

12 June 2026

The Point Solar Farm
Fast Track Approvals
Environmental Protection Authority
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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

FTAA-2500-1100 – FAR NORTH SOLAR FARM – THE POINT SOLAR FARM- REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (#12)

Thank you for your letter dated 3 June 2026 requesting further information as directed by the Point Solar Farm Expert Panel (the **Expert Panel**). This letter provides a joint response to the Expert Panel on behalf of mana whenua and their planning representatives.

We understand that the Environmental Protection Authority (**EPA**) is seeking further information regarding the updated ecology information and associated updated conditions provided by the applicant (**Far North Solar Farm**), relating to the Point Solar Farm application.

We understand that consideration of the following matters would be of assistance to the Expert Panel:

- a) *Whether the updated ecology information satisfies (in whole or in part) any concerns previously expressed.*
- b) *Whether you consider there are material deficiencies in the information before the Panel.*
- c) *What further amendments you consider are required to the updated condition sets, as to any ecology matters.*

OVERVIEW OF POSITION

Since the substantive application entered an extended period of suspension,¹ there has been limited engagement with the applicant. The last in-person meeting between mana whenua and their planning representatives, and the applicant was held on 31 March 2026. Subsequent email correspondence between planning representatives for mana whenua and the applicant concluded on 29 April 2026, in anticipation of the application coming off suspension the following day. However, the application remained suspended until 2 June 2026 and, since that time, no further updates or communication has been received from the applicant.

We understood that the continued suspension was necessary to allow the applicant sufficient time to respond to the outstanding requests for further information and undertake the additional survey work required by the Expert Panel.

It was anticipated that the responses to the request for further information would include broad and species-specific assessments relating to vegetation, avifauna, lizards, invertebrates and associated

¹ Originally suspended until 30 April 2026 and subsequently extended to through to 30 May 2026. Processing resumed 2 June 2026.

management responses, including monitoring and adaptive management measures.² However, having reviewed the updated ecological information, mana whenua consider that important information gaps remain.

The matters raised in the following sections of this response reflect the ongoing concerns and information gaps that mana whenua consider remain unresolved. These comments focus on matters that are of particular relevance to mana whenua and are closely aligned with concerns that have been previously raised through engagement with the applicant and previous submissions to the Expert Panel.

Consequently, the matters raised in this response should not be new to the applicant, in particular, our previous comments focused on enabling a comprehensive understanding of the potential ecological effects of the solar farm; the proposed management framework; and the outcomes anticipated from that framework. Mana whenua request that particular attention is given to the effects on avifauna, reflecting the ongoing concerns that have been raised in relation to both the Haldon and The Point solar farm projects.

Updated Ecology Information and Conditions

The updated ecology information and associated conditions of consent is understood to comprise the additional material provided in response to Request for Further Information #5 (RFI 5) and Request for Further Information #10 (RFI 10). For ease of reference, the following sections provide comments in relation to each request for further information.

REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION #5

3.1 Broad assessment of ecological package

In RFI 5, the Expert Panel raised concerns regarding the adequacy of the ecological effects assessment and the proposed effects management framework, identifying information gaps that created uncertainty as to whether adverse ecological effects would be appropriately addressed. The Panel also noted that only a partial update to the ecological effects assessment had been provided. The Panel requested further information on all nationally threatened or at-risk flora and fauna known or potentially present within the Project area to address these concerns. As noted above, this anticipated further information was subsequently reiterated in Minute 17.

Despite this, the applicant's response to section 3.1 of RFI 5 does not appear to provide any substantive additional information addressing these identified gaps. Instead, the response largely cross-references existing material prepared by Wildlands Consultants, including the original ecological assessment, the draft Terrestrial Invertebrate Management Plan³, and the suite of draft ecological management plans. Reference is also made to information contained within responses to section 53 comments, with no further detail as to which comments might be of most relevance.

On face value, the response appears inconsistent with the scope of information that the Expert Panel requested, particularly given the rationale for the extended suspensions of the application.

