



Vegetation and Habitat Survey of The Point Solar Farm, January 2026

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1.0 Introduction

Far North Solar Farms Ltd (FNSF) has applied under the fast-track approvals bill to establish a new solar farm on a site at the northern end of Lake Benmore, in the Mackenzie District in South Canterbury (The Point Solar Farm).

The Fast Track Panel have issued several minutes pertaining to the application and in a meeting with FNSF and Wildland Consultants Ltd (Wildlands) on the 16 January 2026 requested more information on ecological aspects of the application. One of the requests made was for an updated vegetation and habitats survey of the site given the farmer has undertaken some cultivation.

This memo summarises vegetation surveys that have previously been conducted at the site, and presents the outcome of an additional one-day vegetation and habitat survey of The Point Solar Farm undertaken on 20 January 2026.

2.0 Scope

The scope of this memo is to provide the following:

- A summary of the Wildlands vegetation and habitat survey undertaken on 12 December 2022, and the AgScience site visit conducted on 17 December 2025.
- An updated vegetation and habitats map and vegetation descriptions from a site survey conducted by Wildlands on 20 January 2026.
- Representative photographs of the vegetation and habitats from 20 January 2026.

Responses to the other ecological questions raised by the Panel are addressed in separate memos.

3.0 Summary of the Wildlands December 2022 vegetation and habitats survey

The initial terrestrial vegetation survey of the site was conducted by Wildlands on 12 December 2022. Vegetation and associated habitat types were mapped and described following the structural classes of Atkinson (1985). Field mapping was digitised onto aerial imagery using ArcGIS 10.8. All vascular plant species observed were listed.

A walk-through lizard survey was conducted on the same day, and an avifauna survey the following day using transects. A walk-through survey of invertebrates and their habitats was undertaken on 2 February 2023.

The 2022 vegetation survey found that almost the entire site was farmland, and a large part of it was cultivated and cropped seasonally. The vegetation cover at The Point Solar Farm was predominantly grazed exotic grassland and cropland, with some small remnants of indigenous dryland and shrubland communities around the margins. No wetlands were found on the site. Five vegetation and habitat types were identified on the site:



- Sweet briar-matagouri shrubland.
- Cocksfoot grassland.
- Brassica cropland.
- Brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel grassland/herbfield.
- Stonefield drylands.

4.0 AgScience site visit on 17 December 2025

A subsequent site survey was conducted by AgScience on 17 December 2025¹. The AgScience memo concluded the following:

- The entire site has been cultivated and converted to dryland pasture.
- No indigenous vegetation communities are present in the proposed solar development area.
- Due to this no significant floristic values remain and no further ecological assessment is required.
- This high degree of modification would also eliminate natural habitat for indigenous fauna.

No mapping of vegetation was provided in this survey, and the vegetation communities on the cultivated land were not described. It is also unclear if the cultivation had affected all areas of the site, including plant communities with notable indigenous species such as the stonefield drylands and sweet briar-matagouri shrubland, or whether cultivation was limited to the proposed solar farm footprint.

5.0 Additional Wildlands vegetation and habitats survey 20 January 2026

Photographs and anecdotal comments supplied to Wildlands in January 2026 suggest that most of the site was cultivated or seed drilled in early 2025. A photograph of part of the site taken in January 2025 (supplied by FNSF) shows bare, recently cultivated ground on that part of the site. It is therefore possible that vegetation cover at the site has changed since the Wildlands December 2022 survey, possibly also changing indigenous flora and fauna habitat values.

Wildlands was asked by FNSF to undertake a further site visit to clarify if the vegetation and habitats at The Point Solar Farm had changed since the December 2022 surveys. This further vegetation survey was conducted on 20 January 2026 by a vegetation ecologist. Vegetation and habitat types were mapped over the site, with a particular focus on determining any areas of the site that had different vegetation and habitats present than in the previous Wildlands survey and mapping. General vegetation patterns were observed by a drive-through survey, combined with more detailed walk-through inspections at many points across the site. A total of seven hours was spent on site.

