



Ref: 26026

12 April 2026

Hokonui Energy Limited

RE: Hokonui Energy Land Swap Proposal Ecological Assessment

1 Introduction

Hokonui Hills Wind Farm Limited Partnership (HHWFLP) is seeking a referral to the Fast-track consenting regime to enable the proposed Hokonui windfarm to be considered under the Fast-Track Approvals Act 2024 (FTAA). Three of the proposed wind turbine generators (WTG) and part of the internal road network are situated on a narrow corridor of farmland within the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area. The land has been managed by the neighbouring landholder Fairfield Trustees Limited (FTL) and is currently grazed. In exchange HHWFLP proposes to exchange a parcel of fenced off regenerating shrubland that is contiguous with the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area. The areas of land that are subject to the land swap proposal are shown in Figure 1.

The FTAA requires the referral application to include a brief description of the conservation values, which includes ecological values, of the land parcels to be characterised to assist the consideration of the proposal. HHWFLP engaged e3scientific Limited to complete a preliminary ecological assessment of the two parcels of land to inform this process. This letter has been prepared to document the vegetation and botanical values of the two land parcels.

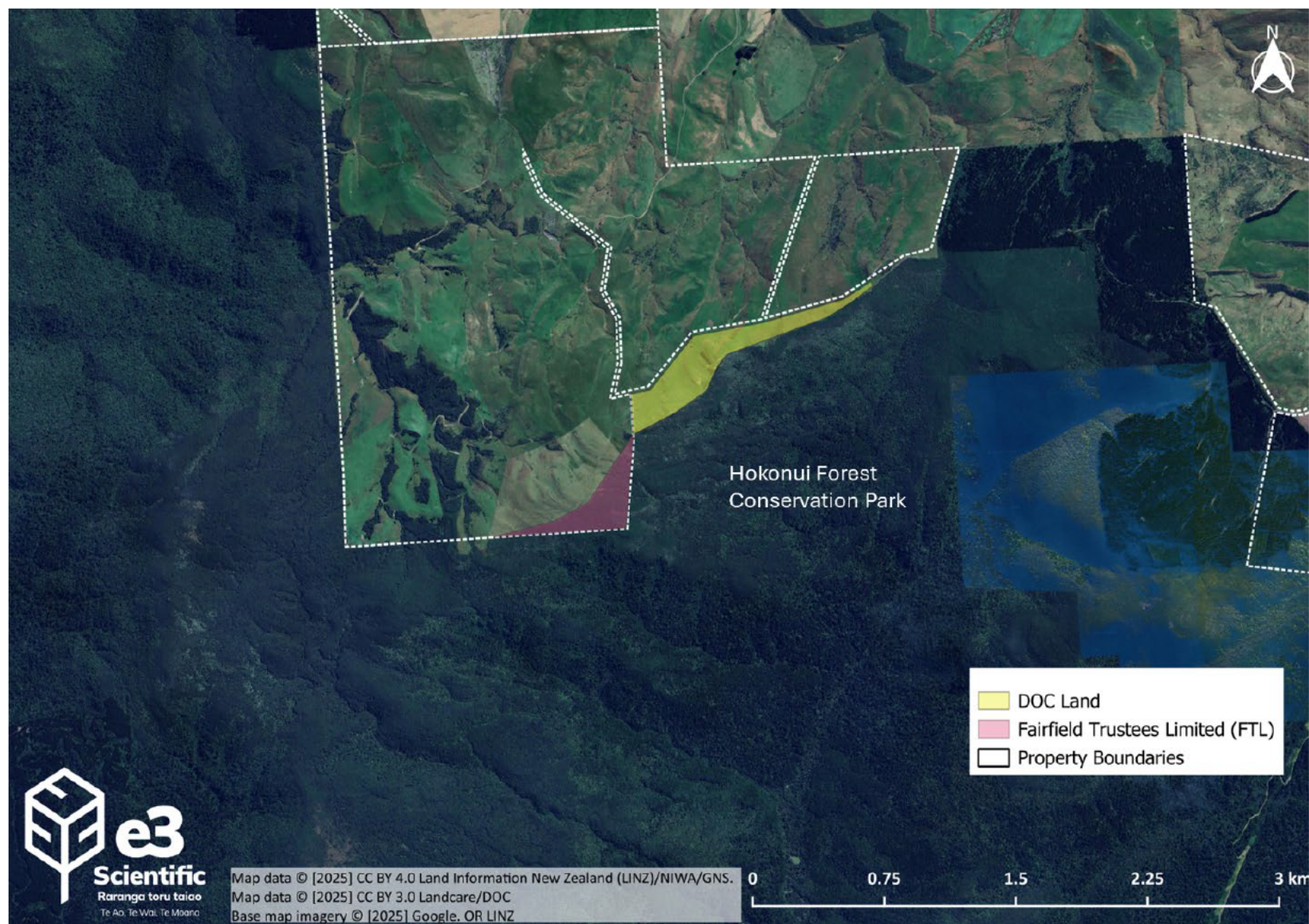


Figure 1: Land Parcels subject to the HHWFLP land swap proposal

1.1 Scope of Work

The scope of work completed to support the Hokonui windfarm referral application included the following:

- Desktop assessment to provide background ecological context;
- Site Visit to view the vegetation within the land parcels associated with the proposed land swap;
- Mapping of vegetation units; and
- Preparation of an ecological report recording the vegetation present.

This report does not undertake an ecological significance assessment. This work will be completed for the substantive application should the proposed Hokonui windfarm be accepted into the fast-track approvals process.

2 Ecological Assessment

2.1 Environmental Context

2.1.1 Ecological District

