

27 February 2026

Hon. Raynor Asher
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Tēnā koe Hon. Raynor Asher

Response under Section 67 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

1. Thank you for Minute 5, dated 13 February 2023, regarding Far North Solar Farm Limited's (FNSF/ the Applicant) The Point Solar Farm proposal.
2. Minute 5 directed Canterbury Regional Council (CRC) to provide comment by 27 February 2026 on further ecological information to be filed by the Applicant by 23 February 2026.
3. The Applicant provided CRC with the additional information on 24 February 2026, which consisted of:
 - a) 6621h-i – The Point Avifauna Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26 (Draft AMP)
 - b) 6221h-ii – The Point Invertebrate Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26
 - c) 6621h-iii – The Point Solar Farm Vegetation Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26v2
 - d) 6221h-iv – Pest Mammal Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26
 - e) 6621h-vi – The Point Solar Farm Vegetation Survey Feb 2026
 - f) 6621i – The Point Solar Farm Lizard Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26
 - g) 6221i-a – App 25 Wildlife Act Approval Checklist
4. CRC note that less than 4 working days were available to review and comment on this information. The level of detail in these comments is reflective of the timeframe provided in Minute 5.
5. Dr Jean Jack, CRC's Team Leader – Land Ecology, has reviewed the above documents, with the exception of the documents described in (b) and (g).
6. Dr Jack sought further advice from Dr Barbara Barratt, Emeritus Scientist with AgResearch Ltd. Dr Barratt has reviewed The Invertebrate Management Plan (the IMP) (g).
7. Review of (a) Wildlife Act Approval Checklist has not been undertaken by CRC as this is considered to fall to the Department of Conservation (also an invited s53 party).

8. The reviewers' key issues are summarised in Table 1 below, while their full comments are supplied as Appendices 1 and 2. Further Planner comment are identified within this table in *italics*.

Table 1. Summary of Key Issues from CRC Technical Review

Document	Comment
Avifauna Management Plan (AMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend the carcass monitoring methodology (Section 7.13.2) is designed by a Suitably Qualified Biostatistician <u>and</u> a Suitably Qualified Avifauna Expert (SQAE). • Systematic carcass monitoring in Section 7.13.2 is proposed for a period of 3 years post-construction. However, Table 2 specifies that it is to continue for the lifetime of the solar farm. This discrepancy needs to be clarified. A duration greater than 3 years may be warranted and recommend consultation with DOC on the appropriate duration. • Section 7.13.3 places adaptive management or compensation with the SQAE. CRC recommend certainty within the AMP on actions required if trigger levels are exceeded, as well as compensation requirements where appropriate.
Invertebrate Management Plan (IMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The surveying of the site is not adequate to identify all invertebrate values at the site. • The Panel requested “quantitative” fauna surveys and mapping. While the report provides mapping, there is no element of quantitative assessment of invertebrate fauna. • <i>Predator-proof fencing to surround the grasshopper reserve is not specified in IMP. However, this is included in the Pest Mammal Management Plan. CRC expect predator proof-fencing to be provided)</i>
Vegetation Management Plan (VMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend that the VMP has clearly stated objectives and outcomes. • Recommend that outcomes be measurable and include triggers or thresholds for further compensation or other management action. • Recommend that conditions require appropriate eco-sourcing of any plant material.
Pest Mammal Management Plan (PMMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 6 of the PMMP requires that adaptive management controls are adjusted “as needed in response to monitoring”. Recommend this is expanded to also require triggers for when adaptive management should apply, which could link to Section 13.2 of the PMMP.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 25 m grid is proposed for mouse eradication (Section 10.3.3). Recommend a 10m x 10m grid instead. • <i>Figure 4 indicates mammalian control measures within Lot 1, i.e., not within the Solar Farm.</i> • <i>Figures 3 and 4 of the PMMP show different grasshopper reserve areas.</i>
Lizard Management Plan (LzMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LzMP Table 1 requires reporting outcomes to CRC, MDC, DOC, and rūnanga. This should be specified in conditions of consent. • Proposed lizard habitat enhancement (Section 5.4 of LzMP) and habitat corridors (Figure 5 of LzMP) cut across potential invertebrate and vegetation habitats. Proposed earthworks (trenching) and preparatory herbicide spraying could impact these habitats. Recommend the LzMP include pre-site checks for other ecological values where lizard enhancement works are to occur (e.g., avoid Maniototo peppercress or high-value grasshopper areas).

