The Point Solar Farm [FTAA-2509-1100]

Expert Panel Briefing – Response to Minute 1 High-Level Overview and Key Responses

Far North Solar Farm Ltd

16 January 2026

Richard Homewood, Director | Tables attached | Experts available (RMM, WWLA, ecology)

Project Overview

- 450 MW solar photovoltaic farm on ~670 ha of land (northern Lake Benmore shore, between Pukaki River and Ohau C canal).
- Site consists of flat, highly modified dryland pasture previously used for irrigated farming, and at one of New Zealand's sunniest locations.
- Situated amongst the robust grid infrastructure in the country, created through the legacy of existing hydro generation, with the Benmore-Islington 220KV powerline running through the centre of the site.
- Components include ground-mounted arrays, grid injection substation, internal access tracks, and underground cabling.
- Construction anticipated over ~36 months; includes 81-ha Ecological Enhancement Plan (native planting, pest control, habitat creation).

17 Dec 2025 inspection – Entire site cultivated dryland pasture; no indigenous vegetation present

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Mana Whenua Engagements & Site Visit

- Recent progress: Online hui invitation sent 17 December 2025.
- Collaboration agreements signed with Aukaha Ltd (16 Dec 2025) and Aoraki Environmental Consultancy Ltd (11 Dec 2025).
- Proposed site visit: 20 January 2026.
- Christchurch hui: 21 January 2026 to discuss submissions and concerns.

- Site visit will include walk-through of array footprint, Ecological Enhancement zones, riparian setbacks, and key public viewpoints (e.g., McAughtries Road).
- Attendees: FNSF team, Pa and kā rūnanga representatives.
- Purpose: Demonstrate modified land condition (AgScience findings) and proposed mitigations on-ground.

17 December 2025

hui invitation

20 January 2026

site visit

21 January 2026

Christchurch hui

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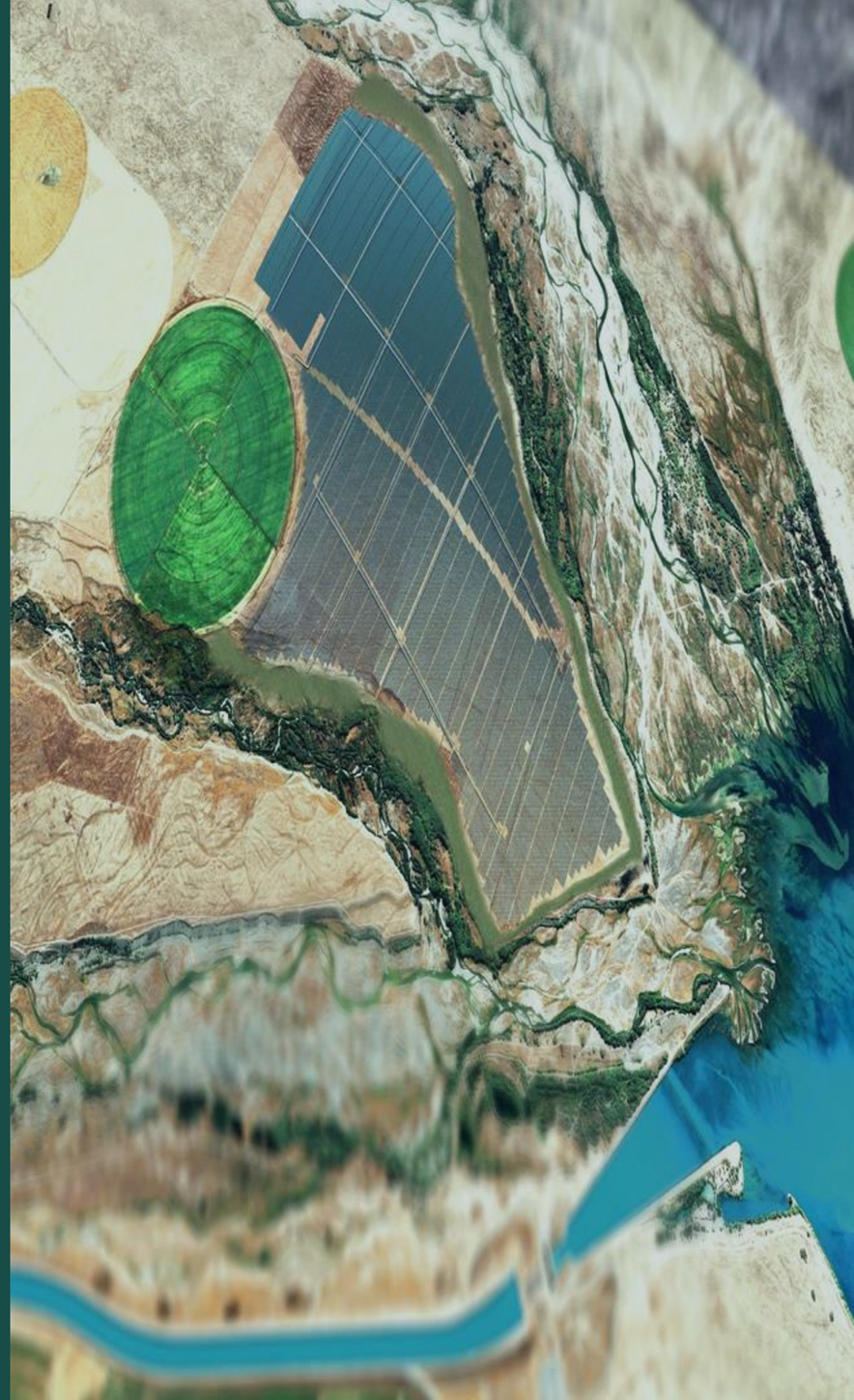
Mana Whenua – Key Questions Summary