The two land parcels are situated within the Hokonui Ecological District (ED). The ED encompasses the Hokonui Hills from east of Gore through to the Oreti River on its western boundary. The Hokonui Hills form a distinctive block of dissected terrain rising up to 750 metres at Bare hill and are part of the Southland Syncline which extends from Mossburn in the west to the Catlins in the east.

Vegetation of the ecological district would formerly have been dominated by podocarp-hardwood forest and podocarp forest in the south and east of the ED with red tussock grassland dominating the uplands of the district (McEwan, 1987). Much of the district has been developed for pastoral activity with the formerly extensive forests now confined to the southern and east areas of the Ecological District primarily within the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area and Croydon Bush.

2.1.2 Threatened Environment Classification

LENZ is an environmental classification developed by Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research (MWLR) that groups the New Zealand landscape into environments with similar soil, landform and climatic attributes. These physical attributes drive biodiversity and ecosystem variation across the landscape and are therefore HHWFLPful in understanding geographical extent of New Zealand's ecosystems and biodiversity.



In an extension of the LENZ work, MWLR combined LENZ, the landcover database and protected area network to develop the Threatened Environment Classification (TEC) across New Zealand. Based on the combination of these databases the TEC categorised New Zealand's landscape into six threat classes as follows:

- Category 1: <10% indigenous cover left
- Category 2: 10 – 20% indigenous cover left
- Category 3: 20 – 30 % indigenous cover left
- Category 4: >30% indigenous vegetation left, and <10% protected
- Category 5: >30% indigenous vegetation left, and 10-20% protected
- Category 6: >30% indigenous vegetation left, and >20% protected

The two land parcels subject to the land swap proposal are situated within the lowest threat class (Category 6) with greater than 30% of the indigenous vegetation cover left and greater than 20% protected.

2.1.3 Faunal Information

Bird, avifauna and invertebrate survey work was out of scope for the land exchange ecological assessment for the referral application, however, will be completed for the detailed land exchange application. The following provides desktop information to provide an indication of faunal values in the area.

