

Minutes of Meeting

Yass Valley Wind Farm & Conroys Gap Wind Farm

Community Consultation Committee

Present:	Nic Carmody	Chairman	NC
	Councillor Neil Reid	Harden Shire Council	NR
	John McGrath	Non-involved landowner	JM
	Paul Regan	Non-involved landowner	PR
	Mark Glover	Non-involved landowner	MG
	Sam Weir	Bookham Agricultural Bureau	SW
	Andrew Wilson	Epuron	AW
	Donna Bolton	Epuron	DB
Apologies:	Stan Waldren	Involved landowner	SW
	Councillor David Needham	Yass Valley Council	DN
	Rowena Weir	Non-involved landowner	RW
Observer:	Dieuwer Reynders	Renewable Energy Precinct Coordinator NSW-ACT border	DR

Date: 4 April 2013

Venue: Yass Valley Council Chambers, Comur Street, Yass

Purpose: Meeting No 2

Minutes:

Item	Agenda / Comment / Discussion	Action
1	<p>NC opened the Community Consultation Committee (CCC) meeting at 2:10 pm. The meeting agenda was distributed to members prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were noted from Stan Waldren, representing involved landowners, Rowena Weir, representing non-involved landowners and David Needham representing Yass Valley Council.</p> <p>There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Previous meeting</p> <p>The requested Preferred Project Reports and Conroy's Gap Decommissioning Consent Conditions were distributed.</p> <p>AW noted, as requested, what is not expected of the committee. The <i>NSW Planning Guidelines – Wind Farms</i> state: As the committee is not a decision-making body, it is not a requirements that consensus be reached on issues discussed.</p> <p>MG noted that meetings are to be held on the first Friday of the month if possible.</p> <p>NC noted the current meeting was arranged due to availability of the Council Chambers</p> <p>Fridays are preferred if the Council chambers are available</p> <p>PR noted that the minutes should include more of the detail of the discussion as some questions were left off the previous minutes such as how many host landowners are there for the Conroy's Gap development. AW noted there are 4</p> <p>The Minutes are to be circulated as draft and any comments on the draft are to be sent to NC as soon as possible to enable a final version to be distributed</p>	<p>AW</p> <p></p> <p>AW</p> <p>AW</p>
3	<p>Conroy's Gap Wind Farm update</p> <p>AW advised the committee that he has finalised the visual impact assessment but has not yet compiled the modification application. This application seeks permission to build all 18 of the approved wind turbine locations rather than 15 of the 18 as in the current approval.</p> <p>JM noted that he had not been consulted regarding Conroy's Gap</p> <p>MG quoted the Preferred Project Report and Consultation document re consultation and stated that it was inaccurate. NC point out that this related to Yass Valley Wind Farm not Conroy's Gap. NC noted that the Epuron statement quoted by MG is accurate.</p>	

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	<p>JM noted that two wind monitoring masts were put up even though the community didn't want them. NC explained that while they were refused by council they were subsequently approved by State government.</p> <hr/> <p>NR noted that he had been elected as the Harden Shire Council representative on the CCC and is keen to assist with mailing lists and can be responsive without waiting for official minutes. Either Neil or Sharon Langman can assist.</p> <p>AW continued with his update noting that grid connection studies are ongoing.</p> <p>JM noted he had contacted 20 odd landowners round Conroy's Gap and nobody had consulted them. No one has consulted anyone in his family, except the two members who are host landowners, other than at the 2005, 2006 and 2010 open houses.</p> <p>AW noted that the Conroy's Gap Wind Farm was approved before he joined the company. MG noted that AW should not 'hide' as AW is representing Epuron and therefore should take responsibility for actions taken previously by Epuron representatives. It is Epuron not AW that is being discussed. NC noted that it is the job of all members of the CCC to get information about the projects out into the community.</p> <p>SW noted it is Epuron's responsibility to contact the community. NC advised that the CCC can ask Epuron to consult.</p> <p>MG suggested that all residents and landowners within 5km of a WTG should be contacted by phone and offered a meeting</p> <p>PR noted that all residents within 2kms are to be contacted in the Director General's Requirements.</p> <p>AW corrected this as the DGRs do not specify distance but mention neighbouring landowners. AW noted that Epuron chose to consult with residents within 5km and sent newsletters to 130 identified parties.</p> <p>NC suggested the newsletters could be sent registered post. MG noted that not everyone has a mailbox.</p> <p>NR noted that Harden Shire does not yet have it's rural addresses bedded in to an address system. He noted it is important to ensure that everyone gets a letter but the Council's issue with rural addresses may be the reason Epuron hasn't managed to contact everyone.</p> <p>NC requested that Epuron bring the newsletter list to the next CCC meeting so that all members can assist in updating it. NC advised that the updated list could be sent to council to ask them if they will send newsletters to anyone within 5kms not on the list.</p>	<p></p> <hr/> <p>All</p> <hr/> <p>AW</p>

