

Rye Park Wind Farm Community Consultation Committee
Meeting No 22 held at Yass Soldiers' Memorial Hall, Yass
Thursday 3rd December 2020

Present

CCC Members: Nic Carmody (Independent Chair), Andrew Field, Christine Hawkins, Jayne Apps, Geoff Frost, Sara Brown.

Proponent: James Beckett (Land Development Manager), Martine Holberton (Community and Stakeholder Engagement Advisor) Matt Glass (Project Manager).

Observers: Robyn Zwar, Allan McRae, Carlene Carmody (Minutes).

The meeting opened at 7.07pm.

1. Welcome/Apologies

Apologies: James Wheelwright, Malcolm Day, Cr John Walker, Graeme Privett. Thank you to the Committee members present for their attendance.

2. Declaration of Pecuniary or other interests

All attendees required to complete Code of Conduct and Pecuniary Interest forms for the Department. Both were distributed to those present to complete as required by the new CCC guidelines. There were no changes to the declarations for those attendees at today's meeting.

The Chair completed a review of the Code of Conduct – a few areas need improvement but overall satisfactory.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2020 were adopted.

There was no CCC meeting in October due to travel restrictions at the time, therefore a project update was circulated to the CCC members in-lieu of the meeting.

4. Actions arising from previous minutes

Action sheet updated.

5. Correspondence

Numerous emails re Covid-19 and timing of meetings. The Social Impact Assessment Guideline 2020 was discussed, and committee members were encouraged to express their views before the exhibition period ended on 27th November.

6. Rye Park Wind Farm Project Status

Martine Holberton

Tilt Renewables (TLT) is in a holding pattern with Department (DPIE). The Modification Application was submitted in April. We were hoping to receive decision before end of year. TLT received a request for more information from the Department in September. TLT responded within the set timeframe by the end of October.

Sara Brown: Why did you get an extension for the response for submissions?

James Beckett: We submitted the response to the Request for Information by the date requested by the Department. With respect to the submission of the Response to Submissions, this took slightly longer than initially requested by the Department. The reasoning for this is the engagement of technical specialists and the length of time taken to engage, scope the work and provide a response that adequately addressed the matters raised. This is particularly relevant to the submissions made on the visual impact assessment and the required response.

Sara Brown: We as community representatives are not given the same consideration as the proponents.

Martine Holberton: We purposely built the Inform Rye Park Website to assist the community with this.

Sara Brown: As you said previously, the website hit rates were very low.

Martine Holberton: The Inform Rye Park website was built to enable the community to digest the highly detailed and technical information contained in the 1,300+ page Modification Application Report. We sent out newsletters, placed ads, informed the CCC and the Councils of the platform. If hit rates were low, that means the community wasn't interested in reading it.

Sara Brown: Under Covid they didn't arrive in a timely manner. People could not print them out either.

Matt Glass: We are understanding of all that, but it is up to the Department to decide on time extensions.

Martine Holberton: Everything on the Inform Rye Park website was made to be printable. All of this information was sent live right on the first day for public exhibition. This process was over and above what we were required to do. We also gave Councils the opportunity to get hard copies, but they asked only for USBs which we sent. Since the Response to Submissions Report and accompanying Amendments Report have been made public, the Inform Rye Park website has also been updated accordingly – so everything on our public platforms has up to date information, including the printable fact sheets.

Sara Brown: The issue we have is that our elected representatives do not come to the meetings.

Martine Holberton: We were also available over the phone. I know we are not going to be able to please everyone. We did what we could our end. The Department and your elected representatives' availability are outside of our control.

James Beckett: It is not in our interest to delay the process. It may help the Department to let them know your views.

Martine Holberton: Can I get some feedback on our Newsletter? The removal of 3 turbines? The Inform Rye Park website has been updated. TLT took the three turbines out to be proactive and demonstrate we are listening to community concerns and feedback.

Agreed that people were aware of the information.

Matt Glass: Recently working on progressing the project's transport route. The route basically depends on the turbine we select. Closer to site routes are becoming more well defined. Continue to engage with Councils re road upgrades and timing.

Construction materials: investigation is ongoing. We are hoping to source gravel and water from site or close to it, which will limit truck movements and disruption to the community.

Christine Hawkins: Is it at the Rye Park end?

Matt Glass: It is at the Rye Park end. The investigation is being done by a separate developer so I cannot give accurate information, but we will share this information as it becomes available. Gravel extraction is covered by a separate approval.

James Beckett: Smaller quarries are approved at a local Council level or State Government if it is larger. There is also a separate licencing regime for extractive industries at a State level.

Matt Glass: Having on-site quarries would mean that the quarry trucks would come through the internal roads and would minimise the impact on the local road network. Overall, it would be beneficial for Tilt and the community.