2.1.3.1 Avifauna

The various vegetation communities are likely to be utilised by a range of native avifauna species. The species known to be present or utilise similar habitat in the Hokonui Hills are listed in Table 2 below. Table 2 provides a likelihood of occurrence of each species, their preferred habitat and their threat classification (Robertson *et. al.*, 2021).

We note that a detailed avifauna assessment is currently being undertaken and will be provided in the ecological assessment for the Hokonui windfarm substantive proposal.

Table 1: List of avifauna species that may be present in the Land Swap parcels

Species	Preferred Habitat	Likelihood of Occurrence	Threat Classification (Robertson et al., 2021)
Pīwakawaka/South Island fantail (<i>Rhipidura fuliginosa fuliginosa</i>)	Mixed Shrubland communities	High	Not threatened
Riroriro/Grey warbler (<i>Gerygone igata</i>)	Mixed Shrubland communities and open tussock grassland	High	Not threatened
Korimako/Bellbird (<i>Anthornis melanura melanura</i>)	Mixed Shrubland communities	High	Not threatened
Tūī (<i>Prothemadera novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i>)	Mixed Shrubland communities	Moderate	Not threatened
Kererū/New Zealand wood pigeon (<i>Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae</i>)	Mixed Shrubland communities	High	Not threatened
Pūtangitangi/Paradise sHHWFLPduck (<i>Tadorna variegata</i>)	Open exotic vegetation (grassland) and around ponds/water storage areas	Moderate	Not threatened
Kāhu/Australasian harrier (<i>Circus approximans</i>)	Open exotic vegetation (grassland), tussock grassland and mixed shrubland	High	Not threatened
Kārearea/Eastern falcon (<i>Falco novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i>)	Mature trees and slash surrounded by open grassland as well as broadleaf forest.	High	Threatened – Nationally vulnerable
Pīpipi/Brown creeper (<i>Mohoua novaeseelandiae</i>)	Mixed shrubland and tussock grassland	High	Not threatened
Ngirungiru/South Island tomtit (<i>Petroica macrocephala macrocephala</i>)	Mixed shrubland	High	Not threatened
Tauhou/Silvereye (<i>Zosterops lateralis lateralis</i>)	Mixed shrubland	High	Not threatened
Pīhoihoi/New Zealand Pipit (<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae</i>)	Tussock grassland and mixed shrubland.	High	At Risk – Declining

2.1.3.2 *Herpetofauna and Invertebrate*

Herpetofauna and invertebrate survey work is currently being undertaken and will be incorporated for the substantive application.

2.2 Survey Findings

A vegetation survey of the two land parcels was undertaken by e3scientific consultant ecologists Dr Claire Newall and Glenn Davis on the 24 February 2026. The survey included a walk through of the two land parcels recording botanical information and vegetation communities present. The following section describes the vegetation communities present within the two land parcels.

2.2.1 Department of Conservation Land

The DOC land subject to the land swap proposal covers an area of approximately 22.02 ha. The land has been developed for pastoral activity and is currently grazed by the adjoining property owned by FTL. While much of the land has been developed for pastoral activity some copper tussock grassland, shrubland and wetlands are present. The vegetation is mapped in Figure 2 and described below. Pastoral areas dominated by exotic grassland is the most widespread vegetation community. This vegetation is all the remaining areas not mapped on Figure 2.

