected community solar PV array with output available for consumption by as much of the papakāinga as possible, and wood-burners for space and water heating in new homes. However further study is required into the design and costs of a feasible metering and billing solution to allocate the benefits of community owned distributed electricity generation.

The technologies with the largest expected effect on energy independence include combining solar water heaters with wood-burners and wetbacks for space and water heating, and producing firewood locally with an SRC plantation.

Based on the household study, transport behaviours or technologies are expected to have a larger effect on GHG emissions than papakāinga infrastructure.

Recommendations include a billing/metering feasibility study potentially followed by a community PV array, an SRC trial, and solar water heaters and wood-burners with water heating for new homes.

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I would also like to acknowledge that the conclusions and recommendations here fall far short of the vision of self-sufficiency at Parihaka, but hope that they inform some initial practical steps as part of a larger journey in that direction.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables	viii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background Information.....	1
1.2. Sustainable Energy for Community Development	3
1.3. Problem Statement	4
1.4. Literature Review	5
2. Methods	9
2.1. Community Engagement	9
2.2. Assessing Current Energy Demand.....	11
2.2.1. Electricity demand.....	12
2.2.2. LPG demand.....	14
2.2.3. Firewood demand.....	15
2.2.4. Hot water demand.....	16
2.3. Modelling Possible Future Energy Demand	19
2.4. Assessing the Renewable Energy Resources	21
2.4.1. Wind resource	21
2.4.2. Solar resource	32
2.4.3. Hydro resource	33
2.4.4. Biomass resource.....	43
2.5. Predicting the Performance of Various Renewable Energy Conversion Technologies	45
2.5.1. Performance indicators	45
2.5.2. Renewable energy conversion technologies and system architectures considered	48
2.5.3. Modelling energy efficiency gains	52
2.5.4. Modelling solar water heating.....	52
2.5.5. Modelling heat pump water heating performance.....	55
2.5.6. Modelling heat storage in water cylinders.....	56
2.5.7. Modelling wood fired boilers for water heating in marae	57
2.5.8. Modelling other heat generation and use.....	58

2.5.9.	Modelling electricity generation and use	59
3.	Results and Discussion	61
3.1.	Current Energy Demand	61
3.2.	Future Energy Demand	67
3.3.	Renewable Energy Resources	70
3.3.1.	Wind resource	70
3.3.2.	Solar resource	75
3.3.3.	Hydro resource.....	75
3.3.4.	Biomass resource	82
3.4.	Predicted Performance of Renewable Energy Conversion Technologies.....	83
3.4.1.	Existing buildings.....	83
3.4.2.	Community outcomes – zero-growth scenario	85
3.4.3.	Future buildings	90
3.4.4.	Community outcomes – mid-growth scenario	91
3.4.5.	Community outcomes – high-growth scenario.....	94
3.4.6.	Effect of population growth.....	97
3.5.	General Discussion.....	99
4.	Conclusions	104
5.	Recommendations.....	107
	Glossary.....	108
	References	111
	Appendices.....	115
A.	Marae energy audit, 22/4/2015	115
B.	Energy monitoring points	120
C.	Powerspout turbine type selection chart	122
D.	Indicative prices of renewable energy technologies in NZ in 2016	123
E.	HOMER model inputs.....	130
F.	Individual building results	137
G.	Comparing aggregated and measured community electricity demand	151

