

## Grampians Solar Project

### Supplementary information to accompany a referral application under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

#### 1) Further information in regards to anticipated project commencement date and anticipated completion date

The Grampians Solar Project is steadily progressing through pre-construction development stage. Following resource consent approval additional milestones, such as electricity offtaker negotiations, Overseas Investment Office approval (if required), lead contractor appointment, detailed design and other activities required for the project to secure construction capital, will commence (if not progressed concurrently). These are forecasted for completion within a short period after obtaining consent. A summary of the critical ongoing development milestones is provided below.

- Site: Since late 2020, Helios has been working with Grampians Station Limited to identify and validate a high quality large-scale solar project on pastoral farmland. The Project Site has some of the highest solar resource in the country, and direct on-site connection access to a robust part of the National Grid. A Solar Licence Agreement was executed between Helios and Grampians Station Limited in Q3 2024.
- Connection: Helios has been exploring a project connection at this location with Transpower since 2021 and the project was accepted directly into the Investigation stage of the Transpower Connection Management Framework when it was first published in December 2022. The project holds a first ranking position to connect to the 220kV lines crossing the Project Site (Transpower commits any local spare connection capacity on a first ready first served basis. Helios' grid connection request at Grampians successfully secured the first ranking position, meaning the first 300MW of spare capacity at this location is reserved for Helios). The connection investigations are well advanced and ongoing with the Transpower Works Agreement to be executed shortly after resource consent is secured for the project.
- Transmission Easements: none are required for the project due to the on-site point of connection.
- Consenting and Approvals: Helios has completed more than 2 years of solar specific site assessment, in addition to ecology work which has been undertaken over the last four years to validate the ecology present onsite. With all baseline seasonal survey work already completed, a consenting application will be prepared over the coming nine months with completion in Q3 2025. Helios has experience obtaining Overseas Investment Office approval for farm land advertising exemptions across the wider portfolio and has been working with a specialist barrister and engaging with Overseas Investment Office staff since 2001. Helios will be progressing the approvals required for the Grampians Solar Project concurrently with the resource consent process.

The Grampians Solar Project will then enter construction stage once financial close has occurred. Construction is forecast to commence in Q4 2027, progressing over a ~2 year timeframe and will include electrical commissioning and connection to the National Grid. There is no staging of the construction phase.

Upon completion of construction and commissioning, the Grampians Solar Project enters the operational stage, scheduled for Q4 2029. The facility has an expected operational life of 35 years.

At the end of the project lifecycle, the Grampians Solar Project enters the decommissioning stage - the infrastructure is dismantled and removed from the Project Site which is then reinstated to the condition it was in prior to construction commencing, estimated timeframe for completion of this stage is 6 months.

#### 2) Supplementary assessment to provide explanation against the criteria of Section 22 (2) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024

Relevant subsection	Assessment
22 (2) (i) Has been identified as a priority project in a central government, local government, or sector plan or strategy (for example, in a general policy statement or spatial strategy), or a central government infrastructure priority list	<p>No</p> <p>The proposed project is not specifically identified as a priority project. However, the proposal is aligned with a number of key strategies promoting renewable energy to meet our national targets:</p> <p><u>Central Government Plan or Strategy</u></p> <p>Electrify NZ, National Party, dated March 2023 The proposal supports New Zealand's ambitious national commitments of doubling renewable energy generation to accelerate transition to a low-emissions, high-growth economy, and net zero carbon emissions by 2050.</p> <p><u>Sector Plan or Strategy</u></p> <p>Rautaki Hanganga o Aotearoa, the New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy 2022-2052 sets out actions New Zealand needs to take to ensure the infrastructure system meets the challenges of a growing population and environmental factors, such as climate change, over the next 30 years.</p>

