

Ongaonga Solar Farm - Stakeholder Engagement Summary

This document outlines the stakeholder engagement strategy for the solar farm on Taylor Road, Ongaonga. Helios has undertaken a comprehensive pre-application engagement programme in order to proactively inform and engage early with the local community and key stakeholders.

In summary, to date this has involved the following:

- Te Mana Taiao o Tamatea were contacted directly via Central Hawkes Bay District Council's Pou Whātua and a meeting was held in early August to provide an overview of the proposal and introduce the appropriate people at Helios to contact throughout the project. Consultation has continued as the project progresses.
- Landowners of adjoining properties on Taylor Road were directly informed of the proposal via a brochure drop. Where requested follow up in person meetings and email correspondence has continued as the project progresses.
- Key stakeholders (refer to list in section 3.0 below) were informed of the proposal via email including the local MP, Mayor, Councillors, Fire and Emergency NZ. All key stakeholders were invited to engage with Helios to discuss the proposal and attend the community drop-in session.
- A community drop in information session was held Wednesday 23 August 2023 at the Ongaonga Community Hall from 3pm-7pm. Approximately 35-40 people attended the informal drop-in information session. Four feedback forms were completed at the event, and that feedback has been summarised as well as verbal feedback in section 3.0 below.
- There have been ongoing discussions with landowners of properties on Taylors Road which is outlined in section 4.3 below.

More detail on the Helios stakeholder engagement process is provided below.

1.0 Engagement Strategy

The aim of the Ongaonga stakeholder engagement was to inform and engage with the local community and stakeholders early, to ensure local people were aware of the proposal, had the chance to find out more and express any initial views well ahead of a formal resource consent application.

Helios's key objectives were to:

- Inform the local community and key stakeholders of the proposal and to ensure they heard about it from the landowner and developer first and directly
- Provide accurate information about the proposal and solar energy generation. This is especially important given large-scale solar farms are relatively new in New Zealand (but well established globally)
- Provide information in a number of formats (brochure, information boards, website, conversation)

- Answer queries regarding the proposal specifically, and solar technology more generally
- Provide an opportunity for the local community and key stakeholders to provide their opinions about the proposal; and
- Take on board feedback from the local community in shaping the proposal.

2.0 Engagement with Mana Whenua

The Ongaonga solar farm is located within the rohe of Ngāti Kahungunu and Heretaunga Tamatea. Introductory letters with an overview of the proposal were sent to Heretaunga Tamatea Settlement Trust and Taiwhenua o Tamatea in July 2023. Helios met with Te Mana Taiao o Tamatea on 1 August 2023. The meeting was facilitated by Central Hawkes Bay District Council's Pou Whātua (Maori Relationships Manager) Pam Kupa and was held online. Jeff Schlichting (Helios Founder and Managing Director) and Sarah Brooks (Helios Senior Environmental Planner) introduced Helios and outlined the project. A summary of key discussion points and feedback from the hui was:

- The importance of community resilience for future weather events and climate change was acknowledged by both parties and the role solar can play in increasing electricity resilience.
- It was queried whether there is anything harmful which could come off the panels. Helios confirmed by weight, more than 80 per cent of a typical PV panel is glass and aluminium. The remaining 20 per cent is silicon and metals and there are no toxic materials within the panels.
- Discussion covered how it works with multiple solar projects in an area. Helios provided a summary of the criteria required for a solar site (strong solar resource, adequate land, capacity at the substation in close proximity) which all serves to limit the number of projects which can feasibly be built in an area.
- Helios invited members of Te Mana Taiao o Tamatea to visit the site. This was not considered to be required by meeting attendees but the offer remains going forward.
- Separate to the resource consent discussions Helios is committed to further discussion with Te Mana Taiao o Tamatea to build a framework for an alliance in regards to a funding structure to support the local community in relation to education, energy hardship and sustainability.

Helios provided a copy of the consultation brochure (discussed further below) on 7 August 2023 via email and invited members and whanau of Te Mana Taiao o Tamatea to attend the community drop-in event.