Adaptive Management

9. CRC's s53 comments considered that potentially significant effects to avifauna were the key remaining ecological issue for the proposal. CRC sought inclusion of well-defined adaptive management conditions requiring specific offset and/or compensation measures in case management plan mitigation measures fail to adequately prevent effects to avifauna.
10. As outlined above, management plans have not addressed this issue. CRC reiterate the recommendation that adaptive management conditions requiring specific offset and/or compensation measures be included in conditions of consent, especially in relation to effects on Nationally Critical and Nationally Endangered species. CRC anticipate that these measures would be reflected in management plans.

Management Plans

11. CRC considers that the Applicant's draft management plans provide sound management approaches. Notwithstanding, CRC recommends that the management plans be revised to:
 - a) Have clear, measurable outcomes;
 - b) Ensure they align with each other and that measures in one management plan do not adversely affect the outcomes sought in other management plans; and
 - c) Adequately respond to the matters raised in Table 1 of this document.

Conditions

12. CRC understands from the applicant's further information response that the applicant is engaging a specialist condition writer. CRC has not yet received any revised conditions sets prepared by this expert. It is expected that many of the matters raised above could be addressed through these revised conditions.
13. CRC continues to seek discussions with the applicant, their specialist condition writer and any other appropriate s53 party to ensure conditions associated with this consent provide suitable mitigation or compensation, are in a format which can be administered by the CRC; are easy to understand and are enforceable. Given the limited timeframes associated with Fast Track Approvals, CRC suggests a 'round table' discussion with the applicant's expert would be of utmost benefit.
14. We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on any report from the Expert Panel's Senior Avifauna Expert, as outlined in Minute 5.
15. CRC trusts the above satisfies the request of Minute 5.

Ngā mihi nui,



Brett Aldridge
Director Operations

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – CRC Land Ecology Advice

Appendix 2 – AgResearch IMP Review

APPENDIX 1 – CRC Land Ecology Advice – Dr Jean Jack

Date	26 February 2026
To	Reuben Herz-Edinger – Senior Consent Planner
From	Dr Jean Jack – Team Leader: Land Ecology
Project advice provided for	FNSF The Point Solar Farm FTAA-2509-1100
Documents referred to	6621h-i – The Point Avifauna Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26 (Draft AMP) 6221h-ii – The Point Invertebrate Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26 6621h-iii – The Point Solar Farm Vegetation Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26v2 6221h-iv – Pest Mammal Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26 6621h-vi – The Point Solar Farm Vegetation Survey Feb 2026 6621i – The Point Solar Farm Lizard Management Plan DRAFT 23-2-26

Review comments of draft management plans

Generally, the plans provide sound management approaches, however I make some specific recommendations below for consideration.

Perhaps most importantly, I recommend:

- the plans have clear measurable outcomes, and
- plans are reviewed collectively to ensure they align - particularly where the proposed enhancement operations of one plan might cut across the purposes of another.

This will ensure works targeting one outcome won't be averse to another – ie. Any grazing, or habitat earthworks proposed by the LzMP doesn't dig up invertebrate habitats, or that the proposed grasshopper reserve fencing is placed to provide the most benefit to multiple taxa (if appropriate).

Vegetation management plan (Wildlands Consultants, February 2026 – Authored by Payne et al.)