At a practical level, the extensive cross-referencing to existing material, with limited guidance as to where relevant information can be found or how it addresses the matters raised by the Expert Panel, makes it difficult to understand how the applicant has addressed the request for information. Consequently, mana whenua, and their planning representatives have been left to independently review a substantial volume

² As noted in Minute 17 of the Expert Panel

³ No. 6621h-ii

of material to identify the relevant information and determine which aspects of the existing material remain applicable given the evolving nature of the project.

It is further noted that some of the referenced material is either incorrectly identified or could not be located within the publicly available Fast-Track documentation. For example, the response refers to draft ecological management plans dated April 2026, whereas the versions available on the Fast-track website are dated March 2026. Similarly, reference is made to a Wildlands Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE) dated 2025; however, no such document could be located. The only relevant assessment identified was the original Assessment of Ecological Effects.⁴

Mana whenua have consistently emphasised that their concerns are interconnected and, when viewed through a Kāi Tahu lens, require a holistic understanding of environmental effects and associated management responses. Following the last in-person engagement with the applicant, and as recorded in mana whenua response to Minute 10⁵ of the Haldon Solar Expert Panel, concerns were raised regarding the anticipated focus of the remaining ecological responses. The responses appeared likely to focus predominantly on avifauna-specific matters, with limited consideration of the broader ecological context, associated effects and management responses.

Notwithstanding, the comments below assess the extent to which the information currently available addresses the matters raised by the Expert Panel in RFI 5 3.1 (a) and (b) and mana whenua concerns.

- a) *Residual effects for each threatened or at-risk species known or likely to be impacted after efforts to avoid, minimise or remedy, but before application of residual effects management. This includes-***
- i) *Address uncertainties arising from limitations in survey effort, particularly for lizard, invertebrates and plants.***
 - ii) *The expected magnitude of each type of effect is amalgamated into an overall project effect for each species***
 - iii) *The interplay between the threat status and the magnitude of effect, to arrive at a transparent overall level of residual effect.***

Comments:

The draft Terrestrial Invertebrate Management Plan (March 2026) provides additional information regarding anticipated effects on grasshopper and wētā populations before and after implementation of management measures. The assessment concludes that effects would be minor without management and less than minor to negligible following implementation of management measures. However, it is unclear whether the applicant anticipates there will be residual adverse effects following implementation of those management measures.

In relation to avifauna effects, the draft Avifauna Management Plan (March 2026) identifies five potential effects and refers readers to the Wildlands AEE (2025) for further detail. As noted above, that document could not be located on the Fast Track website. However, the original Assessment of Ecological Effects (May 2023) identifies the same effects and assesses their magnitude prior to mitigation, with effects ranging from minor to more than minor.

While the Avifauna Management Plan identifies measures intended to avoid, minimise or remedy adverse effects, it does not clearly identify the level of residual adverse effects expected to remain once those

⁴ Wildlands Report No. 6621c), dated May 2023

⁵ Request for further information directed by the Haldon Solar Expert Panel, dated 2 April 2026.

measures have been implemented. As a result, an information gap remains in relation to the assessment of avifauna effects.

A similar issue arises in relation to lizard species. The draft Lizard Management Plan identifies potential effects and associated management responses but does not clearly assess the residual adverse effects expected to remain following implementation of those measures.

For plant species, the information currently available appears to comprise the original Assessment of Ecological Effects (May 2023), survey work undertaken between January and February 2026, and the draft Vegetation Management Plan (March 2026). While the additional survey work provides further information on ecological values, including the identification of previously unrecorded plant species, there remains no clear assessment of the effects on indigenous vegetation or threatened plant species, including any residual adverse effects following implementation of management measures. The Vegetation Management Plan largely focuses on identifying vegetation values and management responses rather than providing a clear assessment of effects.

More broadly, while the response states that a precautionary approach has been adopted where survey limitations exist, it provides limited explanation as to how uncertainties have been accounted for, particularly in relation to lizards, invertebrates and vegetation. The response also does not clearly explain how the magnitude of effects and species threat status have been considered together to determine the overall residual adverse effects for each species.