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	<p>SW noted he had spoken to one landowner who had not been contacted. MG suggested it was because there is a gag clause in Epuron contracts. AW noted there is no gag clause relating to the agreement but there is a confidentiality clause around the commercial terms which is normal business practice.</p> <p>NR requested that Epuron bring a copy of the confidentiality clause to the next CCC.</p>	AW
	<p>PR noted that a number of landowners he had contacted had advised they were not involved with the project. AW noted that publicly available maps show the properties currently included in hosting wind farm infrastructure.</p>	
	<p>JM noted that he had been an employee of TransGrid from 1981 to 1996 and knows that the transmission lines in the area are 'fully loaded'. NC asked if he could clarify whether that meant they don't have available capacity for the Wind Farm. JM advised that the connection won't work.</p> <p>NC asked if a TransGrid assessment had been undertaken. AW confirmed it had. NC noted that the matter is beyond the remit of the committee and was a risk the developer should consider.</p>	
	<p>SW raised aerial farm management concerns. He said he had spoken to a pilot caught in turbulence 10 km downwind of the Gunning Wind Farm on a quiet day with little wind, who said it was like flying in a washing machine.</p> <p>AW advised that aerial aviation issues are not new. The many aerial aviation companies that Epuron has spoken to all advise that each individual carries out their own risk assessment and the usual practice is for those landowners affected to be compensated for any additional aerial agriculture costs that are the result of the wind farm. This compensation could be included as a condition of the development approval.</p> <p>MG noted that he has 700 acres of land that can only be supered by aerial spreading and if he can't put super on, it lowers the carrying capacity of his property.</p> <p>NC noted that Ted Macintosh is to be invited to the next meeting to discuss the issue. SW to invite Ted.</p>	SW
	<p>JM queried the safety issue with fires and aviation. NC noted that the RFS has advised that it is not a problem.</p>	
4.	<p>Yass Valley Wind Farm update</p> <p>AW advised the committee that Visual Impact and Noise assessments are being updated. He advised that there is a preference to connect the wind farm into the 330kV line to the south.</p>	

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	<p>JM noted that he has not been able to comprehend the connection of the wind farm (Conroy's Gap) since it was first discussed with him in 2005.</p> <p>MG noted that he felt the aerial issues had not been sorted. AW said it is likely to be dealt with through a Statement of Commitment which might say that there will be compensation for the difference in price for those who can't use aerial agriculture services for spraying and fertilising. MG requested an updated map of Agricultural airstrips. NC noted that Sam is to ask Ted Macintosh to attend the next meeting and provide an update on the location of all airstrips in the vicinity of the wind farm.</p> <p>MG requested a history of Epuron's political donations from 2007. AW noted they are all declared on the website with each application. The most recent application was Liverpool Wind Farm – see https://majorprojects.affinitylive.com/public/5084f0e86778f7e7cdc1b3382bdee79e/AppleApplication%20Form%20.pdf</p>	
	<p>PR asked if AW had received a letter from Renee Grogan. AW confirmed he had. JM suggested Epuron would struggle with some of the questions.</p>	
	<p>PR asked who is the Proponent at the time of decommissioning – who is the legal owner? AW noted that the Proponent is the entity receiving planning consent and that it is usual for there to be a special purpose vehicle eg Yass Valley Wind Farm Pty Ltd so that the consent and land agreements all sit with that entity and that entity can be owned by different parties but it has the rights and obligations that go with the consent and the agreements.</p> <p>SW asked if that was an accepted practice worldwide. AW noted that it was. SW noted there are many wind turbines which have been decommissioned world-wide which are still standing. He noted he would like a bond in place for decommissioning.</p> <p>JM noted that under the Conroy's Gap decommissioning conditions (JM cited 1.9(c), presumed to mean 1.11 (c),) there was a requirement for notification of surrounding landowners re decommissioning but he still has not been consulted.</p> <p>AW noted there is an obligation to prepare a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) 3 months prior to construction which will include a detailed assessment of impacts and how they will be managed.</p> <p>SW asked if the 'towers' for Conroy's Gap had been ordered. AW noted that a contract for the supply of the wind turbines had been signed but that it was conditional on securing a PPA for the project.</p>	
	<p>JM noted that neither he nor his family had ever been consulted about Conroy's Gap.</p>	
	<p>PR asked AW if he had ever been on the main ridge at Coppabella. AW affirmed he had. PR noted the crane hardstands are 900m² and queries how will you manage that on a 10m wide ridge? He noted that Epuron don't care just want to get approval and sell for</p>	