- Agree with management strategy.
- Recommend for vegetation monitoring: Identify objectives and align outcomes to these. Outcome required to be measurable to provide triggers/thresholds to then trigger management action or compensation etc. Note that the actual measurement thresholds don't necessarily need to be quantified upfront (as may depend on baseline measures and population trends/temporal variabilities) but there should be a requirement for outcomes to be measurable. The report provides an example in section 8.1.5 for threatened plants.
- Re section 6.3 - Recommend conditions require appropriate eco-sourcing of any plant material (while some species may not be available, its important to clarify

that any material should be constrained to eco-sourced plant material appropriate to the landform (outwash plains) and ED).

Avifauna management plan (Wildlands Consultants, February 2026 – Authored by Gunby & Bennett).

- Section 7.13.2 details a systematic carcass search ‘at representative locations’. I agree incorporating the representativeness of habitats into the design is recommended, however just as (or more) importantly will be the necessity to ensure effort is adequate to detect birdstrike occurrence. This links to birdstrike detection probabilities which I’d presume needs some trials or quantify.

Recommend the design of this systematic carcass search is based on DOC advice provided earlier - requires design by a SQ biostatistician and SQAE: *Carcass monitoring protocols need careful design by a suitably qualified biostatistician and need to account for the fact that it is unlikely that the entire PVSF can be monitored completely and constantly. Design needs to include determining correction factors to apply to the results – a correction factor for observer effectiveness (i.e. how many carcasses do observers detect and how many do they miss?) and a correction factor for carcass persistence (how long does a carcass remain on the ground before it degrades or is scavenged by a mammalian or avian predator?). A further correction is likely needed to account for birds that may collide with infrastructure but then fly or walk off site before dying. Recent research indicates that frequently carcasses are not found (likely because of predation of stunned, injured or killed birds) but imprints on panels can now be swabbed and the eDNA extracted to identify species with high certainty (Gruppi et al 2023; Harrigan et al. 2023).*

- Section 7.13.2 limits the proposed monthly systematic carcass searches to a period of 3 years post construction. While the summary Table 2 sets this monthly monitoring to continue for the lifetime of the solar farm. Recommend consultation with DOC regarding the duration. I note a previous decision on another solar farm had a 3 year duration – I have **attached the decision** as it may assist with this case (although this site in the Basin may present more a more sensitive context and warrant a longer duration than 3 years.
- Section 7.13.3 places adaptive management or compensation decisions with the SQAE. Can compensation triggers be pre-determined? - providing greater certainty (or at least guidance) to the SQAE regarding appropriate actions following trigger limits being met.

Dwain provided me with the attached FNSF Response (23rd Feb 2026) where section 5 refers to an Avifauna Compensation Strategy (ACS) and outlines how associated funding (\$1m*) might be allocated.

Allocations outlined present worthwhile and relevant compensation actions for kaki and other river bird values including:

- Provision for predator control aimed at protection of river birds of the Cass and Godley Rivers. This would augment/complement what I understand to be planned by the 'Kahu Ora' programme which focusses its predator control on the Tasman River, another important river bird breeding area.
- The 'transmitter project' sounds promising. I am aware that tracking the juvenile kaki presents considerable challenges, including dedicated resourcing requiring new technological solutions.
- Similarly, the instream invertebrate work is a relevant area of focus to assist with kaki conservation.
- Wetland enhancements are targeted towards known important kaki habitats – aligned with what I understand to existing DOC work areas.

*Note that presented totals sum to \$1.05m – \$50,000 more than the \$1m figure referenced in the heading.

Invertebrate management plan (Wildlands Consultants, February 2026 – Authored by Smith & Goldwater).

Refer to external review of this plan by Dr Barbarra Barratt, dated 26th February 2026.