There has been ongoing correspondence ahead of submission of the application as follows:

- 27 August 2023 - a proposed framework for a local trust to provide funding to support local community initiatives, projects, and developments
- 3 November 2023 - a project update including an overview of the resource consent application and key documents (draft site layout, elevation plan of the panels, planting

plan, frequently asked questions and a more comprehensive overview of the local trust framework)

- 14 December 2023 - introductory call with Environmental Planner working within the Te Taiao o Tamatea ropu. Helios committed to providing a draft copy of the application and undertaking a site visit in early 2024.
- 17 January 2024 - site walkover with Environmental Planner from Tamatea Pōkai Whenua. It was confirmed a CIA would be required due to the presence of awa in proximity and this process would provide the currently unknown name for the intermittent tributary which runs through the site (and will be planted with additional natives as outlined in the planting plan). CIA was subsequently commissioned and it was confirmed the CIA can run concurrently with lodgement of the application and will be provided in May 2024.

Helios is committed to open and transparent communication with mana whenua throughout the Project, and the solar farm development will be guided by ongoing discussions.

3.0 Engagement with Key Stakeholders

3.1 Central Hawkes Bay District Council

Planning

A pre-application meeting was held onsite on 6 March 2023 with Emma Hilderink-Johnson (Planning Consultant on behalf of Council). Ms Hilderink-Johnson's feedback of note included:

- Confirmation that a Landscape Assessment, Transport Assessment, Acoustic Assessment and Glint and Glare Assessment should be provided with the application
- Confirmation that Helios had identified the correct parties for consultation

Subsequent correspondence with Ms Hilderink-Johnson through 2023 confirmed that Helios will include in the AEE that the site is not listed as a HAIL site on any regional or district council records. Correspondence with Emma in November 2023 identified that consent would not be required for transformer oil. The oil in the transformers is for insulation and cooling therefore meeting the storage exemptions provided in the District Plan. An assessment against the relevant rules has been provided in the Assessment of Environmental Effects.

Transport

A pre-application meeting was held with Shawn McKinley, Land Transport Manager at Central Hawkes Bay District Council on 1 August 2023. This was attended by Sarah Brooks (Senior Environmental Planner), Sam Vivian (Head of Project Development) and Kate Murphy (Senior Engineer) from Helios. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the project and discuss the potential route options for the transmission line to connect the solar farm to the Transpower operated Waipawa substation. Following this, a draft copy of the Integrated Transport Assessment was provided to Mr McKinley who confirmed based on the information provided there were no initial issues.

Overall, the resource consent application is consistent with the pre-application feedback provided by Central Hawkes Bay District Council as identified above.

Alex Walker, Mayor and Doug Tate, Chief Executive

- A letter providing an overview of Helios as a company and a high level summary of the proposal was sent to Ms Walker and Mr Tate on 7 August 2023
- Jeff Schlichting and Sarah Brooks (Helios) met with Ms Walker and Mr Tate in person on 23 August at the Council offices in Waipawa. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce Helios and its vision and values and talk through the Ongaonga solar farm proposal at a high level, noting resource consent had not yet been applied for.

Kelly Annand, Deputy Mayor and Councillors Tim Aitken, Pip Burne, Kate Taylor, Jerry Greer, Gerard Minehan, Exham Winchman, Brent Muggerridge

- Introductory letters and a brochure were sent on 7 August 2023 providing an overview of Helios and the proposed solar farm. Councillor Aitken responded on 7 August and requested no further email correspondence given his position as a Commissioner, and to also exclude Councillors Greer, Taylor and Burne on the same basis. Helios has taken this feedback on board.

3.2 Pre application discussions with Hawke's Bay Regional Council

Pre application discussions have been ongoing with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council and have covered the following topics:

Planning: Hawke's Bay Regional Council provided the following information in June 2023:

- Agreement with the planning assessment provided by Helios, which based on preliminary design confirms there are no regional resource consent requirements.
- Confirmation a production land consent is not required as the Waipawa sub-catchment is not a Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen (DIN) limit exceeding sub-catchment
- Confirmation the HBRC Wetland Inventory does not indicate the presence of any wetlands.

Flooding: The Hawke's Bay Regional Council Engineering Department reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment- Part 1 and confirmed via email on 7 August 2023 that they have no issues with the conclusions and recommendations proposed.

Following further design work it is likely regional resource consent will be required for the volume of earthworks proposed. A regional resource consent will be submitted in due course.

Will Foley, Chair and Councillor Hinewai Ormsby

- Introductory letters and a brochure were sent 7 August 2023 providing an overview of Helios and the proposed solar farm.

