

The Point Solar Farm – Proposed Ecological Enhancement Approach 2 February 2026

Wildlands attended the Panel's site visit on Friday 30 January. Matt Baber (ecologist panel member) was present and spent several hours inspecting the site and discussing ecological aspects of the proposal. Based on the site visit and discussions, a proposed approach to ecological enhancement has been formulated by Wildlands for consideration by The Point Solar Farm. A brief outline of this is given below.

- Quantitative surveys will be undertaken in early February 2026 for vegetation, lizards, avifauna and invertebrates. Surveys will be at a scale appropriate to each habitat and its values. This will provide greater certainty on the site's ecological values than the current largely desktop information allows.
- Effects approach suggested: The proposed solar farm will likely have low magnitude and large spatial scale effects, representing perhaps a moderate overall level. However, it is suggested that mitigation/compensation and enhancement should focus on a high magnitude of positive effect at a small spatial scale. A small area provides greater certainty of outcomes, is easier to manage, and easier to attain measurable positive outcomes. More extensive measures (e.g. clustered woody plantings over the c.82ha enhancement area) are risky and provide uncertain outcomes in dryland environments.
- The proposed approach is therefore to have a small, intensively managed predator-proof fenced enhancement area. Full predator control would be undertaken in this area, along with habitat enhancement for multiple flora/fauna groups. The enclosure would be centred around one (or both) of the eastern gullies and adjoining outwash terrace, where the highest ecological values are currently found. The most appropriate size, location and habitat enhancement measures need further consideration based on outcomes of the quantitative flora/fauna surveys and discussions with input from DOC specialists. It is anticipated that an appropriate size would be 12-15ha.
- The enclosure can include diverse habitats such as shrubland, tussockland, herbfield, stone piles, woody debris. It could also consider herbfield creation, but the success of such action is unproven and therefore likely risky.
- Avifauna compensation measures already discussed with DOC will also be retained.
- A few clusters of indigenous woody vegetation planting would also be included in the wider c.82ha, with the aim of increasing diversity across the site and providing potential seed sources in the long term.

Some other comments –

- The predator proof fence size and shape will likely be a compromise between covering as much good habitat as possible, while also having as small a perimeter:area ratio as possible to keep costs and maintenance down and increase the efficacy of the fence. There will need to be control, monitoring and surveillance inside the fence, and over time pest control and monitoring can be taken out and just leave the surveillance.

- Specific areas of habitats would be created and maintained within the enclosure that favour lizards, invertebrates and flora. For example, the best grasshopper habitat for inclusion within the fence is open gravel and rock with mosses, lichens and a few scattered herbs. Not upright shrubs or a lot of grasses. They like Raoulia, native broom, pōhuehue, and coprosmas are good for other invertebrates. Sustained targeted pest plant control may also be required to maintain some habitats.
- Comparable sanctuaries include the Mokomoko Dryland Sanctuary (14ha) at Alexandra and the Macraes Flat enclosure (18ha). We'd suggest a minimum of 12-15ha for The Point Solar.
- Construction costs are likely to be in the order of \$300 per metre (minimum) for a mammal-proof fence.

Preferred potential locations should incorporate one or both eastern gullies, as these contain known ecological values associated with flora and lizards and enable diverse habitats to be restored (including shrublands, dry terrace scarps and bouldery substrates, dry terrace edges). Matt Baber was in agreement that these were the best locations to consider, subject to the quantitative surveys not showing any unexpected values elsewhere.