Accordingly, RFI 5(3)(a)(i)–(iii) does not appear to have been fully addressed, and information gaps remain in relation to the residual adverse effects on threatened or at-risk species. This limits the ability of mana whenua to develop a holistic understanding of the potential ecological effects of the Project and, in turn, assess the extent to which the proposed management, monitoring and adaptive management measures are sufficient to address those effects.

As a way forward, the applicant may want to consider providing a consolidated and up to date assessment of ecological effects that provides relevant information for all threatened flora and fauna and at-risk species in one document so that it is clear what aspects have been covered, where remaining gaps need to be filled and how the management plans work in collaboration to manage ecological effects prior to, during and post construction of the solar farm.

b) Assessment of expected outcomes after proposed residual effects management measures have been considered. This includes-

- i) The expected biodiversity outcome following residual effects management for each species, in term of either:***
 - a. No net loss; or***
 - b. Net positive; or***
 - c. Uncertain; or***
 - d. Net loss.***
- ii) An assessment of the proposed residual effects management package against commonly applied offsetting or compensation principles.***

Comments:

As noted above, information gaps appear to remain for the assessment of ecological effects (including residual adverse effects) on all threatened or at-risk species. In the absence of this information, it is difficult to understand how a fulsome response can be provided for RFI 5(3)(b).

The applicant's response does not introduce any further substantive information and appears to largely cross-reference existing Wildlands documentation. While the response indicates that a precautionary approach has been adopted where uncertainty remains and suggests that potential interactions with threatened or at-risk species have largely been avoided through project design, little explanation is provided as to how the Wildlands conclusions have informed the anticipated biodiversity outcomes. As a result, it remains unclear whether the applicant considers the Project will result in a net loss, no net loss, net positive outcome, or whether uncertainty remains for the species identified. Similarly, no clear assessment is provided against the effects management hierarchy and the offsetting or compensation principles.

Accordingly, mana whenua, and their planning representatives remain unclear as to the anticipated biodiversity outcomes and whether those outcomes are expected to constitute a net loss, no net loss, net positive outcome, or an uncertain outcome for affected species. It is also unclear how the management package aligns in terms of the offsetting or compensation principles of the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

3.3 Avifauna Impacts

3.3(a)–(e) Avifauna Compensation Funding Related Questions

Comments:

Mana whenua, and their planning representatives acknowledge the applicant's commitment to provide upfront funding for the proposed Avifauna Compensation Strategy (ACS) without requiring a trigger event (i.e. bird mortality). Through discussions with both the applicant and the Department of Conservation (DOC), it is understood that provision of the full funding amount prior to construction of the solar farm reflects, in part, the broader risk that the Project presents to avifauna and provides greater certainty that funding will be available to support targeted conservation programmes administered by DOC.

The response also indicates that the funding will be secured for the identified conservation programmes and will not be reallocated to other DOC initiatives. This approach is supported in principle, as are the proposed conservation responses and programmes. To ensure the funding associated with the ACS eventuates if consents are granted, it is critical that the appropriate contractual arrangements are put in place with the applicant and/or any potential third party that oversees the construction and operation of the proposed solar farm prior to consents being approved.

In relation to the development and implementation of the ACS and associated compensation framework, Mana whenua support the involvement of DOC and anticipate that opportunities for further input into its development and implementation would be available through the Kaitiaki Governance Group. The delivery of compensation measures may also be an appropriate matter to incorporate into the Strategic Cultural Programme and provide opportunities for mana whenua involvement.

3.3.5 Population-Level Impact Thresholds & Adaptive Management Options

- i) maximum sustainable annual mortality rates for regional kaki population***
- ii) population consequences of 1-2 adult kaki deaths per year***

Comments:

Mana whenua have consistently raised concerns about the potential population-level effects of injury to, or mortality of, threatened or at-risk bird species. The attention of mana whenua has focused on the recovery efforts for kākī, a taonga species for Ngāi Tahu, given its very low population size. Mana whenua repeated this concern in their most recent comments on the Haldon Solar Farm project (April 2026) and

sought further clarification on the likelihood of threatened or at-risk bird species being injured or killed and the potential population-level consequences of those events.