3.3 Stakeholder Consultation

The table below summarises additional key stakeholders Helios has engaged with throughout the preparation of the resource consent application

Organisation	Method of Contact	Date of Contact	Summary of Consultation
Department of Conservation	Letter	7 August 2023	Introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project
Centralines	Email/Video Call	11 July 2023	Introducing the Ongaonga Project and discussing the connection methodology for the project and nearby Centralines infrastructure to be avoided for the new Private Transmission Line between the project site and Transpower substation
Anna Lorck, Local MP	Letter	7 August 2023	Introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project
Catherine Wedd, Incoming Local MP	Letter	30 October 2023	Introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project
Transpower	Various	Ongoing since February 2022	<p>Helios and its external consultants Beca have been working with Transpower since late January 2022 to explore the feasibility of a connection to their Waipawa substation to the north of their project site.</p> <p>In June 2022, Helios submitted a request to formally investigate the connection of the proposed Project at this location, and on the 29th of November 2022, Helios submitted a formal Generation Connection Application under Transpower’s new Connection Management Framework which was subsequently accepted as complete in mid December.</p> <p>On 27 June 2023, Helios and Transpower executed a Services Agreement and the connection application for the Project moved into ‘Investigation Stage’ with the appointment of a dedicated Transpower project manager. Investigations will include formal validation of the connection methodology, detailed grid studies and execution of a Works Agreement with Transpower for their aspect of the Project connection works within Transpower’s Waipawa substation compound.</p> <p>Two existing National Grid 110kV transmission lines cross the solar farm site. Transpower requested Helios include in the consent application the protection measures for the transmission lines incorporated into the solar design. These measures have been included in the consent application (chiefly Section 3.2) and into the proposed consent conditions.</p>
Bob Palmer, Fire and Emergency NZ	Phone Email	20 July 2023 3 - ongoing	<p>Initial phone call on 20 July introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project. Subsequently project information and a site layout plan was emailed to Bob, seeking feedback. Bob was kept up to date via email with an invitation to attend the community drop-in information session.</p> <p>Bob presented the project at a District leadership team meeting to ensure all the Managers can have an input if</p>

			<p>needed. Feedback provided 6 November 2023 via email as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The provision of a Firefighting water supply(FFWS) source 2. Hard stand for a 20 tonne appliance within 5 metres of the tanks. 3. Use low fire risk plant species for landscaping. 4. Need to consider maximum grass length for fire safety purposes (noting previous discussion with Helios regarding sheep.) 5. Entrances to site need to comply with Acceptable Solutions for Building Code. Eg., 4 metre widths 6. Fire management plan during construction and when the site goes live. <p>The planting and access width feedback has been incorporated into the submitted application. The provisions relating to water supply and hard stand will be incorporated into detailed design and appropriate management plans will be prepared for the site through ongoing discussion with FENZ throughout the development of the Project.</p>
Karla Lee, CEO Hawkes Bay Chamber of Commerce	Letter	7 August 2023	Introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project
Matariki (regional economic development strategy) governance board (via Alex Walker, co chair)	Letter	7 August 2023	Introducing Helios and the Ongaonga Project

4.0 Local Engagement

4.1 Information Brochure Mail Drop

A brochure introducing the project was dropped to all landowners of adjacent properties on Taylor Road. The brochure provided an introduction to the project and to Helios, a draft site layout plan, and details on how to contact the Helios team for further information. A copy of the brochure is included in *Appendix A*.

4.2 Community Drop-In Information Session

In order to engage with the local community, to inform them of Helios's intended plans and gain feedback on the proposal, Helios organised a community drop-in information session. This was held at the Ongaonga Community Hall on Wednesday 23 August. This event was structured as a casual drop-in session where the community could visit any time between 3pm-7pm.

At the event the following information was available:

- Display boards provided information about the proposal including an indicative layout and information about the key components of a solar farm
- Feedback forms.

Representatives from Helios and the project landowner were available to provide information and answer questions, as well as take note of any concerns raised.

Approximately 35 people attended over the four hours. Four feedback forms were completed, two noted support for the project, one requested further information on traffic management on the gravel road and one did not provide comments. Verbal feedback was generally positive with people wanting to understand more about how a solar farm works. In general terms conversations covered the below. Helios' response to these questions is provided in italics.