- Survey of invertebrate values limited to subset of fauna while potential effects well described – particularly for blue butterfly and Otago grasshopper.
- Augier (?) conditions for a 'pest mammal-free invertebrate enclosure' reserve and including salvage from the site is detailed. Includes monitoring and precautionary compensation (section 4.6.15) for unsuccessful effects management – a phd research grant (\$15k).
[The proposed mammalian predator fencing location and extent is shown in pest mammal plan.]
- Section 4.6.5 details recommendations for restoration plantings. Recommend: Ensure plant sourcing aligns with ecosourcing principles and the plant management plan also forming part of the proposal. Avoid irrigation – edge effects on existing dryland plant values.

Further review was attained from Barbarra Barratt:
[REDACTED] – attached.

Pest mammal management plan (Wildlands Consultants, February 2026, Authored by Smith & Goldwater)

- Section 6 outlines the plan's goals. This includes the description of methods for adaptive management so that *control is adjusted as needed in response to monitoring*.
Recommend the 'as necessary' should require measurement thresholds - threshold triggers for the adaptive management. May simply require linking this section to section 13.2 "*pest mammal performance standards*." I support the provision for this management plan to link its findings to the outcome monitoring of the other invertebrate, lizard and vegetation plans.
- Section 10.3.3 For mice eradication within the grasshopper a 25-metre grid to control mice is proposed.
Recommend a 10m by 10m grid is considered, as this is the spacing by which other projects have successfully achieved mouse eradication.

Lizard management plan (Wildlands Consultants, February 2026, Authored by Christiansen & King)

- The LzMP follows the principles provided by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in their 'Key principles for lizard salvage and transfer in New Zealand' guidelines document.
- The LzMP Table 1 (page 6) notes reporting outcomes is required to Environment Canterbury, MDC, DOC and iwi. Such reporting requirements are not reflected in the current condition set. Amended condition set Table 1 outlining management plan certification places this plan with Mackenzie District Council. However, reporting could extend to the other mentioned institutions.

Alignment with other plans required.

- The LzMP recognises the other management plans however there are some flags indicating plans should be reviewed for alignment.
- Recommend ensuring proposed works align with other plans for vegetation and invertebrate values.

I have concern regarding the proposed habitat enhancements (section 5.4) which specifies habitat corridors (Figure 5) which cut across potential areas of invertebrate and vegetation habitats. Proposed earthworks (1m deep trenching) and preparatory herbicide spraying associated with enhancements clearly have the potential to impact invertebrate and vegetation habitats.

Recommend the LzMP in these sections adopt / refer to pre-site checks for other ecology values where lizard enhancement works are to occur (i.e. avoiding any Maniototo peppergrass or high value grasshopper areas).

From the text I understand the habitat enhancements will be constructed outside (adjacent to and surrounding) the proposed grasshopper reserve.

Recommend considering if lizard enhancement is wanted near this area – as I understand in other fenced areas lizard predation of the grasshopper became an issue.

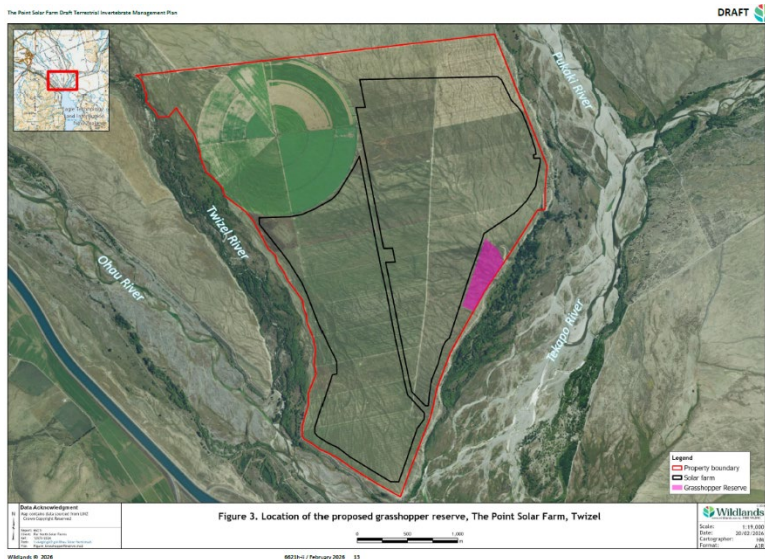
- The LzMP states *Every effort will be made to source the plants in the lists provided but the confirmed species to be planted will depend on the availability of plants at nurseries.*

Recommend conditions require appropriate eco-sourcing of any plant material (while some species may not be available, its important to clarify that any material should be constrained to eco-sourced plant material appropriate to the landform (outwash plains) and ED).