Question	Summary Response
Q9 & Q10	Recent direct interactions: hui invitation 17 Dec 2025; signed agreements 11 & 16 Dec 2025; site visit & hui 20–21 Jan 2026 planned.
Q11 & Q12	Confirmation of wāhi tūpuna and traditional nohoanga sites will be discussed at the upcoming site visit and hui.
Q13	No joined-up strategic spatial plan developed; focus remains site-specific while acknowledging other solar proposals in the basin.
Q14 & Q15	Taonga species identification and site selection rationale (degraded pasture, high irradiance, grid proximity) to be covered at hui; AgScience report to be shared.
Q16	Dee Isaacs report (8 April 2025) prepared as basis for re-engagement after 2023 pause.
Q17	No direct adverse effect on Lake Benmore; stormwater managed per Appendix K; EEP includes riparian setbacks and will improve awa protection overall.

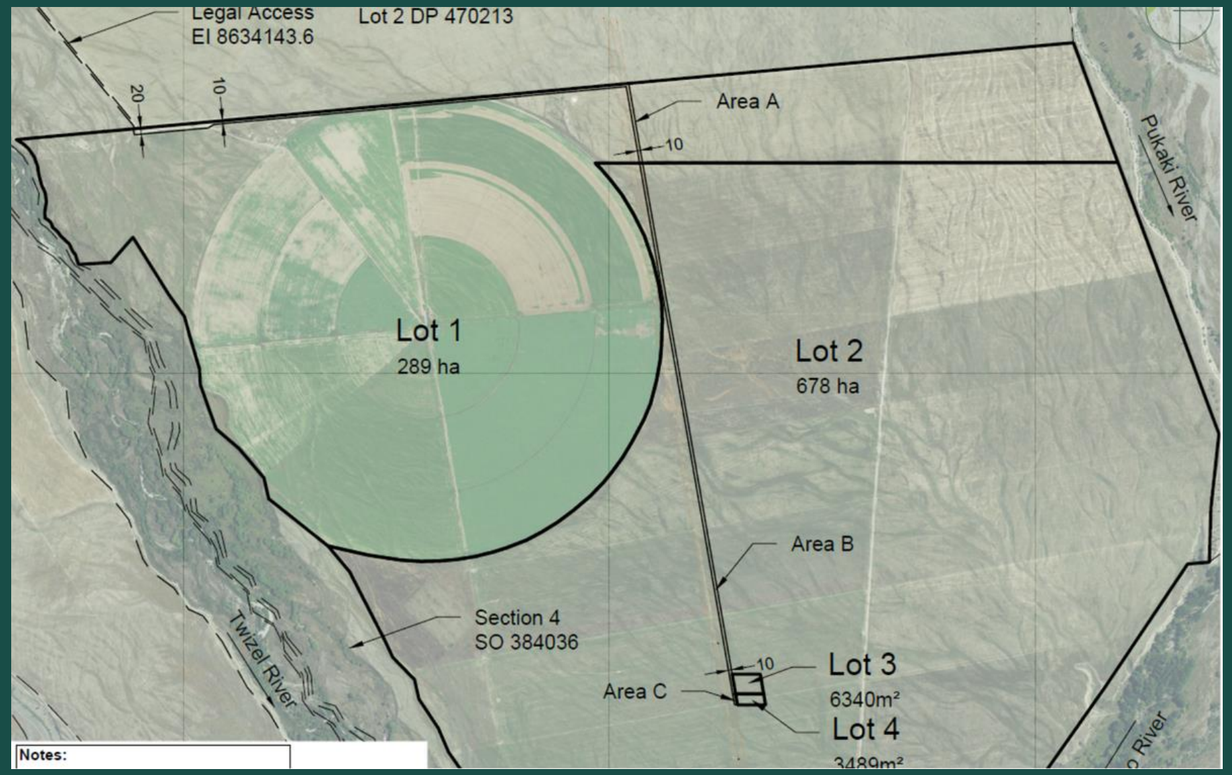


RMA – Subdivision, DoC & Hazardous Substances

- Subdivision creates three titles to enable long-term leases (Transpower 30+30 years); northern non-solar area retained for farming; ongoing liaison with MDC for agreed conditions. First draft for subdivision conditions detailed in the updated conditions in PART E

- Department of Conservation discussions continue; no Wildlife Act approvals required – AgScience survey confirms limited to no wildlife values on-site.

- Hazardous substances: Approximately 100,000 litres of oil in two transformers; fully contained with pan and separator arrangement; no releases permitted under Transpower environmental standards.



Detail from the subdivision scheme plan, showing the farm area (Lot 1, 289ha) the solar area including revegetation and screening (lot 2, 678ha inc 81ha plantings), and the substations areas (Lots 3 and 4, 0.9ha).

RMA – Earthworks & Stormwater

Earthworks volumes

- **Internal roads** ~23,868 m³ over 119,344 m² area
- **cable trenches** ~39,000 m³ over 30,000 m²
- **substation platform cut** ~3,105 m³ over 9,545 m²