- General questions regarding how a solar farm works.
- Glare from the solar panels. *Solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight rather than reflect it. Solar panels incorporate anti-reflective coatings to maximise the absorption of energy. Glare is not a safety issue, as evidenced by the prevalence of solar farms being developed inside and around airports in New Zealand and overseas.*
- Impact on property values. *There is little evidence internationally of solar farms negatively impacting property values. Once installed, solar farms are low-lying, quiet, produce no emissions and can be effectively screened with boundary planting. Helios are developing high-quality solar projects and do not expect there will be a significant change in neighbouring property values.*
- Visual impact and request for taller plants to screen longer distance views from Taylor Road Properties. *This feedback was provided to Isthmus and subsequently higher grade (2m tall) planting has been proposed on the northern boundary of the site.*
- Pollen impacts on the panels. *The solar panels have a non-stick surface which is a non-hazardous silicon-based coating. The panels will be rinsed by the rain, no chemicals will be required to clean the panels.*
- Fire risk. *There is no increased risk of fire with a solar farm. Solar panels are not flammable. The components are encapsulated in glass and cannot support a fire. All major electrical components such as inverters and transformers will be containerised. Electrical wiring from panels to inverters is underground. All our projects are developed in consultation with Fire and Emergency New Zealand. There may be requirements for water to be stored at a site for fire control – for example, if the grass around the panels should catch fire (as is possible on any farm). Fire risk mitigation and associated measures form part of each detailed project design.*
- Flood Risk. *There is no heightened flood risk. The panels are elevated with wide spacing and the ground beneath the panels is permeable farmland.*
- Recycling of the panels. *Over 80% of a solar panel is aluminium and glass. At present the minimum recycling includes stripping off the aluminium frames for general recycling and then the crushing of the glass and silicon. This crushed aggregate generally gets used in*

construction materials as an inert material. As is occurring in other countries with more mature solar markets, we anticipate the recycling industry in NZ will refine and grow over the 35-year term of our solar farms.

- *Management of roads through construction. An Integrated Transport Assessment will be provided with the resource consent application. Helios will recommend a Construction Management Plan is required by way of a resource consent condition to include details of how roads in proximity to the site are appropriately managed through construction.*

4.3 Further consultation with Neighbouring Landowners

Helios is committed to ongoing discussions with adjacent landowners and has proactively responded to questions as they have arisen following the consultation event. Further discussions have been held in person where requested to discuss the components of the solar farm and to talk through the design and landscape assessment.

Design amendments following discussions with 162 Taylor Road

Following an onsite meeting with the owners of 162 Taylor Road the layout as presented at the consultation event was amended. The following changes have been made in response to a request for a larger setback from the property boundaries of 162 Taylor Road.

- The amended design excludes ~5.8ha of the site from installation of panels or other Project components. This consists of the entire paddock closest to the property on Taylor Road and an additional panel exclusion area in the paddock to the south, with the panels now located at least 65m from the property boundary (See Figure 1 below for annotated setbacks from the boundary). While Helios is still obligated to lease this land the setback has been agreed to increase the distance from the boundaries of 162 Taylor Road.
- The existing shelterbelt on the southern boundary of the field was intended to be removed. This will now be retained and additional planting established in front of this shelterbelt to screen views.



Figure 1: Annotated image of new exclusion area and setbacks provided to the landowners of 162 Taylor Road, Ongaonga via email on 20 October 2023.

5.0 Summary

Helios committed to early engagement with the local community to inform them of the proposed solar farm on Taylor Road, Ongaonga. The intention is to listen to feedback, thus enabling due consideration to be given to matters of importance to the local community.

It was anticipated that there would be questions and concerns raised, given how new solar developments are to Aotearoa. Helios has been transparent, accessible and direct in its engagement with the local community and, overall, has received a generally positive response.

We have responded to the feedback received in a number of ways, including responding directly to queries at the August Community Drop-In Event and meetings with key stakeholders. We have also addressed the comments raised through the technical assessments which will accompany the planning application and in the design of the solar farm and associated landscaping plan.

We have made meaningful alterations to the proposed development to reflect feedback from the closest adjacent neighbour and have incorporated taller plant grades at the request of residents on Taylor Road.



Appendix A: Ongaonga Project Overview Brochure



Who is Helios?

Helios Energy is a Kiwi company established in early 2020 to develop large-scale solar projects across New Zealand.

We are led by renewable energy specialists from New Zealand and internationally. We bring extensive experience and a track record of success in the commercial development and delivery of renewable power projects, including over 50 large-scale solar projects globally.

We are committed to delivering responsible, high-quality solar energy projects for New Zealand's future generations and to building genuine partnerships with local communities where our projects are based.

Get in touch

Solar farms are new to New Zealand but are common internationally as a safe, passive way to generate clean energy.