The applicant's response broadly aligns with the updated ecological information prepared for the Haldon Solar Farm project. The response acknowledges that avifauna collision risk remains difficult to predict because New Zealand-specific data is limited, species-specific flight path information is difficult to obtain, and there are few comparable international studies. Notwithstanding these limitations, the response accepts that the loss of one or two adult kākī per year could be ecologically significant, given the species' nationally critical conservation status and very small population size. Wildlands also describes collision risk for key threatened species as uncertain, but generally within the low to moderate range.

Accordingly, it is understood that a significant focus of the applicant's ecological management response has been the development of monitoring, carcass detection and adaptive management measures intended to identify and respond to unforeseen avifauna effects should they arise. Based on previous engagement with the applicant, mana whenua understand that the effectiveness of the proposed trigger framework for avifauna mortality is heavily dependent on robust monitoring and carcass detection programmes. It is also understood that the use of conservative trigger thresholds is intended, in part, to account for the limitations associated with predicting avifauna interactions with the solar farm.

Based on the information currently available for both Haldon and The Point solar farm projects, mana whenua anticipate that some uncertainty about population-level effects is likely to remain as the potential magnitude and significance of adverse effects on threatened or at-risk bird species cannot yet be assessed with confidence. However, the extent to which the proposed management measures (including adaptive management responses) will ultimately reduce or address those effects is currently unclear and will likely depend on the nature and scale of any effects observed during operation.

Given these circumstances, mana whenua consider it essential that any monitoring, trigger and adaptive management framework is robust enough to identify and respond to unforeseen adverse effects at the earliest opportunity. Mana whenua are not yet confident that a sufficient level of detail has been provided to satisfy their concerns.

To address this uncertainty, Mana Whenua consider there would be value in confirming potential response options in advance of any mortality event, including a draft response plan to help minimise delays between identifying an event and implementing an appropriate management response, particularly where threatened or at-risk species, including kākī, are involved. This draft response plan could be explored further with DOC and incorporated into the suite of conditions if the consent was to be granted.

REQUEST FOR FURTHER INFORMATION #10

In RFI 10, the Expert Panel broadly sought further information regarding the relationship between the draft management plans and corresponding conditions of consent. The Expert Panel also sought revised plans for the proposed development to be included with the latest draft conditions.

1 (a) How can management plans that are not linked to conditions be considered by the Panel in the decision-making process?

1 (b) if it is intended to be linked provide amendments to reflect this.

Comments:

It is understood that, in response to RFI points 1(a) and 1(b), the applicant has elected to remove the four identified draft management plans. It is understood that the four removed plans relate to biosecurity,

construction fire risk, soil monitoring and substation construction. The applicant states that the rationale for doing so is to maintain a clear and streamlined condition framework and avoid potential confusion.

While this approach addresses the issue raised by the Expert Panel regarding management plans that are not linked to consent conditions, it is unclear how the matters previously addressed by those plans are now proposed to be managed. This raises further questions as to whether the associated effects management responses have been adequately incorporated elsewhere within the proposed condition framework.

In the absence of any further explanation, it is unclear whether these matters are now addressed through other consent conditions and/or management plans. Clarification on the applicant's intended approach would therefore be helpful.

As a general observation, sections 6 and 7 of the draft Vegetation Management Plan appear to address biosecurity management during both the construction and operational phases of the Project. It is therefore possible that these provisions are intended to replace the former Biosecurity Management Plan, however, this is not expressly stated and remains unclear.

1 (c) include the additional ecological information into updated sets of conditions.

The applicant's response states that only very minor changes have been made to the conditions. This may be in part due to the limited amount of further ecological information that appears to have been supplied in response to RFI 5 ecological matters. Notwithstanding, the inclusion of the mana whenua specific conditions (including the Kaitiaki Governance Group and Strategic Cultural Programme) is confirmed to be consistent with the draft wording that was previously supplied to the applicant at the last in-person hui (31 March 2026). This inclusion is supported by mana whenua, and their planning representatives.

In terms of the Avifauna related conditions the following key comments are provided:

Nature of the response to threshold exceedance

The proposed trigger levels for bird mortality events set out in Condition 95 of the Mackenzie District Council suite of conditions (Attachment 9B) are supported in principle and are understood to represent a conservative threshold for bird mortality events. The inclusion of taonga species within the trigger framework is also supported.