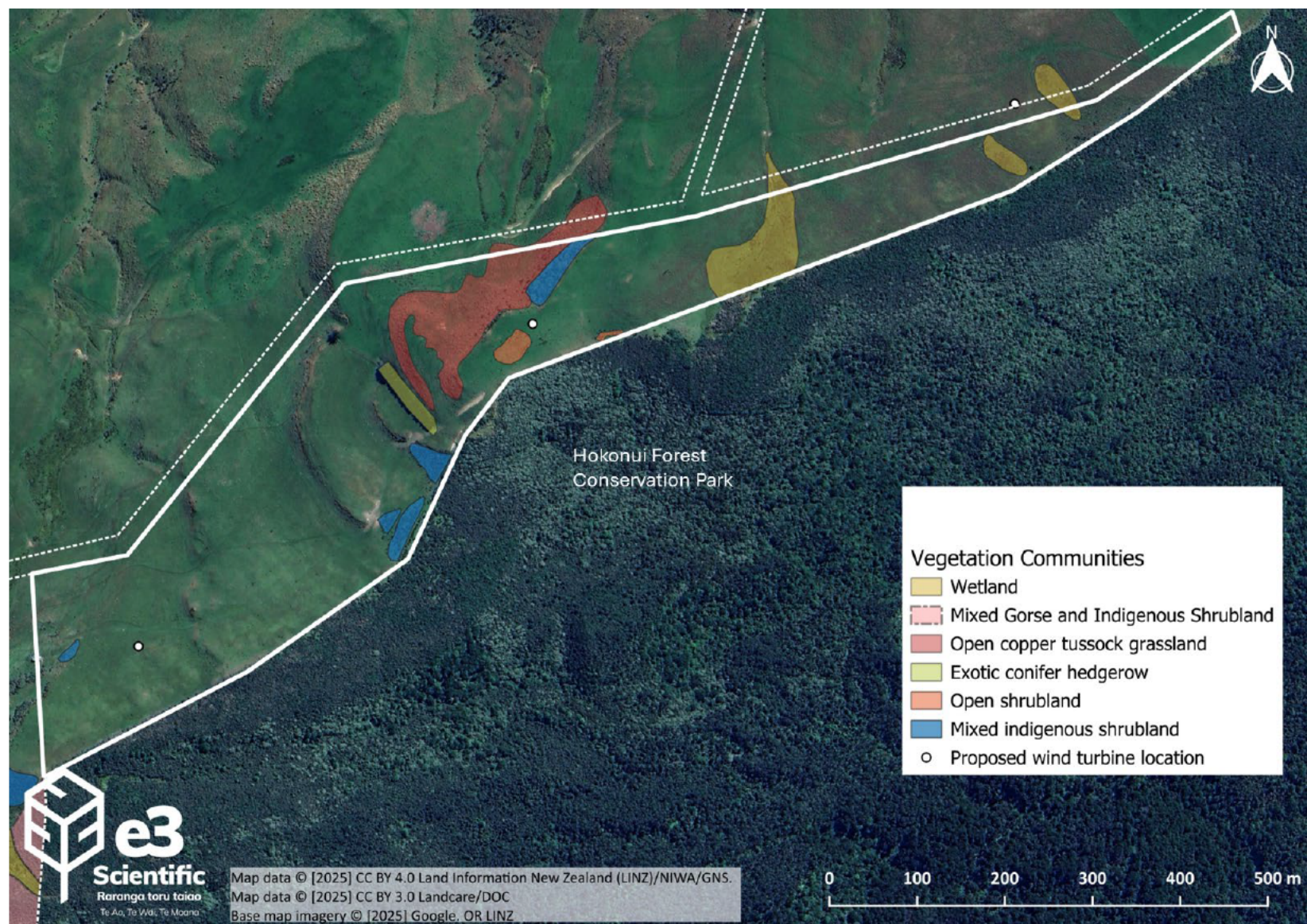


Figure 2: DOC administered land (Hokonui Forest Conservation Park) subject to HHWFLP land swap proposal

2.2.1.1 Wetlands

Three wetlands were mapped in the DOC land. The two small wetlands to the east of the DOC land parcel are dominated by the sedge *Carex coriacea* and exotic rushland species *Juncus effusus* with exotic grasses also present including *Holcus lanatus glomerata* (Yorkshire fog), *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping bent), *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (sweet vernal) and *Trifolium repens* (clover). Representative photographs of the wetlands are provided in Plates 1, 2 and 3.