- Much material will be reused onsite.
- Roading is detailed in the consent plans, and more civil drawings and calculations can be supplied on request.
- Construction-phase stormwater consent now required by ECAN and ECAN has agreed to expand the s15 discharge permit for the substation to include the solar farm area:

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RMA – Water Supply, Traffic & Conditions

- Water supply: Onsite tank and irrigator for firefighting (compliant with SNZ PAS 4509:2008); dust suppression via water carts per Dust Management Plan; limited planting irrigation for drought-tolerant species sourced onsite.

- No new water take consents required.

- Traffic: Utilises existing accesses off the state highway; Construction Traffic Management Plan required (as per table 1 in the updated condition set; NZTA engagement undertaken.

- Draft conditions: Latest versions attached; currently under review with MDC, ECan, DoC; WWLA drafting is ongoing.

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National Direction Instruments (Q30)

- Announced 18 December 2025, effective 15 January 2026:
  - New NPS for Infrastructure
  - Amendments to NPS-HPL, NZCPS, NPS-REG, NPS-ET, NPS-IB, NPS-FM

- Strengthen support for renewable energy projects in modified landscapes and Outstanding Natural Landscapes.

- Recognise functional need for infrastructure and biodiversity net gain through adaptive management.

- Directly align with project design (degraded farmland transition, EEP outcomes).

Landscape Issues – Application Status & Mitigation (Q31–33)

- Application status: We can confirm the current status of the application under the relevant planning framework is a Discretionary Activity; assessed under Fast-track Act Schedule 5 (no s.104D gateway test required).

- Plant replacement and maintenance: 5 years initial irrigation and care; ongoing replacement for consent term (detailed in amended condition set - Condition 28a).