Vegetation cover at The Point Solar Farm remains predominantly grazed exotic grassland and cropland, with some small remnants of indigenous dryland and shrubland communities around the margins. Six vegetation and habitat types were mapped at the site (Figure A):

1. Sweet briar-matagouri shrubland.
2. Sweet briar/socksfoot grassland.

¹ Espie, P. 2025. 'The Point' Solar Farm Site Inspection. AgScience Ltd, 19 December 2025. 1p.



3. Cocksfoot-lucerne-haresfoot trefoil grassland.
4. High producing exotic pasture.
5. Brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield.
6. Stonefield drylands.

Overall, the site showed only very minor changes in vegetation and habitats since the 2022 survey, summarised as follows:

- Almost all areas mapped as cocksfoot grassland in 2022 have since been cultivated and drilled (most likely in January 2025), and now comprise a similar but slightly sparser grassland dominated by cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), lucerne (*Medicago sativa*), and haresfoot trefoil (*Trifolium arvense*) (see Vegetation Type 3 in Figure A).
- One paddock mapped as cocksfoot grassland in 2022 has not been cultivated since then, and now contains a notable component of sweet briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*) amongst a dense cocksfoot grassland (see Vegetation Type 2 in Figure A).
- A small paddock at the northwest of the site mapped as cocksfoot grassland in 2022 has also not been cultivated since then, and comprises brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield (see Vegetation Type 5 in Figure A) with scattered sweet briar and Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). This paddock also contains a population of the indigenous grassland sedge (*Carex breviculmis*; Not Threatened) in its western margin.
- Areas mapped as brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel grassland/herbfield in 2022 may have been drilled in 2022 but showed less evidence of cultivation since 2022. They retain a similar vegetation composition, except for a slightly increased relative abundance of haresfoot trefoil in places (see Vegetation Type 5 in Figure A).
- Within the irrigated area, high producing exotic pasture has replaced the brassica cropland of 2022 (see Vegetation Type 4 in Figure A).

Updated descriptions of vegetation and habitats are presented below.

1. Sweet briar-matagouri shrubland

This shrubland is unchanged since the 2022 survey, and the description here is copied from that report.

This type is confined to two small patches in shallow gullies on the eastern edge of the site. Vegetation in these areas is dominated by exotic sweet briar with indigenous tūmatakuru/matagouri (*Discaria toumatou*), porcupine shrub (*Melicytus alpinus*) and mingimingi (*Coprosma propinqua*) (Plate 1). Scattered exotic pines (mostly *Pinus contorta*) are emergent in places above the shrubs. There are also open areas, rocky ground, and exotic weeds, including mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) and haresfoot trefoil. Indigenous hard tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*) and creeping pōhuehue (*Muehlenbeckia axillaris*) are also locally common.

2. Sweet briar/cocksfoot grassland

Tall and dense cocksfoot to over one metre in height dominates the grassland, with some clovers (mostly *Trifolium repens* and *T. pratense*), lucerne, sweet vernal (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Shrubs of sweet briar are frequently present to 1.5 metres in height.



3. Cocksfoot-lucerne-haresfoot trefoil grassland

This vegetation has developed following cultivation in early 2025, but is very similar to the cocksfoot grassland described in the 2022 survey. The main difference since 2022 is an overall reduced abundance of cocksfoot and an increased abundance of lucerne and haresfoot trefoil. The grassland varies in height and composition across the site, with the dominant species being cocksfoot, lucerne, haresfoot trefoil, mouse-ear hawkweed and sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). In some places the grass is dense and over one metre tall where it is dominated by cocksfoot. But in most areas, it is shorter and less dense, and comprises a mixture of lucerne, haresfoot trefoil and cocksfoot. Other species present include white clover, ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), sweet vernal, and red fescue.

Fencelines and site margins at the north of the site and around the irrigated area contain a taller vegetation community dominated by tall cocksfoot with some sweet briar, yarrow (*Achille millefolium*), moth mullein (*Verbascum virgatum*), and narrow-leaved plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). Taller grassland vegetation is also present along the margins of vehicle tracks, notably along the north-south track that runs down the site between this vegetation type and the brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield to the east.

4. High producing exotic grassland

The circular area of land under a centre-pivot irrigator contains high producing exotic grassland, which has replaced the brassica crop present in 2022. At the time of the survey the grassland was short, and included species of clover.