Christine Hawkins: That will have an obvious impact on the locals. It is another bit of information that has not been disclosed to the people in the Village until now.

Jayne Apps: People can hear a lot of noise coming from the Bango quarry.

James Beckett: Should the on-site quarries progress, they would need to have a noise impact assessment along with other technical assessments with the regulatory application.

Christine Hawkins: Cr Frost can you explain the process

Cr Frost: It is not particularly Council's issue and they are notoriously difficult to get approval.

James Beckett: There are impacts to be managed but we see the benefit from taking vehicles off the roads and to within the windfarm area. A final decision is likely to be the responsibility of our construction contractor and has not yet been made.

Andrew Field: If the modification does not proceed do you go back to the original plan? Your CEO recently released a statement saying you won't be starting any new wind farms soon.

James Beckett: The statement from our CEO (Deion Campbell) was in relation to technical difficulties in connecting our most recent project (the Dundonnell Wind Farm, VIC) to the grid. We continue to work with AEMO to work through remaining hold points on the Dundonnell Wind Farm and expect to be able to export up to the full capacity of the wind farm in Q1 2021. All proponents find this a challenging space and we look to confirm a better process that gives all parties certainty when connecting future projects.

Martine Holberton: We are committed to the Project and will continue the development activities to position ourselves for a future investment decision. Should the modification application be rejected we would need to reassess our planning to ensure the project is commercially viable.

James Beckett: We continue to be in discussions with multiple parties for the potential sale of electricity from the windfarm. These types of offtake agreement underpin the financing of larger energy projects and play an important part of being able to make a decision to proceed with the Project.

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Andrew Field: Are you going to trying to link into Hume Link?

Matt Glass: No, still planning on connecting into the 3J line at the southern end of the wind farm. The Hume Link line will strengthen the network within the region however.

James Beckett: Field activities – Geotech program commenced this week through to end December to better understand geology of turbine sites, which is important for cost and scheduling of the construction activities. Ongoing ecological surveys. Continuing supplier and contractor engagement process – preferred suppliers have been selected and this will assist in the ongoing detailed design of the wind farm.

Andrew Field: Are you going to lock up some treed areas with some landholders?

James Beckett: Yes, as part of the biodiversity requirements we are currently investigating some sites within the project area and more broadly. We do have a good handle on what our disturbance will be and have requirements for

offsetting disturbance. The potential for on-ground biodiversity stewardship sites is likely as well as market-based mechanisms that have been established by the State government.

Martine Holberton: Goods and Services register is open. We do want to work with as many local suppliers as possible.

Link for register: <https://podio.com/webforms/11895570/1096976>

Sara Brown: Do you have Position Descriptions for the 10 full time permanent roles?

Matt Glass: I will provide them.

Martine Holberton: As the CCC we encourage you to distribute this information to your Community to provide them with the opportunity to register their interest to work on the project. Should the modification application be approved, it may be the case that as construction tails off on the nearby Bango Wind Farm that seems more likely that construction may be ramping up on the Rye Park Wind Farm.

Jayne Apps: The businesses are benefitting but the locals are inconvenienced.

Martine Holberton: It is a fine balance, though we think there are great economic advantages for the local communities through the development of these types of projects.

Just want to note that we do try hard to respond to your questions at any time. As mentioned at our latest meeting – if you have any questions please contact us immediately, not wait for the next meeting.

Martine Holberton: As part of the Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) TLT has committed to \$2,500 per built turbine. The Modification has reduced the number of built turbines up to 77. TLT has committed to contributing funds for a 92-turbine project. We are trying to look at ways to distribute the additional funds (e.g. if 77 turbines built, the funds associated with 15 turbines x \$2,500pa) and we want to consult directly with the Community on how they would like this money is to be spent.

Andrew Field: Is there the ability for the Councils to renegotiate the VPA given that construction costs will be cheaper.

Matt Glass: Construction costs are not cheaper.

Andrew Field: The footings are smaller, less of them.

Matt Glass: But the turbines are larger and more costly.

James Beckett: The value of the VPA is roughly equivalent to other wind farms in the region under construction or in development and we have committed to go beyond the regulatory requirements by maintaining the funding on a 92-turbine project.

Cr Frost: I understood that was an amount that would start growing it was to be indexed. The State Government then said that it does not start until it goes online. We lost 5 years of CPI increases. You have three different community bodies who are entitled to a view of where the extra funds will be spent.

Subsequent note: Tilt Renewables confirmed following the meeting that the CPI increases of the Monetary Contribution of the VPA occur annually from July 2011.

Martine Holberton: It is up to the Community, particularly the CEF committees for each fund, to decide where to put the funds remaining from unbuilt turbines - in one spot or fund a project. We are trying to work out what other projects we can do in addition to the VPA and input from the community will be considered in the development of the Benefit Sharing Plan.