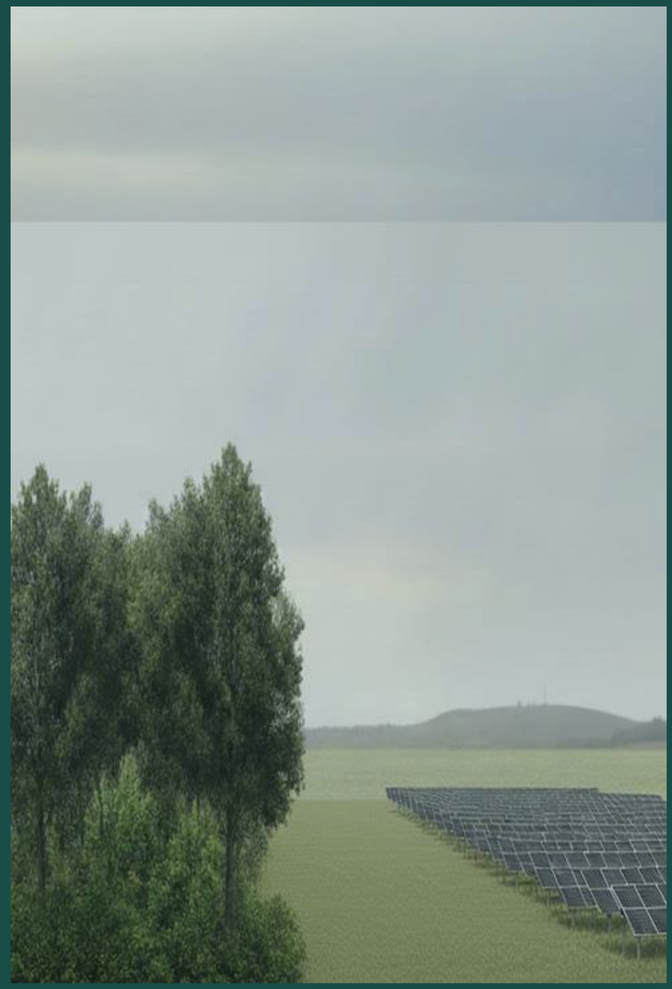
- Proposed conditions for recessive colours: Inverters, control rooms, and substation buildings to be finished in dark, recessive colours (e.g., black, sandstone, gull grey) to reduce visual contrast.

Landscape – Mitigation Strip & Planting (Q34–37)

- Mitigation strip focused on southern and eastern boundaries (highest-visibility areas from rivers/tracks); not extended western boundary due to existing willows/shelterbelts, greater distance (1–1.2 km), and prioritising ecological outcomes within the 81-ha Ecological enhancement area
- The numbers of plants with the revegetation zone in the EEP at will be approximately 100,000 plants, consisting of 33,900 trees for screening/mitigation, and the balance of planting to focus on ecology enhancement.
- Mitigation has limited screening near Viewpoints 8/9 (McAughtries Road) but reduces perceived 'tongue' extent via low-lying design and clustering.
- A cumulative effects assessment could be undertaken in relation to other solar farm developments, however, any assessment of potential cumulative effects should give weighting on the probability of those projects proceeding based on the availability of grid capacity.

Landscape – Cumulative Effects & Vulnerability (Q38–40)

- Project fits within existing hydro-modified context; adds low-profile solar without new tall structures/lines; not a negative cumulative extension.
- Cumulative effects with Ohau Canal, Ohau B/C assessed as low-moderate due to screening/topography/context; Whilst the Waitaki Hydro Electric Power Scheme and The Point Solar Farm are both large scale power generation development, together they will not result in adverse cumulative effects because they are two separate types of development.
- Importantly, the solar farm will assist in retaining the aesthetic and associated values of the dammed Lakes and their recreational uses. This is because the solar farm will contribute as a daytime power source, relieving the full-time use of the hydro scheme
- Site falls in High Visual Vulnerability/low capacity area per Densem 2007 Study, Plan Change 13, and Appendix V criteria (openness, visibility, naturalness in basins/lakesides/rivers).
- Mitigations (mitigation strip, EEP planting, low-profile design, recessive colours) reduce overall landscape/visual effects to minor or moderate.



Ecology – AgScience Inspection Conclusions

- Visual inspection conducted 17 December 2025 by Peter Espie PhD (full site survey route shown in Figure 1).
- Entire proposed development area cultivated and converted to dryland pasture (historic pivot irrigation evident).
- No indigenous vegetation communities present in the solar development area.
- No significant floristic values remain; no further ecological assessment required.
- High degree of modification eliminates natural habitat for indigenous fauna.

“No indigenous vegetation or habitat – Peter Espie PhD.”

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Ecology – Effects Assessment Adequacy

- Wildlands surveys (Dec 2022–Feb 2023) provided robust baseline data.
- AgScience inspection resolves previous uncertainties: no presence, abundance or distribution issues on-site → negligible effects.
- Assessment methodology was conservative: habitat-focused, considered spatial scale, proportion, duration, time lag, precautionary principle (especially for threatened species like kakī), and cumulative effects.
- Magnitude of effects now low: no significant loss; land has been highly modified by farming activities.
- Changes to the design based on Wildlands Report have removed or mitigated issued raised. The solar area is removed from sensitive areas.