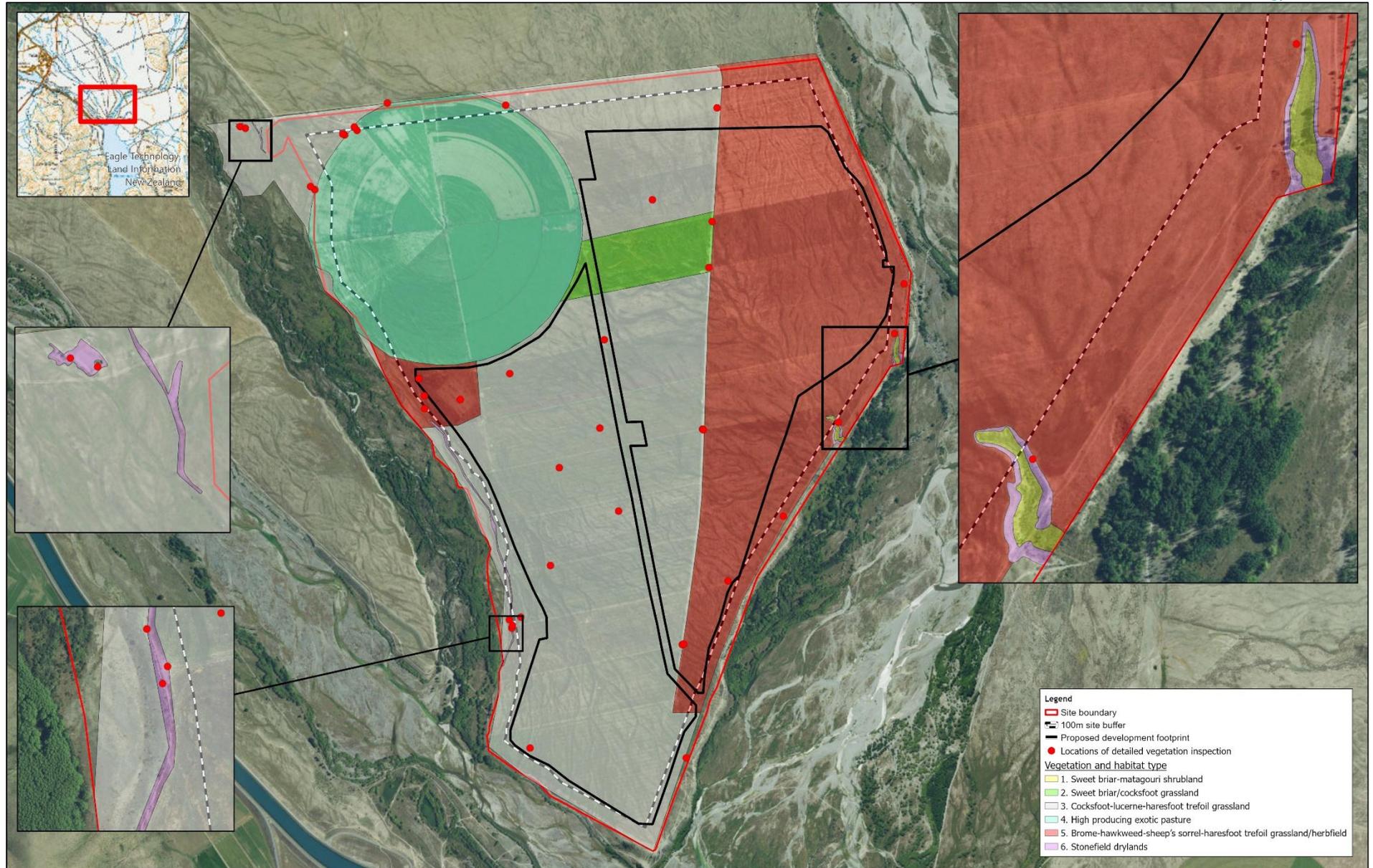
5. Brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield

These areas remain relatively unchanged since the 2022 survey. They appear to have been cultivated in the past but have not been resown recently (i.e. since 2022). The vegetation comprises a wide range of exotic grasses and herbs, the most abundant being brome grasses (*Bromus tectorum* and *B. hordeaceus*), mouse-ear hawkweed, sheep's sorrel, and haresfoot trefoil. Other common species include cocksfoot, ryegrass, sweet vernal, clovers, lucerne, viper's bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), and chicory (*Cichorium intybus*). It appears that haresfoot trefoil has increased in abundance since the 2022 survey in some areas.