	<p>The Infrastructure Action Plan, May 2023, sets out a work programme in response to identified challenges and opportunities in the Strategy around the provision of efficient, equitable, resilient and sustainable infrastructure system. The strategy recognises that electricity generation capacity needs to increase by 170% and that a major energy transition is required to meet net-zero carbon emissions targets. The action plan focuses on accelerating development of new renewable electricity generation across the economy. The Grampians Solar Farm at 300MW will provide a meaningful contribution to the future renewable energy mix of New Zealand and will be quick to deploy and start contributing to these targets.</p>
22 (2) (ii) will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The Grampians Solar Project is one of the largest solar photovoltaic projects proposed in New Zealand (and if constructed today would be the largest by a factor of 4).</p> <p>Due to the scale of the proposed project and the strategic location (in one of the highest solar irradiance locations in the country) as well as proximity to robust National Grid infrastructure, the ~NZ\$450 million project is expected to generate the equivalent electricity to power approximately 70,000 average kiwi households annually with clean renewable electricity. It will also have significant job creation during the ~24 month construction period. This is expected to be in excess of 300 jobs during peak construction periods.</p> <p>Solar is highly complementary to nearby hydro generation and acts as ‘virtual rain’ allowing greater storage of water in our southern lakes during daylight hours and summer periods so that it can be utilised to meet demand during evening winter peak periods when solar and other intermittent renewables such as wind are not generating. So, in addition to greater renewable generation to help electrify New Zealand’s economy, this will also add significant resilience to the continued functioning of New Zealand’s electricity generation portfolio.</p> <p>This is further improved via the co-location of battery energy storage within the project which will enable portions of the generation to be stored and discharged during peak periods, as well as providing ancillary services to the National Grid if required.</p>
22 (2) (iii) will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020).	No
22 (2) (iv) will deliver significant economic benefits	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The Grampians Solar Project represents a ~NZ\$450 million capital investment into the region and will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Significant job creation during the ~24 month construction period. In excess of 300 jobs during peak construction periods. Local roles required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- civil, mechanical and electrical contractors</li> <li>- fencing and planting contractors</li> <li>- semiskilled labourers</li> <li>- ancillary services (freight and logistics, accommodation, hospitality, transport and traffic management)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2) In addition to a large number of construction phase roles, the project will create <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- approximately 5 FTE for locally based operations and maintenance staff</li> <li>- opportunities for upskilling and/or retraining which can be applied in a new but growing industry across the country</li> </ul> </li> <li>3) Helios is also committed to establishing a local investment trust associated with the Project. The trust would allow for yearly funding of local projects and initiatives as an enduring contribution to the local community.</li> <li>4) Current land use of merino sheep grazing will also continue to be co-located with the solar project once operational.</li> <li>5) We also expect there will be economic benefits associated with a 70ha ‘no build area’ that will have native species planted in key areas as part of the project</li> </ol>
22 (2) (v) will project support primary industries, including aquaculture	Yes