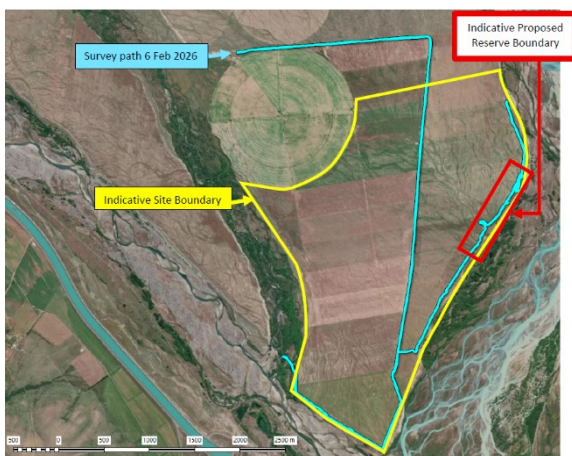
Note: I have read the letter from Dr Tocher (dated 16th Feb) you provided me which expressed concerns related to survey effort. This report addresses that concern, reporting that intensive survey effort has subsequently been undertaken. Dr Tocher questioned the feasibility of the proposed predator-proof / mammalian fencing and recommended a feasibility assessment. There may be some misunderstanding about where the proposed predator fencing would go or that the proposed fencing plans have changed from what Dr Tocher was briefed on. Maps within the pest mammal plan Figure 3 & 4 places a grasshopper reserve in different areas and this differs in relation to where the southern gully occurs. However, assuming the invertebrate management plan provides the authoritative location the reserve is proposed as shown in Figure 3. Dr

Tochers map understood a predator fence was to encompass both the gullies, however I understand the current proposal is only to fence a grasshopper reserve to the south of these gullies – thereby not needing to fence through the unstable terrace feature.

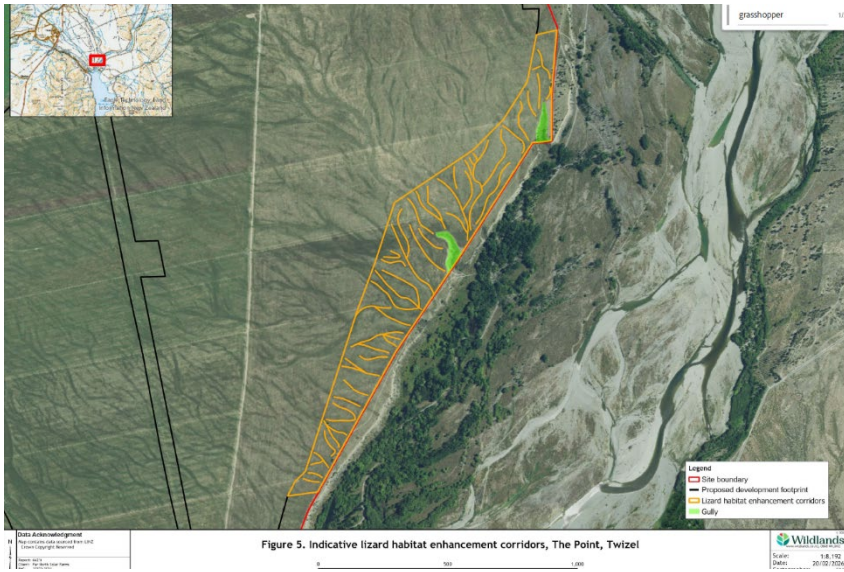
Below: Figure 3 of invertebrate plan showing location of grasshopper reserve area to fence.