However, it is unclear how the reference to "Compensation" in Condition 95 is intended to operate. Conditions 99–101 require the preparation of a Bird Collision Management Plan where the prescribed trigger thresholds are exceeded, and Condition 101 states that the purpose of the Plan is to minimise the risk of bird collisions and avoid further exceedance of the mortality thresholds. The measures identified in the condition appear to comprise adaptive management responses aimed at preventing future collision risk.

In this regard, it is unclear whether the conditions anticipate additional compensation measures beyond the upfront Avifauna Compensation Strategy, or whether adaptive management is intended to be the primary response to trigger exceedances. Further clarification would assist mana whenua in understanding the intended effects management framework and the relationship between compensation and adaptive management within the proposed conditions.

Timeliness of response

As discussed above in relation to RFI 5, mana whenua have concerns regarding the potential lag between the identification of a mortality event and the implementation of measures to prevent further mortality.

Under Condition 100, a Bird Collision Management Plan is not required to be submitted to Mackenzie District Council for certification until 40 working days after a trigger threshold has been exceeded.

While it is acknowledged that an appropriate long-term response will depend on the circumstances of an event and may be difficult to determine in advance, mana whenua consider there would be value in developing an interim response framework prior to operation of the solar farm. This could include the preparation of a draft response plan that identifies potential management actions, responsibilities and decision-making processes should a trigger threshold be exceeded.

Mana whenua consider this particularly important given the proposed trigger thresholds are intended to identify mortality events that may warrant further investigation or management intervention. In the absence of an agreed interim response, there is a risk that additional mortality events could occur while a Bird Collision Management Plan is being prepared, reviewed and certified. This is of particular concern where threatened or at-risk species are involved, as even a small number of fatalities may have population-level consequences.

Such an approach should help reduce delays in implementing management responses and provide greater confidence to mana whenua that further mortality events can be minimised while longer-term adaptive management measures are being developed and certified.

OTHER MATTERS

Whilst not directly related to the ecological information, mana whenua want it noted that the assessment of the Sites and Areas of Significance to Māori (SASM) provisions in the Mackenzie District Plan, which was expected to be undertaken collaboratively between mana whenua (and supported by their planning representatives) and the applicant, did not eventuate.

Instead, the SASM assessment prepared by the applicant was provided to mana whenua for comment the day before the RFI response deadline. As a result, the assessment was ultimately presented as two separate responses, with the mana whenua response highlighting the relevance of the SASM provisions to the proposal and identifying opportunities for more meaningful consideration of those provisions.

It is also noted that the associated email correspondence was proposed to be included with the assessment to assist the Expert Panel in understanding the limitations of the assessment, and the constraints on mana whenua to provide feedback. However, this correspondence does not appear to have been included in the material provided to the Expert Panel.

Despite the application remaining suspended until 2 June 2026, no further engagement was undertaken by the applicant to revisit or progress the SASM assessment.

Mana whenua and their planning representatives are happy to provide this additional correspondence if this would assist the Panel.

CONCLUSION

Mana whenua, and their planning representatives consider that significant information gaps remain in relation to the assessment of residual adverse ecological effects, the anticipated biodiversity outcomes and the effectiveness of the proposed management framework. In particular, uncertainty remains regarding the potential population-level effects on threatened and at-risk avifauna species and the extent to which the proposed management responses will address those effects.

Notwithstanding these matters, Mana whenua, TRoNT, AECL and Aukaha acknowledge the constructive engagement that has occurred with the applicant throughout much of the substantive application process and remain open to further engagement should the applicant wish to do so.

Key Contacts

Please contact AECL's Principal Planner, Kylie Hall, on [REDACTED] if you have any questions or require further clarification from AECL.

Please contact Aukaha's Senior Planner, Tim Vial, on [REDACTED] if you have any questions or require further clarification from Aukaha.

Please contact TRoNT's Senior Planner, Amy Beran, on [REDACTED] if you have any questions or require further clarification from TRoNT.

Kā mihi,



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