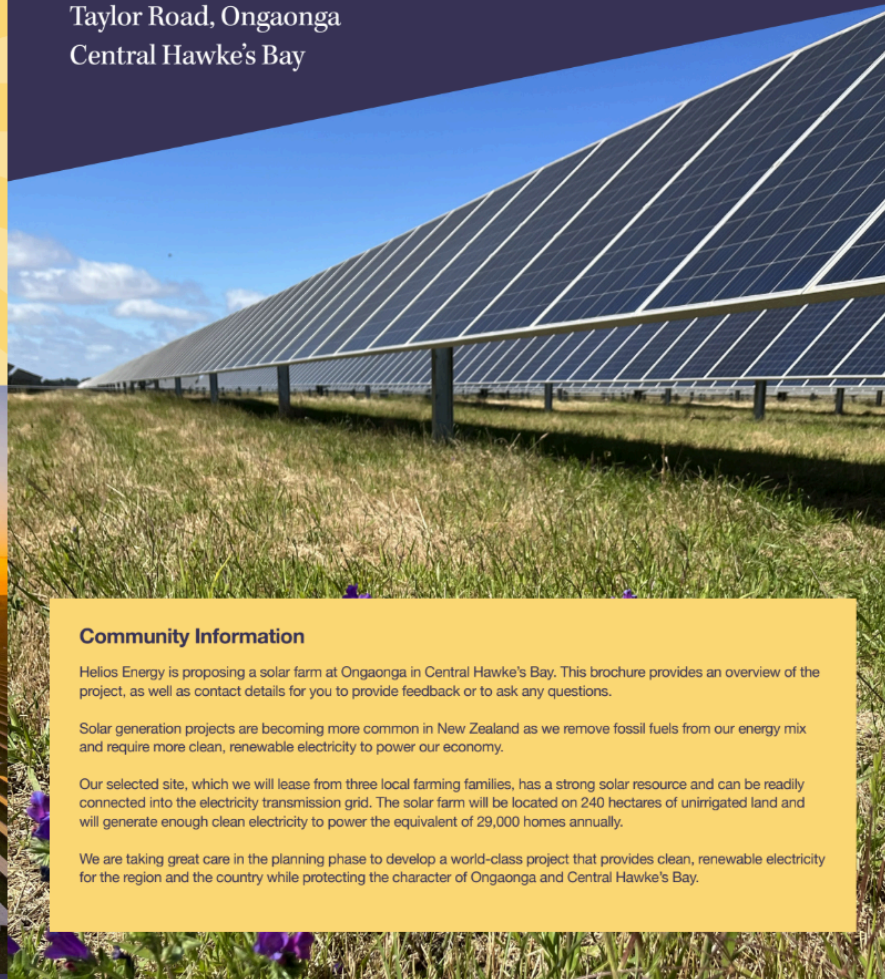
Helios will answer any questions about this project openly and honestly. We're committed to making this a development that locals are proud to have in their district.

If you have any questions about Helios or solar farms more generally, there is more information available on our website www.heliosenergy.co.nz. Please feel free to get in touch with us directly on projects@heliosenergy.co.nz and we will come back to you quickly.



Proposed Solar Farm

Taylor Road, Ongaonga
Central Hawke's Bay



Community Information

Helios Energy is proposing a solar farm at Ongaonga in Central Hawke's Bay. This brochure provides an overview of the project, as well as contact details for you to provide feedback or to ask any questions.

Solar generation projects are becoming more common in New Zealand as we remove fossil fuels from our energy mix and require more clean, renewable electricity to power our economy.

Our selected site, which we will lease from three local farming families, has a strong solar resource and can be readily connected into the electricity transmission grid. The solar farm will be located on 240 hectares of unirrigated land and will generate enough clean electricity to power the equivalent of 29,000 homes annually.

We are taking great care in the planning phase to develop a world-class project that provides clean, renewable electricity for the region and the country while protecting the character of Ongaonga and Central Hawke's Bay.

Indicative plan of proposed solar farm.

Location and land

The proposed development is on 240 hectares of land, south of Taylor Road near Ongaonga. The land will be leased from three local farming families and will remain in local ownership.