The largest wetland mapped in the DOC land contains sedgeland, rushland and shrubland and is botanically diverse compared to the smaller wetlands. Indigenous species recorded in the large wetland included *Carex coriacea*, *Chionochloa rubra* (copper tussock), *Shawia laxiflora* (tree daisy), *Coprosma dumosa*, *Celmisia gracilentia*, *Gonocarpus* spp, *Gunnera monoica*, and *Nertera depressa* and *Isolepis* spp. Introduced species recorded include *Juncus effusus* (soft rush), *Lotus pedunculatus* (Lotus), *Carex leporina* (oval sedge), *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping bent), *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (sweet vernal) and *Trifolium repens* (clover)



Plate 1: Photograph showing the largest wetland with sedgeland, rushland and shrubland present



Plate 2: Photograph in largest wetland showing rushland and the tree daisy *Shawia laxiflora*



Plate 3: Rushland in smaller wetlands to the east of the DOC land

2.2.2 Open copper tussock and Open Shrubland

Open copper tussock grassland is a prominent feature of the Hokonui Hills vegetation in areas that have a long history of pastoral activity. This community typically features isolated copper tussock and *Poa cita* (silver tussock) and scattered shrubland species in areas that have been oversown with grass seed and clover. The shrubland species present typically include *Coprosma dumosa*, *Coprosma propinqua* (mingimingi) *Melicytus alpinus* (porcupine shrub) and *Discaria toumatou* (matagouri).



Plate 4: Open copper tussock grassland



Plate 5: Open shrubland

2.2.3 Mixed indigenous shrubland

Patches of Mixed indigenous shrubland are present within the DOC land and vary in composition. Ubiquitous species in almost all shrubland communities include *Coprosma dumosa*, *Coprosma propinqua* (mingimingi) *Melicytus alpinus* (porcupine shrub). However more diverse stands are present, particularly on steeper faces and contain *Shawia ilicifolia* (hakeke), *Myrsine divaricata* (weeping māpou), *Fuchsia perscandens* (scrambling fuchsia), *Griselinia littoralis* (kāpuka), *Phormium cookianum* (mountain flax), *Shawia bullata* (tree daisy) and the climbing plant *Muehlenbeckia complexa* (scrub pōhuehue).



Plate 6: Mixed indigenous shrubland

2.3 Fairfield Trustees Limited Land

The FTL land subject to the land swap proposal covers an area of approximately 11.7ha. The land is fenced off from the neighbouring farmland and has been left to naturally regenerate.

The land is covered in a closed canopy shrubland dominated by dense gorse with emergent shrubs, indigenous shrubland and a wetland. Figure 3 presents a map of the vegetation units in the land parcel with the vegetation recorded described below.

2.3.1 Mixed Gorse and Indigenous Shrubland

The mixed gorse and indigenous shrubland is a seral community that covers most of the FTL land. Dense stands of gorse is the dominant vegetation but indigenous species are emergent and become dominant in some areas of the land swap block. Indigenous species recorded include *Leptospermum scoparium* (manuka), *Ozothamnus leptophyllus* (tauhini), *Coprosma dumosa*, *Coprosma propinqua* (mingimingi), *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (kōhūhū), *Phormium cookianum* (wharariki), *Chionachloa rubra* (copper tussock)

2.3.2 Wetland

A wetland extends from the neighbouring farmland and into the land swap block, occupying the northern corner of the block. The wetland contains *Carex coriacea* (rautahi), *Juncus effusus* (soft rush), *Juncus articulatus* (jointed rush) and copper tussock.



Plate 7: Looking in a south west direction across the fenced off FTL land.