List of Figures

Figure 1: Current papakāinga boundaries	2
Figure 2: Karakia ceremony to commission the wind tower	9
Figure 3: Electricity monitoring (CTs and <i>grid-node</i>) installation in a household distribution panel	13
Figure 4: Electricity monitoring (<i>grid-node</i>) installation in a household distribution panel	13
Figure 5: Mr Hohaia weighing LPG cylinders using gantry and scales	14
Figure 6: Mr Hohaia noting species and sampling moisture content of firewood stocks	15
Figure 7: Ultrasonic flow sensor attached to hot water supply pipe in Marae B	17
Figure 8: Ultrasonic flow meter data-logger	17
Figure 9: Typical wind resource assessment procedure	21
Figure 10: The location of the two meteorological data sets used to select a wind tower site	21
Figure 11: The site chosen to install a wind tower on the papakāinga	21
Figure 12: The wind tower installed on the papakāinga	22
Figure 13: Plan and elevation of structure of installed wind tower	23
Figure 14: Wind speed ratios between anemometers mounted on booms at the same height facing different directions for the period 21/1/2015 - 20/1/2016	24
Figure 15: Example of areas of contiguous surface roughness surrounding Parihaka	30
Figure 16: Wind shear profile at the monitored location, using the power law approximation	32
Figure 17: Rivers and streams assessed for micro-hydro potential within the Parihaka locality	33
Figure 18: Mr Hohaia measuring water velocity and area within the Otahi-iti culvert pipe	34
Figure 19: Staff gauge installed in the Waitotoroa river	34
Figure 20: Velocity Area method of measuring waterway discharge	35
Figure 21: Electromagnetic sensor measuring water velocity in a stream	35
Figure 22: Stage/Discharge Rating of the Waitotoroa river	36
Figure 23: Rivers with similar origins used for long term hindcasts	36
Figure 24: Relation between Waitotoroa flow and Kapoiaia flow, for period May 2015 – May 2016	37
Figure 25: Relation between Otahi-iti flow and Kapoiaia flow, for period March 2016– September 2016	37
Figure 26: Relation between Awaitei flow and Kapoiaia flow, for period August 2015 – September 2016	38
Figure 27: Water diversion routes considered for micro-hydro schemes on the Waitotoroa river (intake upstream of a steep bank)	39
Figure 28: Water diversion routes considered for micro-hydro schemes on the Waitotoroa river (intake downstream of a steep bank)	40
Figure 29: Water diversion routes considered for micro-hydro schemes on the Otahi-iti river	40
Figure 30: Water diversion route considered for a micro-hydro scheme on the Awa-iti stream	41
Figure 31: Wetted perimeter of channels	42
Figure 32: Moody chart for determining penstock internal friction factor	42
Figure 33: COP of various existing heat pump water heaters in NZ, modelled by BRANZ	56
Figure 34: Diagram showing how HOMER was used to calculate the performance of each modelled solution	59
Figure 35: Estimated annual energy demand of the papakāinga (excluding transport) by fuel type	61
Figure 36: Mean annual household energy use (excluding transport)	63
Figure 37: Mean annual household energy cost (excluding transport)	63
Figure 38: Mean annual household energy use related GHG emissions (excluding transport)	63
Figure 39: Mean annual household energy use (including transport)	64
Figure 40: Mean annual household energy cost (including transport)	64
Figure 41: Mean annual household energy related GHG emissions (including transport)	64
Figure 42: Mean annual marae energy use	64
Figure 43: Mean annual marae energy cost	65
Figure 44: Mean annual marae energy related GHG emissions	65
Figure 45: Mean daily electricity load profile of current papakāinga (as modelled)	65
Figure 46: Mean monthly electricity demand of current papakāinga (as modelled)	66
Figure 47: Average daily electricity load profiles (modelled for mid-growth scenario)	67
Figure 48: Mean monthly electricity demand (modelled for mid-growth scenario)	68
Figure 49: Average daily electricity load profiles (modelled for high-growth scenario)	69
Figure 50: Mean monthly electricity demand (modelled for high-growth scenario)	69
Figure 51: Wind direction frequency rose of measured data over 12 months	70
Figure 52: Wind speed frequency distribution of measured data at 10m and 15m above ground over 12 months	70
Figure 53: Monthly mean wind speeds, measured data at 15m above ground over 12 months	70
Figure 54: Average diurnal wind speed variation, measured data at 15m over 12 months	71
Figure 55: Wind direction frequency rose, MCP hindcast over concurrent 12 month period	71