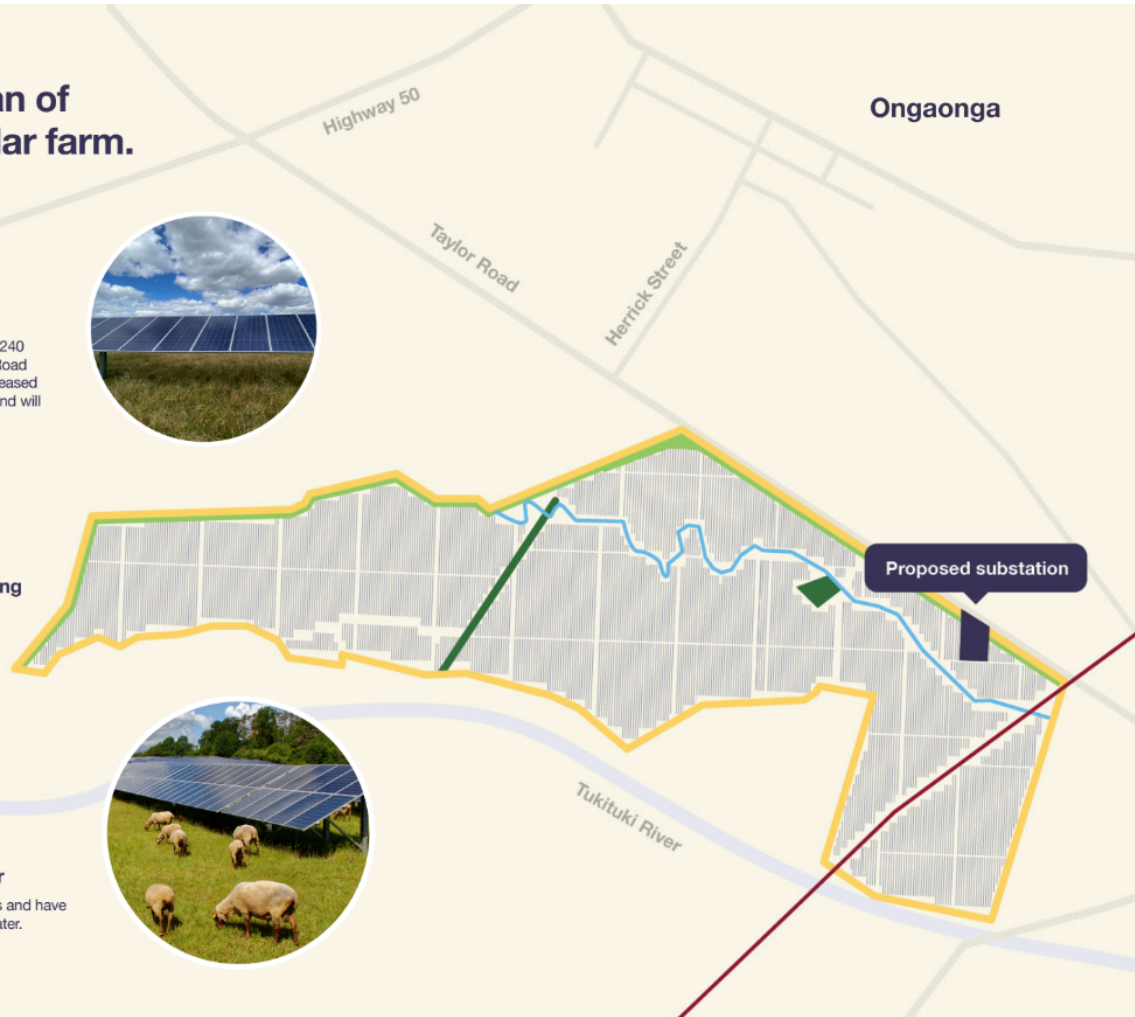
Land will remain in farming

The solar farm will be grazed by sheep under and around the solar panels.



Protecting soil and water

Solar farms produce no emissions and have no impact on the soil or groundwater.



Aerial shot of proposed location

Minimal local impacts

We've selected unirrigated land which is flat and located well out of the Ongaonga township for our solar farm proposal. Solar panels are low-lying with a maximum height of 2.8m.

Once operational and screened with boundary planting, the site will be largely hidden to the vast majority of local residents and passersby.

New planting

As part of the project we will be developing a detailed planting plan for the solar farm incorporating local feedback.

Construction and connection

Solar farms are relatively quick to build. Construction of the solar farm will take approximately 12 months. The project will connect into the existing Transpower substation at Waipawa.

We will use local contractors and suppliers in the construction phase wherever possible.

Quick Facts



100 megawatts of clean electricity



The lowest impact source of renewable energy



Complementary to continued farming operations



Enough to power ~29,000 homes









Developed in partnership with three local farming families



Silent, sustainable and safe energy production.

Map Legend

-  Existing Transpower Line
-  Proposed Solar Farm
-  Substation
-  Vegetation
-  Proposed new planting
-  Waterway
-  Indicative solar panels