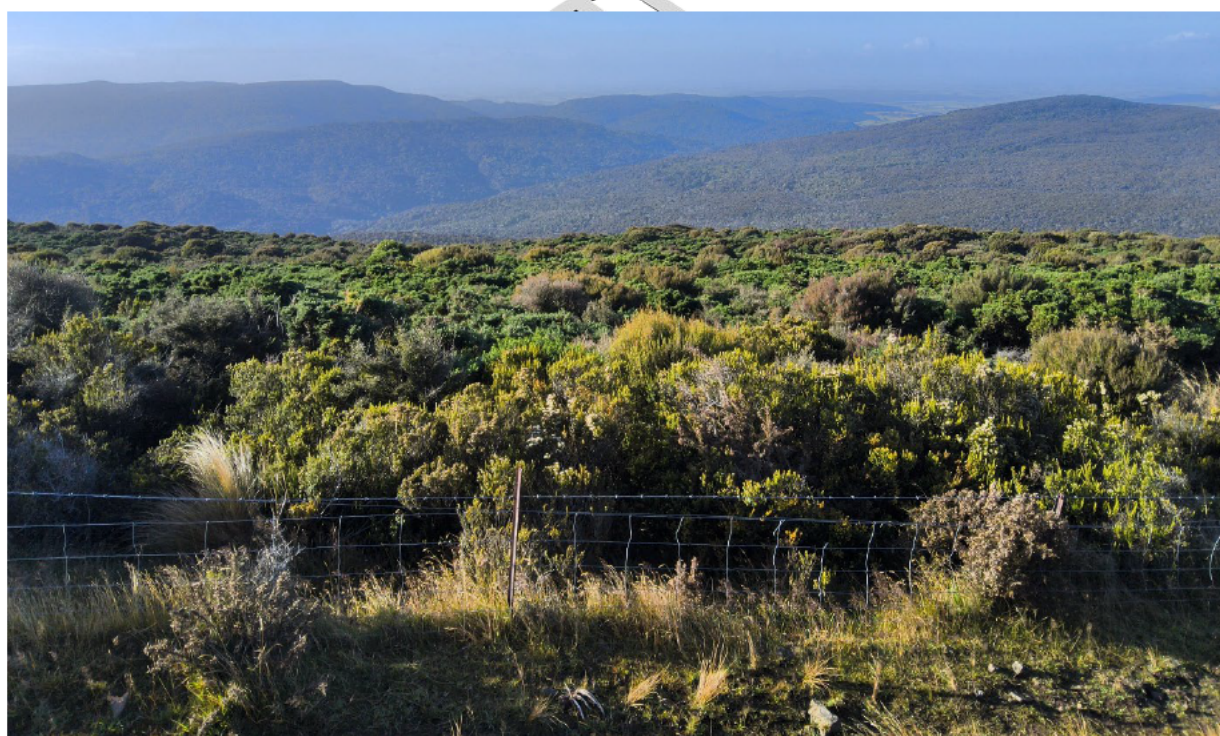


Plate 8: Looking across the fenced off FTL land

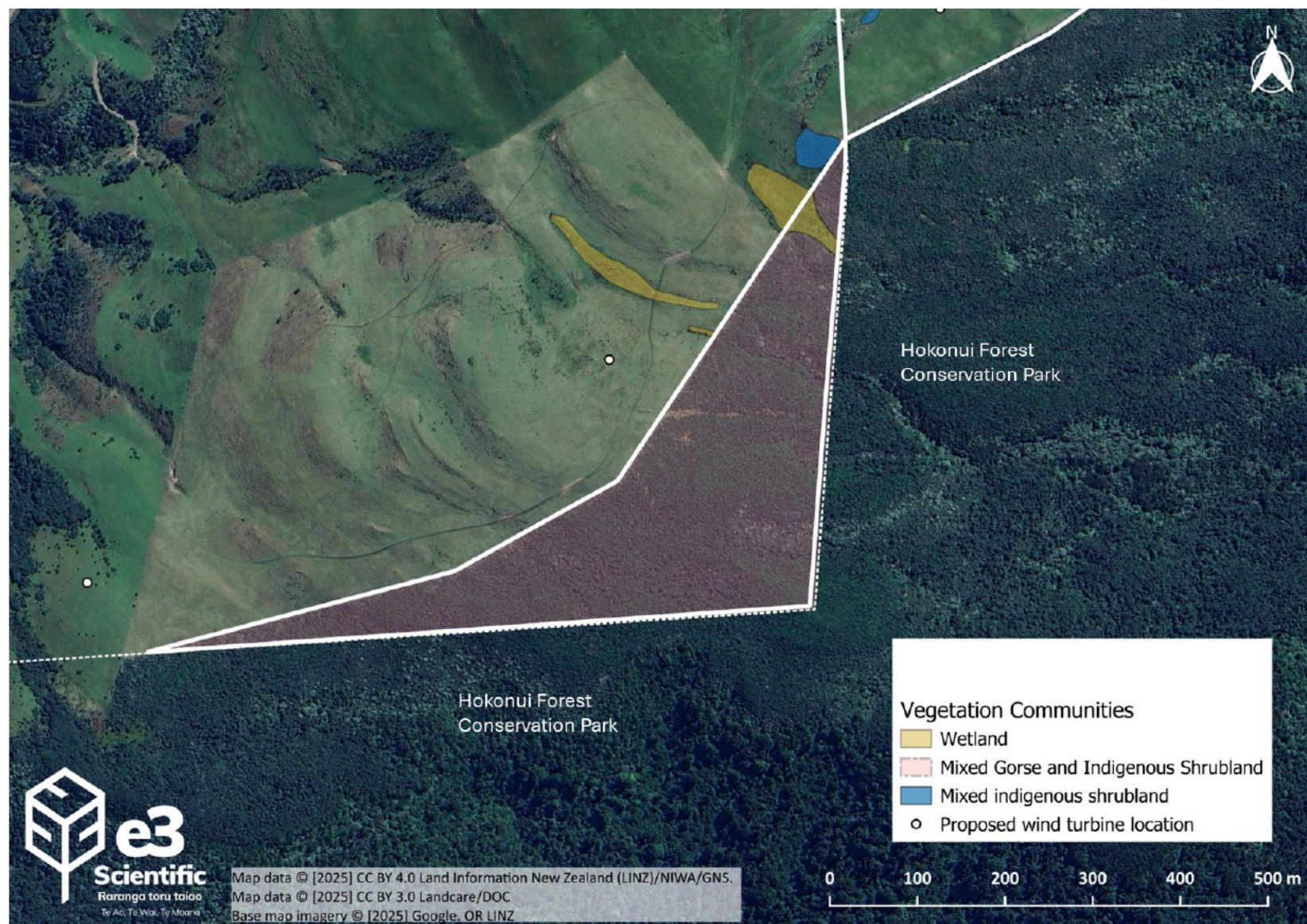


Figure 3: FTL owned land subject to HHWFLP land swap proposal

3 Summary

In summary the two parcels of land are under very different land uses, with the DOC land parcel currently under pastoral farming activity, while the FTL land parcel is fenced off and left to regenerate. The FTL land is almost entirely covered in a closed canopy shrubland, albeit with gorse being a significant component. That said, the gorse is acting as a nurse crop and over time the area will become dominated by indigenous shrubland and forest species that will be contiguous with the existing shrubland and forest communities in the Hokonui Forest Conservation Area.

The DOC land has been developed for pastoral activity with a vegetation cover dominated by exotic pasture. The ecological values within this landscape are confined to patches of copper tussock, shrubland and wetlands. Ecological processes within these remaining communities are compromised by pastoral grazing activity.

e3scientific considers the ecological trajectory of the FTL land (with minimal management) will result in a positive ecological outcome that will support a successional process leading to significant biodiversity gains that cannot be achieved on the DOC land parcel.



If you have any questions regarding the information provided in this letter, please contact Glenn Davis on 027 376 6588 or via email at glenn.davis@e3scientific.co.nz

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Davis
Managing Director

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