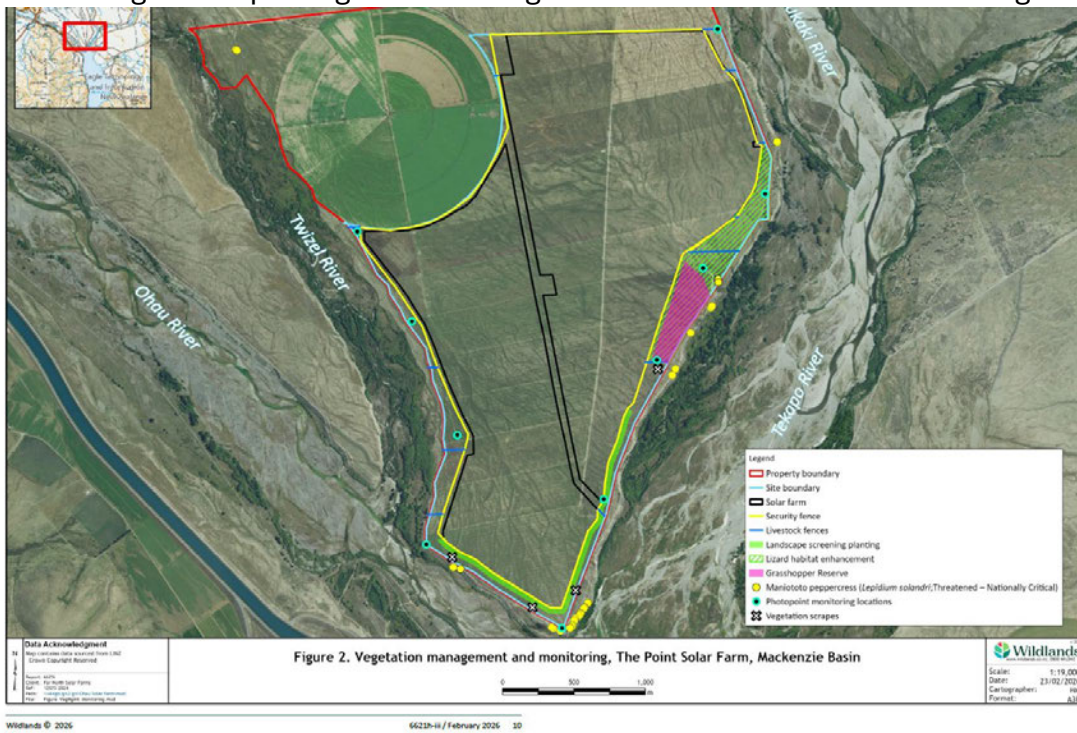
Below: Dr Tochers Appendix 1 letter's map showing her understanding of the fence location.



Below: The LzMP map of where possible habitat enhancements (planting, stone piles and earthworks to trench) might occur



Below: Vegetation plan figure 2 showing over view of habitat reserve and mgmt. areas



Attached example decision document from:

[RC240065 Helios OTA Op LP - Decision Notified - Central Otago District Council](#)

[On the Vegetation Survey of Document 6621h-vi]

Findings – Threatened plant locations – reiterates need for alignment between any fencing or enhancement works proposed by management plans – i.e. checking disturbance footprints for the fencing of the grasshopper reserve and site boundary fencing.

Survey effort:

Plant locations – reiterates need for alignment between any fencing or enhancement works proposed by management plans – i.e. checking disturbance footprints for the fencing of the grasshopper reserve and site boundary fencing.