6. Stonefield drylands

This vegetation and habitat type is unchanged since the 2022 survey, and the description here is copied from that report.

Areas of stonefield and indigenous dryland vegetation are confined to the tops of old river terraces on the margins of the site. These areas are generally dominated by exotic weeds and grasses with mouse-ear hawkweed and haresfoot trefoil both abundant. However, local pockets of indigenous dryland vegetation persist on stony ground. Indigenous species observed in these areas included creeping pōhuehue, maikaika/onion orchid (*Microtis unifolia*), blue wheatgrass (*Anthosachne solandri*) scabweed (*Raoulia hookeri*), and NZ harebell (*Wahlenbergia albomarginata*). Two At Risk - Declining species, mat daisy (*Raoulia australis*) and stout dwarf broom (*Carmichaelia monroi*), and Maniototo cress (*Lepidium solandri* Threatened – Nationally Critical), were recorded just outside the site boundary.



Data Acknowledgment

Map contains data sourced from LINZ
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Report: 6621C
 Client: Far North Solar Farms
 Ref: 12573
 Path: \\w4\gis\gis2\gis\Ohau Solar farm\mxd
 File: VegHab_2026.mxd

Figure A. Vegetation and habitats at The Point site, January 2026



Wildlands
 www.wildlands.co.nz 0808 WILDLANDS
 Scale: 1:20,000
 Date: 21/01/2026
 Cartographer: HM
 Format: A3R



6.0 Flora

No vascular plant species additional to those observed in the 2022 survey were noted during the 2026 survey. However, a few *Raoulia australis* cushions were noted in the base of the gullies at the east of the site – previously this species was only noted outside of the site boundary. Observations of indigenous plants were again confined to the margins of the site, outside of the development footprint.

The northwestern patch of brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield contained indigenous flora that was not specifically referenced in the 2022 survey. First, a small population of grassland sedge is present within the western portion of this habitat, numbering over 100 individuals. This population is outside of the proposed development footprint. Second, resurrection lichen (*Xanthoparmelia semiviridis*; At Risk - Declining) was scattered within the western and central areas of this habitat, with some noted just within the proposed development footprint. This lichen is frequently found in high abundances in dry, sparsely vegetated areas of the eastern South island high country.

7.0 Indigenous fauna habitat

Overview

Given the similar vegetation and habitats found on the site in 2026, the conclusions reached in 2022 regarding avifauna, lizard and invertebrate habitat are still applicable. Despite the high degree of modification at the site, habitat for indigenous fauna is present at the site, including within the development footprint, although this is often of a low to negligible quality.

Lizard habitat

Most of the site, including the sweet briar/cocksfoot grassland, cocksfoot-lucerne-haresfoot trefoil grassland, and brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield, is still considered to comprise potential lizard habitat that is only of low to negligible quality. McCann's skink may be present in low densities in these habitats. Populations may persist along fencelines and vehicle track verges, where taller grassland remains intact even during periodic cultivation activities.

Areas of high-quality lizard habitat are also present on the site but outside of the proposed development footprint, including the areas of stonefield dryland and sweet briar-matagouri shrubland, particularly where there are relatively deep rock piles amongst indigenous shrubland vegetation (i.e. embedded cobbles at the bottom of talus slopes). These areas could potentially support threatened species (i.e. Lakes skink and/or scree skink), which are known from similar habitat in the Mackenzie Basin.



8.0 Representative photographs from the 20 January 2026 site visit



Plate 1: Sweet briar/cockfoot grassland within the proposed development footprint.



Plate 2: Cocksfoot-lucerne-haresfoot trefoil grassland, here dominated by lucerne and haresfoot trefoil.



Plate 3: Cocksfoot-lucerne-haresfoot trefoil grassland, here dominated by cocksfoot and sheep's sorrel.



Plate 4: Brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield near the centre of the site.



Plate 5: Brome-hawkweed-sheep's sorrel-haresfoot trefoil grassland/herbfield at the south of the site.



Plate 6: Grassland sedge at the northwest of the site, outside of the proposed development area.