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	<p>a buck.</p> <p>AW noted that a constructability feasibility study had been undertaken for the site and Origin Energy had done the same. There are costs involved in building on steep terrain but they are not major hurdles.</p> <p>NC added that the Proponent has to submit a detailed design and a CEMP before the start of construction.</p> <p>JM noted that Black Trig is erosion prone. MG suggested not to blast when conditions were wet as the soil wouldn't stay in place. NC asked if anyone had any other questions. PR noted he had 2 pages of questions.</p>	
5.	<p>General Business</p> <p>MG queries impacts to Eastern Bentwing Bats (EBB) noting he knows they are in the area as both he and his neighbour have one in their freezers.</p> <p>PR asked if Epuron could guarantee that there will be no decrease in property value as a result of the wind farm. NC noted that the Planning Department would say it's not a planning consideration. PR noted he is asked this question frequently.</p> <p>NC asked if neighbours can show impact whether they can they be compensated. AW clarified that this was not the case. Where a property owner can show impact and the proponent can mitigate it they will.</p> <p>NC noted if anyone is having an impact on a business they should contact council.</p> <p>AW noted this are no examples of decreased property values attributable to wind farms. He noted that normally there is an obligation for a community fund and this could be used for anything on the property eg for a neighbouring property to deal with soil erosion.</p> <p>JM asked what happens to the soil removed for the turbine base AW noted it is generally used in the road construction. NC added that roads have to be built to council specifications.</p> <p>MG queries a table in section 7.4.3 of the EA under fauna, threatened species assessment where the EBB has a X. AW clarified that this X indicated there is the potential for the species to be present. MG suggested EBBs could be breeding on either side of Childowla Road or in the wilderness area off Bogolara Road in Babinda He wanted the assessment updated. NC noted that it was a matter for alerting OEH to this and Dieuwer Reynders will follow up with OEH re EBBs. Mark Glover noted he wished</p>	

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	<p>to hear about this directly on 0417 268049</p> <p>SW noted that Bookham will be in the lee of the wind turbines and asked what will be in it for the community. AW agreed this was a good point and if Bookham is the most impacted community it should benefit to a greater degree from the community fund.</p> <p>MG suggested boat people with backpacks could be employed to spread superphosphate.</p> <p>NR noted that he understood the Council used the community fund for a new hall at Breadalbane and wondered if there could be a Section 94 for road improvements for trucks bringing in gravel?</p> <p>NC noted that the State government would set money aside for roads and the Section 94 contributions are for specific things. Loss of amenity is the biggest issue with wind farms and he believed compensation should go to neighbouring landowners.</p> <p>MG suggested Sarah Laurie has brought up good anecdotal evidence about adverse health impacts, and these concerns needed to be addressed. DR noted that one of the Doctors she has cited has publicly stated that his study was taken out of context and incorrectly referenced by Dr Laurie.</p> <p>JM suggested there were concerns about the conglomeration of wind farms in the area and asked why we don't have interconnectors for the power.</p> <p>NC advised that the development applications will be assessed by the State Government and all wind farms are developed independently of others.</p> <p>AW noted that in rounds of meeting he had met with neighbours several said members of the Bookham Agricultural Bureau had put out a non-attributed leaflet about the wind farm. This leaflet has a lot of inaccurate information. AW asked SW if the bureau had sent out this information.. SW said the bureau had not. For clarification: SW noted subsequently that he and a number of other individuals who are also members of the Bookham Agricultural Bureau are forming a Bookham Landscape Guardians Group and this group sent out the leaflet.</p> <p>DB gave an update on Carroll's Ridge and Birrema Wind Farm proposals.</p> <p>Carroll's Ridge Wind Farm site will not be proceeding and land agreements had been terminated and equipment decommissioned.</p> <p>Birrema Wind Farm site has additional wind monitoring in progress and Epuron will continue to monitor the site for a further 6-12 months to assess the wind resource.</p> <p>JM asked if Carroll's was not proceeding because there was no wind. DB noted that the wind resource is excellent but that the Eastern Bentwing Bat remains a significant constraint. Other developers may choose to progress the site. JM noted that it was bound to kill at least one EBB so it couldn't proceed. DB noted that the assessment related to whether there would be significant impacts, not an impact to a single bat.</p> <p>NR queried whether there would be any change to the access on the Hume and Hovell</p>	DR

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	Walking Track at Conroy's Gap. It was confirmed that there would be no change. NR requested that a small zone outside of the impact zone be removed from the map. AW confirmed he would do this.	AW
6	<p>Next meeting:</p> <p>Epuron is awaiting information from Yass Valley Council or NC re the venue for the next meeting. Due to council chambers being booked on Friday 3 May the Chambers are provisionally booked for Thursday 2nd May. To be confirmed by NC.</p> <p>Proposed date for next meeting</p> <p>Date: Thursday 2nd May</p> <p>Time: 2.00 to 3.30PM</p> <p>Venue: Yass Council Chambers (provisional)</p>	
6	Meeting closed at 3.40 pm	Noted