APPENDIX 2 – AgResearch Ltd Invertebrate Management Plan Review – Dr Barbara Barratt

Review of:

Wildland Consultants (2026). Terrestrial Invertebrate Management Plan for the Point Solar Farm at Twizel, Canterbury. Wildland Consultants Contract Report No. 6621h-ii. Prepared for Far North Solar Farms Ltd. 31pp. (draft).

Dr Barbara I.P. Barratt

26 Feb 2026

Far North Solar Farms Ltd (FNSF) have applied for approval under the Fast Track Approvals Act (2024) for a 678ha solar farm in the Mackenzie Basin near Twizel. FNSF has commissioned a report providing information prepared in response to The Point Solar Farm Expert Panel as follows:

“...for the purposes of the Panel’s assessment, it is prudent that the application includes a relevant and up-to-date assessment of ecological effects...”

With relevance to invertebrates “The Panel seeks that the applicant commission quantitative vegetation and fauna surveys, and associated mapping, undertaken by appropriately experienced and qualified ecologists, to assist in understanding:

- a) The presence, distribution, and indicative relative abundance of biodiversity values within the project area and its immediate surrounds; and
- b) The level of effects and the adequacy of the proposed effects management measures, in context.

This review for Environment Canterbury addresses the questions:

- Have appropriate surveys been undertaken to identify invertebrate values at the site?
- Is the Invertebrate Management Plan (IMP) appropriate to manage/mitigate effects to invertebrates from the proposed solar farm?

Have appropriate surveys been undertaken to identify invertebrate values at the site?

Invertebrate surveys of the proposed site have been carried out in February 2023 and February 2026. In both cases these were ‘walkthrough’ surveys although sweep-netting was also used in 2023. This method of surveying invertebrates is not adequate to identify all invertebrate values at the site. More comprehensive, but time-consuming approaches would employ pitfall-trapping, suction-sampling, Malaise trapping etc. So while it cannot be confirmed that the surveys carried out would identify invertebrate values for the site, it could be argued that the approach taken was to use existing knowledge of ‘notable’ (those with some level of recognised threat classification, locally endemic, large bodied and/or habitat restricted) invertebrates and to try to ascertain from what is known about the habitat requirements of these species, what species are likely to be present at the site. Given time constraints, ‘walkthrough’ surveys were better than simply using desk-top resources, but having said that, the map showing the survey tracks suggest that coverage could have been more comprehensive.

It was acknowledged that pitfall trapping or tracking tunnels would be required to detect Tekapo ground weta. Two species of *Holcaspis* (Coleoptera: Carabidae), *H. abdita* and *H. bidentella* (nationally critical) have recently been shown to have very limited distributions in the vicinity of the site (Wakelin *et al.* 2025). These would not be detected by walkthrough survey and would require pitfall trapping to determine their presence. Similarly, a local endemic *Prodontria minuta* (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae), known from the Tekapo River delta (Emerson and Barratt 1997), is nocturnal so not likely to be detected during a daytime walkthrough.

The panel requested “quantitative” fauna surveys, and mapping. While the report provides mapping there is no element of quantitative assessment of the invertebrate fauna.

Having agreed that it was prudent to focus on larger ‘notable’ Orthoptera and more visible species such as the NZ blue butterfly given the time constraints, it must be said that a limited consideration of a small number of ‘notable’ species can in no way be indicative of the “relative abundance of biodiversity values”. However, given the very sparse information available on the biodiversity values of the Mackenzie Basin, there would be very little context for such a full biodiversity evaluation. The most comprehensive evaluation of the invertebrates of the Mackenzie area was carried out by Wakelin *et al.* (2024) which lists 3052 taxa of which 28 are endemic to the area. However, while this highlights species of conservation concern for the region, it is not a source of local biodiversity assessment.

Is the IMP appropriate to manage/mitigate effects to invertebrates from the proposed solar farm?

The invertebrate management plan has been comprehensively executed and seeks to systematically manage/mitigate effects on invertebrates.

