

See 1964 - Marsden Point

History: The decision to build...

(NZRC, 2009b)

1956-58

The decision to build...

Due to its low population density, New Zealand presents a comparatively small oil market; consequently fuels were originally imported into the country by the oil companies. In 1956, murmurings about the establishment of an oil refinery were going through the corridors of power and various interests were positioning themselves to take advantage of it. In 1958, Nash's budget forced a review of oil prices which, in turn, resulted in Shell being asked to look into the viability of a New Zealand refinery. This they duly did, but not without causing some displeasure among the other oil majors who did not want to see Shell in an advantageous market position. Consequently the decision was eventually made to build a refinery with all the oil companies represented and, at the Government's insistence, the general public maintained an interest as well.

Several areas were suggested and five short-listed as possible sites:

- Beachlands, Gracefields (Wellington)
- Picton and Matangarahi (Thames)
- Losing out to Marsden Point - the final choice.

This site had a convenient deep-water harbour close to the main North Island markets, was free from major earthquake risks and had considerable adjacent land available.

Although the refinery was a basic, low cost design, much of the technology was new to New Zealand. It was also one of the world's first integrated refineries. The initial cost was 10 million pounds, which was cheap for a refinery, even in those days.

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MARSDEN POINT OIL REFINING  
- A SHORT HISTORY

1950s	The decision to build...
1960s	Building starts... Flat rates, expansion discussion
1970s	Expansion approval and first oil shock Second oil shock and 'car-less days'
1980s	'Think Big' and labour problems Expansion work... Expansion completed Deregulation
1990s	Refinery profitable
2000s	Future fuels

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