Figure 56: Wind speed frequency distribution, MCP hindcast over concurrent 12 month period	71
Figure 57: Wind direction frequency rose, MCP hindcast over ten year period.....	72
Figure 58: Wind speed frequency distribution, MCP hindcast over ten year period	72
Figure 59: Predicted mean wind speeds in the papakāinga vicinity at 30m above ground level, with potential wind turbine sites identified.....	73
Figure 60: Predicted mean wind speeds in the papakāinga vicinity at 30m above ground level, if sheltering trees near potential wind turbine sites were removed	73
Figure 61: Impression of a 50kW turbine at siteD from the marae ātea of Toroānui.....	74
Figure 62: Monthly mean daily global horizontal irradiance at Parihaka	75
Figure 63: Expected monthly mean daily flows of Parihaka waterways.....	75
Figure 64: Surveyed head of the Waitotoroa river	76
Figure 65: Elevation of surveyed points along the Waitotoroa river, with uppermost point as reference datum	76
Figure 66: Predicted flow duration curve of the Waitotoroa river	76
Figure 67: Surveyed head of the Otahi-iti river	77
Figure 68: Elevation of surveyed points along the Otahi-iti river, with uppermost point as reference datum (numbers in parentheses are interpolated)	77
Figure 69: Predicted flow duration curve of the Otahi-iti river	78
Figure 70: Surveyed head of the Awaiti waterway.....	78
Figure 71: Predicted flow duration curve of the Awaiti waterway	78
Figure 72: Comparison of various potential micro-hydro scheme layouts	79
Figure 73: Micro-hydro scheme layout expected to produce the most electricity annually, assuming that turbines cannot be located further downstream due to space and noise constraints.....	80
Figure 74: : Micro-hydro scheme layout expected to produce electricity at least cost	81
Figure 75: Cost of reducing community energy imports - individual approach.....	86
Figure 76: Cost of reducing community energy imports (electricity generation distributed north of river)	87
Figure 77: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions (electricity distributed north of river)	87
Figure 78: Cost of reducing community energy imports (electricity distributed north and south of river)	88
Figure 79: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions (electricity distributed north and south of river)	88
Figure 80: Cost of reducing community energy imports, mid growth scenario.....	91
Figure 81: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions, mid growth scenario	91
Figure 82: Cost of reducing community energy imports, mid growth scenario (land not available for biomass production)	92
Figure 83: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions, mid growth scenario (land not available for biomass production)	93
Figure 84: Cost of reducing community imports, high growth scenario.....	94
Figure 85: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions, high growth scenario	94
Figure 86: Cost of reducing community energy imports, high growth scenario (land area not available for biomass production) ...	95
Figure 87: Cost of reducing community GHG emissions, high growth scenario (land area not available for biomass production)....	96
Figure 88: Group billing approach to community electricity distribution.....	101
Figure 89: Te Rānui roof, potential community PV array location.....	102

List of Tables

Table 1: Main energy sources currently used to meet demand in 13 selected buildings.....	11
Table 2: Transforming long-term reference wind data to a long-term hindcast of the wind resource at the monitoring site.....	27
Table 3: Comparison of correlations between measured wind data and various hindcast predictions from long term reference data for the period 21/1/2015 - 20/1/2016.....	28
Table 4: Surface roughness factors applied for wind modelling	30
Table 5: Roughness coefficients of micro-hydro headrace channels	42
Table 6: Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions factors applied for existing energy sources	47
Table 7: The renewable energy technologies which were included in this study	49
Table 8: Energy source and appliance configurations considered for individual buildings	50
Table 9: Solar water heater performance parameters used	53
Table 10: Findings from HEEP: Standing losses in electric water cylinders in NZ	54
Table 11: Water cylinder standing losses used in the analysis of hot water demand at Parihaka	55
Table 12: Annual energy use in study buildings	61
Table 13: Times of largest community peak loads	62
Table 14: Measured daily hot water use in study buildings which use LPG to heat water	66
Table 15: Papakāinga annual energy demand (modelled for mid growth scenario)	67
Table 16: Papakāinga annual energy demand (modelled for high growth scenario)	68
Table 17: Comparison of Parihaka wind resource characterisations.....	72
Table 18: Comparison of potential wind turbine sites in the papakāinga vicinity.....	74
Table 19: Expected land area required for biomass production under various appliance scenarios	82
Table 20: Annual fractions of residential water heating demand able to be met by solar and/or biomass.....	83
Table 21: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of individual buildings	84
Table 22: Papakāinga fuel use for various aggregations of individual building technologies	85
Table 23: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community (zero-growth scenario) ..	89
Table 24: Results of sensitivity analysis of the capital cost of wind energy.....	89
Table 25: Results of sensitivity analysis of electricity demand growth	90
Table 26: Expected cost of off-grid homes based on predicted future loads	90
Table 27: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community (mid-growth scenario, 100kW grid-connect capacity constraint)	92
Table 28: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community (mid-growth scenario, 100kW grid-connect capacity constraint, land unavailable for biomass production)	93
Table 29: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community (high-growth scenario, 100kW grid-connect capacity constraint)	95
Table 30: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community (high-growth scenario, 100kW grid-connect capacity constraint, land unavailable for biomass production)	96
Table 31: Summary of the most cost-effective technologies to reduce energy imports of the community under different growth scenarios.....	97