The proposal to establish an enclosed grasshopper reserve adjacent to the solar farm is a highly commendable. The plans for the preparation and maintenance of this reserve have been carefully thought out, and the proposed location for the reserve appears to be suitable. The area will presumably be surrounded by a predator-proof fence, although this does not appear to be specifically mentioned in the IMP. Other plans for vegetation enhancement and restoration planting to benefit invertebrates in areas peripheral to the solar panel installation are also very encouraging, and the intention to engage an entomologist in planning for this is appropriate. The habitat types specified for this seem to be suitable.

The suggestion that for additional compensation, student research projects could be funded to investigate the adequacy and impact of effects management on grasshopper and other species is excellent. If funded research projects could be advertised to students to investigate salvage and translocation operations, and evaluate other aspects of management of the area, this will be a huge benefit to future similar projects. The recommendation to share monitoring results with other researchers and to involve the Entomological Society of New Zealand will be beneficial, in addition to the involvement of post-graduate students.

The salvage and translocation of short-horned grasshoppers from the proposed solar panel area would be an excellent way to mitigate impacts and the proposed method of achieving this seems to be appropriate. Should robust grasshopper be found at any stage, before or during construction, then as noted, work would have to cease, and the Department of Conservation notified. Similarly, the ‘Incidental Discovery Protocol’ for robust or minute grasshopper, or

Tekapo ground weta has been well conceived. The intention to carefully monitor and record changes in populations of insects (and predators such as mice) is appropriate and important.

The predicted effects of shading that will occur after the panels are installed seem to be consistent with effects observed under solar farms overseas. Allowing grazing underneath the panels would help to mitigate the effects of elevated moisture levels and increased grass growth but brings the risk of damage to surface-dwelling invertebrates. This should perhaps be delayed until the salvage and translocation work is complete. Thought should also be given to the seasonality of grazing and stock numbers.

There is little if any existing research on the effects of solar farms on NZ invertebrates. However, research undertaken overseas, suggests that insect abundance and diversity was reduced under solar panels (Wang *et al.* 2025). In an arid area in South Africa, research indicated that there were changes to the community composition of ground-dwelling invertebrates inside solar farm installations compared with surrounding rangeland (Jeala *et al.* 2019). A literature review might be useful to help predict what might occur in New Zealand, and this could become a component of any funded post-graduate research that takes place in the future at this site.

Management of excessive dust during construction and maintenance of the site has been addressed, and the suggested methods of mitigation should reduce this to some extent. However, the risks of bringing fill or other material onto the site during construction is significant. This was mentioned in the earlier Ecological Enhancement Plan but not the 2026 report. This would potentially be a source of invasive weed species and requires careful management if it cannot be avoided altogether.

The intention to avoid damage or removal of indigenous broom plants (*Carmichaelia* spp.) during construction should help to retain habitat for New Zealand blue butterfly.

References

- Emerson BC, Barratt BIP (1997) Descriptions of seven new species of the genus *Prodontria* (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae: Melolonthinae). *Coleopterists Bulletin* **53**(1), 23-36.
- Jeala C, Perolda V, Seymoura CL, Ralston-Paton S, Ryan PG (2019) Utility-scale solar energy facilities – Effects on invertebrates in an arid environment. *Journal of Arid Environments* **168**, 1-8.
- Wakelin M, Tweed J, Murray TJ (2024) A list of the invertebrates of the Mackenzie area, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* **51**(1), 14-76.
- Wakelin M, Tweed J, Tocher MD (2025) *Holcaspis abdita* and *H. bidentella* (Coleoptera: Carabidae) at Simons Pass Conservation Area and Pukaki River Tekapo River Confluence Dryland Recovery Conservation Area, Mackenzie Basin, Canterbury, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* **52**(5), 593-601.
- Wang Y, Cheng Y, Ban L, Yin X, Wei S, Sun W, Zhang R (2025) Insect community diversity in photovoltaic power station and its response to environmental factors. *Biology* **14**(1388).