	<p>The Grampians Solar Project is expected to provide some support for primary industries. Helios has entered into a lease arrangement with Grampians Station Limited for the duration of the solar farm which provides consistent, stable income to support the wider farming operation which includes sheep grazing and breeding Hereford Angus cows. The solar farm is designed to allow for ongoing sheep grazing of the site allowing for co-agricultural use of the Solar Project.</p>
22 (2) (vi) will support development of natural resources, including minerals and petroleum, and if so, how?	No
22 (2) (vii) will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions	<p>Yes</p> <p>The significant amount of new solar electricity generated by the Grampians Solar Project over its 35 year lifecycle will be highly beneficial and complementary to New Zealand's existing electricity mix. Utilising solar generation combined with onsite energy storage, particularly during daytime hours and especially in the summer months, allows more water to be retained in our hydro lakes for use during peak demand periods. This will reduce our reliance on fossil fuels such as coal and gas to bridge renewable generation shortfall during these peak periods and reduce New Zealand's carbon emissions.</p> <p>Additional solar generation at this scale is also expected to result in downward pressure on electricity prices over the long term, which will incentivise the electrification of energy demand currently powered by fossil fuels. Examples include electrification of process heat (e.g. coal and gas boilers) and electrification of our transport fleet (e.g. electric vehicles). Converting these loads to renewable electricity use is likely to result in a material reduction in the use of fossil fuels (thereby reducing carbon emissions) across our energy mix (outside of just electricity generation).</p> <p>In addition to avoiding greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel based generation and demand summarised above, the proposal includes 70ha of 'no build' areas which will be fenced and planted with native species creating pathways of enhanced ecology. This will assist with removing greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
22 (2) (viii) will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards	<p>Yes</p> <p>New Zealand's current electricity mix primarily relies on hydroelectric power, supplemented by thermal (coal and gas) and wind energy sources. The addition of solar power at diversified locations across the country will enhance resilience to natural hazards and support recovery efforts in the aftermath of such events.</p> <p>Solar is highly complementary to nearby hydro generation and acts as 'virtual rain' allowing greater storage of water in our southern lakes during daylight hours and summer periods, so that it can be utilised to meet demand during evening winter peak periods when solar and other intermittent renewables such as wind are not generating, contributing to grid stability and reliability.</p> <p>The Grampians Solar Farm is located away from areas of high natural hazard risk. The site is not subject to coastal inundation, flood risk, notable seismic activity or fault lines, enhancing resilience to climate-related hazards. The design and construction of solar farms further contribute to resilience against natural hazards, minimising down time after a significant weather event. Solar panels are elevated approximately 0.7m above the ground and the tracking systems are monitored and can tilt in response to snow, hail or high wind events.</p> <p>Additionally, solar farms are not permanent structures with decommissioning at the end of the lease requiring land to be returned to conditions suitable for continued agricultural use. At the end of their operational life, a solar farm offers flexibility for future land use, either repowering, a return to the previous land use or a future use. This versatility ensures that solar farms can adapt to changing energy needs and environmental considerations over time, contributing to sustainable land management practices.</p>
22 (2) (ix) will address significant environmental issues	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Projects such as the Grampians Solar Farm which provide a meaningful increase to New Zealand's supply of renewable energy are necessary to both meet growing demand for electricity and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The Grampians Solar Farm project also includes 70ha of land within an intensive pastoral use environment where the project ecologist has identified a small number of native species. The project will include the fencing and protection of these areas (mainly along gullies and intermittent waterways) to exclude the current use of sheep grazing, and extensive native species planting targeted in these key areas where it can make a tangible difference in enhancing biodiversity.</p>
22 (2) (x) is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies	<p>Yes</p> <p>The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement</p> <p>Overall, the RPS provides supportive objectives and policies in relation to renewable energy generation and the development of regionally significant infrastructure. The project is consistent with these. The proposed build area also does not contain ecologically significant values under the Canterbury Regional Policy Statement (2013) ecological significance criteria.</p>

	<p>Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan The project will implement appropriate design and construction methodologies to be consistent with the objectives and policies of the LWRP.</p> <p>Mackenzie District Plan The MDP contains provisions that support renewable electricity generation activities, while ensuring that adverse effects on the receiving environment are appropriately managed and mitigated. The District Plan also promotes the restoration, preservation and maintenance of the Outstanding Natural Landscape, indigenous vegetation and biodiversity values. The proposed solar farm is not identified as a Site of Natural Significance in the Mackenzie District Plan and areas of indigenous vegetation have been identified with suitable setbacks and enhancement planting to increase indigenous biodiversity values. The existing shelterbelts on site boundaries provide significant screening of views of the solar farm site from the wider Mackenzie Basin protecting the Outstanding Natural Landscape values of the wider basin.</p>
<p>22 (3) Subsection (4) applies if— (a) the proposed approvals for the project include an approval described in section 42(4)(f) (land exchange); and (b) the land to be exchanged by the Crown is— (i) a Crown-owned reserve; and (ii) managed by someone other than the Department of Conservation.</p>	<p>The project does not require approval under section 42(4)(f). Subsection 4 does not apply.</p>
<p>22 (5) Subsection (6) applies if the Minister considers there is likely to be competition for space in areas of New Zealand's continental shelf or exclusive economic zone between activity involved in the project proposed to be undertaken under an approval described in section 42(4)(k) (marine consent) and— (a) any activities to which the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf (Environmental Effects) Act 2012 or any other specified Act applies; or (b) commercial fisheries activities.</p>	<p>Not applicable. Subsection 6 does not apply.</p>
<p>22 (7) A project is considered to meet the criterion in subsection (1)(a) if the project is an aquaculture activity— (a) that is within an aquaculture settlement area declared under section 12 of the Maori Commercial Aquaculture Claims Settlement Act 2004 or an area reserved under another Treaty settlement for the aquaculture activities of a particular group; and (b) for which the applicant who is proposed to hold an approval described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consent) is authorised to apply for a coastal permit under the Resource Management Act 1991.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p>22 (8) Subsections (4) and (6) do not limit subsection (2)(b).</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>