Attachment 10: Western Bays Solar Farm Referral Application – Assessment of Applicable National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards

National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation 2011, (amended December 2025) (NPS-REG 2011)

The NPS-REG 2011 applies to renewable electricity generation activities at all scales, and covers the construction, operation, maintenance and upgrading of new and existing structures associated with renewable electricity generation.

The objective of the NPS-REG is to:

> (a) ensure the national, regional and local benefits of REG are provided for;
>
> (b) enable REG capacity and output to significantly increase;
>
> (c) enable REG to support the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities, and for their health and safety;
>
> (d) enable REG to provide greater security of electricity supply and resilience to supply disruptions to all people and communities;
>
> (e) enable REG to support achieving New Zealand's emission reduction target and implementation of the emissions reduction plan under the Climate Change Response Act 2002; and
>
> (f) ensure REG is developed and operated in a safe, efficient and effective manner while managing the adverse effects from or on REG activities.

The policies that implement the objective, and are of relevance to the proposed activities are:

- National significance and benefits of renewable electricity generation (Policy A).
- Operational need or functional need for REG assets and activities to be in particular locations and environments (Policy C).
- Recognising and providing for Māori interests (Policy E).
- Enabling and managing the effects of REG assets and activities on the environment (Policy F).

The Project is consistent with the objectives and policies of the NPS-REG as:

- This Project acknowledges and promotes the benefits of renewable electricity generation, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and contributing to sustainable development. The Project would improve the security and diversity of electricity supply and provide significant economic benefits.
- The Project will generate clean, renewable electricity to power the equivalent of 113,000 typical New Zealand homes annually. This increased resilience in power supply is significant, especially given New Zealand is forecast to need approximately 70% more electricity by 2050 given the continuing electrification in private vehicles, transport and industry sectors.

- Increasing New Zealand's solar energy resource will support the national economy during periods when power from other renewable energy sources is not sufficient to meet demand. For example, during periods of low rainfall in the headwaters of the country's hydroelectric schemes or periods of low wind speeds impacting wind farms.
- The selection of the site has sought to minimise adverse effects on natural resources and cultural values while also being in proximity to the National Grid as a functional requirement (Policy C).

National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022 (NPS-HPL 2022 (Amended 2025))

The objective of the NPS-HPL is to protect highly productive land for use in land-based primary production both now and for future generations. The NPS-HPL provides a framework that protects highly productive land from inappropriate subdivision, land use and development. The majority of the site is mapped as LUC Class 3 on the New Zealand Land Resource Inventory maps. As from December 2025, there is now an exemption for land use and development on LUC-3 land. In addition, the construction and operation of a solar farm falls within the definition of 'specified infrastructure' under the NPS-HPL. The NPS-HPL specifically recognises in clause 3.9(2)(j) that development and operation of specified infrastructure on highly productive land is not an inappropriate use. Meridian Energy Limited is a lifeline utility, being an entity that will generate electricity for distribution through a network or distribute electricity through a network. Therefore, the Project is specified infrastructure and not on highly productive land, and so is exempt from the restrictions of the NPS-HPL.

National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards 2025

The NPS for Natural Hazards does not apply to infrastructure (as defined in the RMA) or primary production (as defined in the National Planning Standards).

National Policy Statement on Indigenous Biodiversity 2023 (Amended 2024) (NPS – IB)

The NPS IB does not apply to the development of renewable electricity generation assets [section 1.3 (3)].

National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management 2020 (NPS FM 2020) and National Environmental Standard (NES Freshwater)

The NPS FM 2020 sets a national policy framework for managing freshwater quality and quantity. It seeks to prioritise the well-being of water bodies and freshwater systems, health and needs of people, and the well-being of communities now and in the future. The policies, relevant to this proposal, seek to ensure there is no further loss of extent of natural inland wetlands, their values are protected, and their restoration is promoted, and habitats of indigenous freshwater species and freshwater values are improved. The ecology memo (**Attachment 7**) accompanying the referral application outlines the identification of wetlands. The solar farm layout as presented in this application avoids all wetlands with at least 10 m setbacks. There are also no watercourses affected by the project. For these reasons the Project is consistent with the NPS FM 2020.

Resource Management (National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminants in Soil to Protect Human Health) Regulations 2011 (NES Soil)

A Preliminary Site Investigation and Detailed Site Investigation have been undertaken and have identified activities consistent with the existing agricultural use that are listed on the Hazardous Activities and Industries List (HAIL). A Contaminated Soils and Remediation Plan will accompany the substantive application detailing the soil management and remediation proposed.