Wildlands baseline → **AgScience confirmation** → **Negligible on-site effects**

Ecology – EEP & Management Adequacy

- Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) is adequate: High likelihood of successful planting establishment; ongoing weed and mammalian pest control as required; outcomes expected to be self-sustaining after 5 year establishment period.
- Monitoring includes UAV surveys, walk-throughs, and before-after-control-impact (BACI) approach for at least 5 years; adaptive management as required.
- The revised conditions in table 1 provide detail on new management plans, including: avifauna, lizards, Robust grasshopper, pest control and weed management, and a state of environment monitoring plan.

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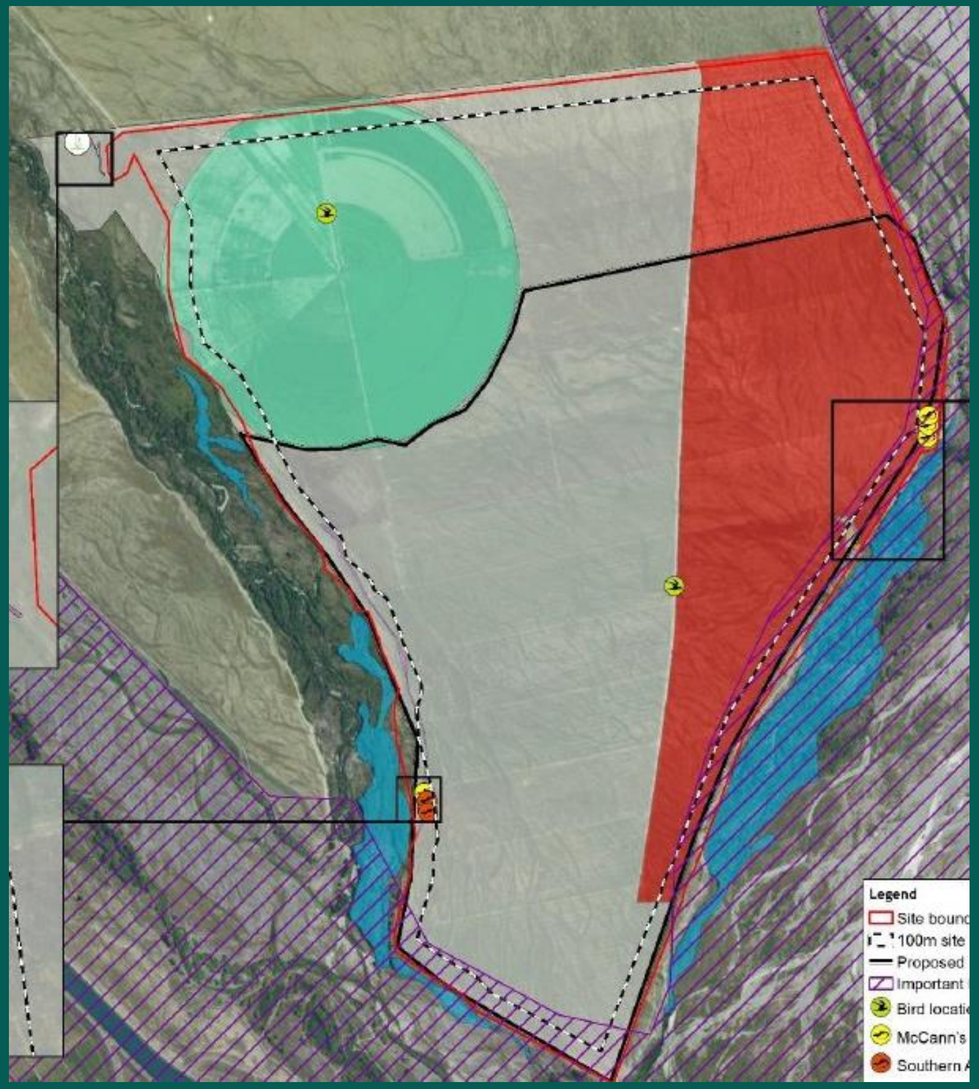
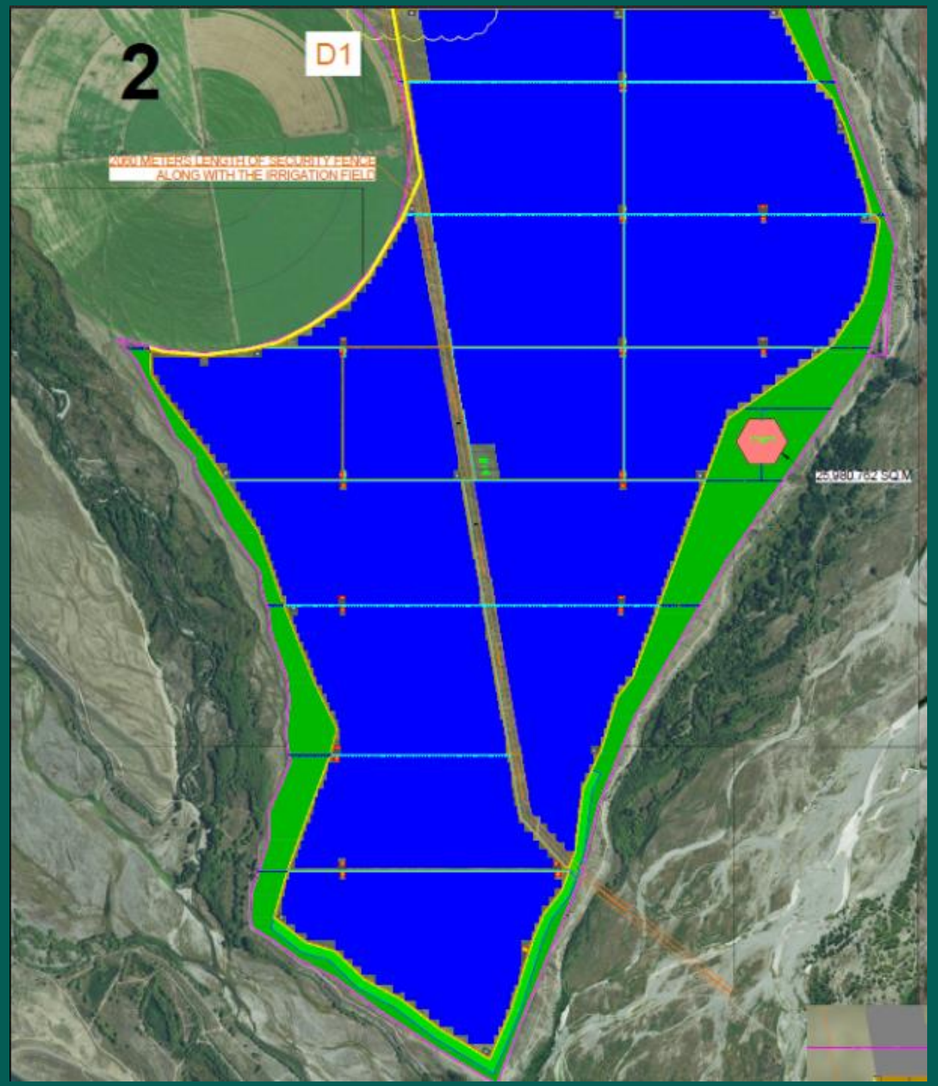
Ecology – Site changes based on Wildland's Survey





Ecology – Clearance & Significance

- No consent is being sought for clearance of indigenous vegetation (none present per AgScience inspection).
- Significance of any potential clearance assessed in AEE and Appendix G (Wildlands) and updated by AgScience: Site is exotic-dominated with no indigenous communities or values meeting CRPS criteria.
- Entire site is now Cocksfoot-dominated grassland when in production (as seen in current aerial photographs).
- Mackenzie District Council comments on potential clearance (Plan Change 18) are addressed—no vegetation exists to clear.
- Clearance is avoided inherently; design includes buffers and enhancement measures to achieve net gain in adjacent restoration areas.

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Closing & Next Steps

- The Point Solar Farm delivers substantial renewable energy and economic benefits with minor, well-mitigated effects.
- AgScience survey confirms low ecological values on site; RMA matters addressed through compliance and robust conditions, including specific and extensive management plans.
- Mana whenua engagement continues with site visit and hui on 20–21 January 2026.
- Draft conditions attached; open to Panel feedback and adjustments.
- Ready for questions and further discussion.

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