Christine Hawkins: My concern is that at the Rye Park end you have the Rye Park Progress Association which does not have the same balance due to the disharmony created by the wind farm.

James Beckett: We have made this commitment, there is some flexibility as to what we can do with the funds that are additional to the VPA commitment. With respect to local organisations, we are consulting broadly for ideas on community benefits however as previously mentioned we have no direct involvement with community/progress associations.

Martine Holberton: Our request for community input and a platform to share ideas has been on the website since May (both the RPWF project webpage and the Inform Rye Park website)

Sara Brown: Does that money sit with Tilt? If the community cannot reach consensus then the money sits there and Tilt benefits from the interest?

Martine Holberton: We are somewhat flexible to the arrangements around the broader Benefit Sharing Plan and this level of detail has not yet been considered. If you did have thoughts on how we could best benefit the community, please share them with us directly or through the Inform Rye Park Website

Jayne Apps: You also need to consider that Rye Park is also getting money with Bango.

James Beckett: Martine has open discussions with personnel from the Bango Wind Farm and if there is potential to align community projects then this is something that could be considered.

Andrew Field: Are you having lights on the turbines? Collector has them and I can see them from my house. CASA said you need lights.

James Beckett: There will be a negligible change in impacts to aviation from the approved project to what is being sought as part of the modification. CASA have recommended consideration of obstacle lighting however further risk assessments by Tilt Renewables confirm that night lighting is not warranted. We will continue to review this in light of the modified Development Consent (as appropriate).

Chair: CASA requested them on the Biala Wind Farm as the Dept of Defence wanted them. Although, the Biala proponent, the Biala community and the Upper Lachlan Council (ULC) do not want them. The Council have agreed to write to the Federal Minister and Local Member Angus Taylor to get them removed.

Chair: Have the VPAs been signed with the 3 Councils and do you have the numbers of turbines in each LGA?

Martine Holberton: Yes, and the original approval was for 92 (65 Hilltops, 11 Yass, 16 Upper Lachlan).

Andrew Field: You are ruining our area and you need to pay for it. I think what you are paying is a pittance.

Andrew Field: Have you met with the involved landholders prior again prior to today's meeting.

James Beckett: We have not met with the landholders that sit on the CCC prior to today's meeting however we continue to give updates to them as key stakeholders on the project outside of this forum, which is appropriate.

7. General Business – questions without notice

Review of Code of Conduct:

A few points of the Code were pointed out about behaviour expectation.

Jayne Apps: Asked about attendance of Cr Wheelwright given he has missed 3 consecutive meetings can we have him replaced.

Chair: advised that Committee has no power over this, the responsibility is with the individual Councils.

Sara Brown: Question to Cr Frost. It would be good to get an idea of what things cost – community project

wise. It would give us an understanding of what we can afford.

Cr Frost: gravel resheeting a km of road – it is about \$30k. Upgrade a road and seal is anywhere between \$200 - \$450k per km.

Sara Brown: For example, how much was the Coronation Park upgrade?

Cr Frost: I will let you know.

Matt Glass: It does not have to be infrastructure.

Martine Holberton: We have an interest in education, energy, social impact (such as mental health and welfare initiatives) and the environment.

See case studies on Inform Rye Park website for some examples: <https://informryeparkwf.com/benefit-sharing>

Similarly, look at this document by the Clean Energy Council for ideas:

<https://assets.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/documents/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/guide-to-benefit-sharing-options-for-renewable-energy-projects.pdf>

Chair: How long does the VPA say funds are required to be spent within the local area? E.g. Biala Windfarm has a requirement of a 5km radius for the first 3 years then 20kms after that.

Christine Hawkins: I think for ours it is 20 years for the life of the project. Is the VPA publicly available?

Cr Frost: VPAs are available publicly through the Council's website.

Martine Holberton: There isn't a maximum distance in the VPA for local projects (i.e. within 20km of the wind farm). These will always be treated as a priority however should no suitable local projects be identified; the funding could go to other areas within the council boundaries. For reference, Taralga have a list of all their projects and the funding received. Might be useful for your community.

Cr Frost – you need to have people on those committees to be active.

Andrew Field: When are you thinking you will receive an answer re the modification. Have they given you a date?

James Beckett: We were hoping for end of 2020 however it is looking more and more likely that it would be first quarter 2021. No, we have not been given a date however we are continuing discussions with the Department.

Jayne Apps: The routes through Rye Park have they been decided?

Matt Glass: From the Lachlan Valley Way we would travel along Trucking Yard Road, Dillon Street, Long Street and onto Rye Park Road. At Rye Park we would seek to travel both north and south along Grassy Creek Road and Dalton Road to the relevant site access points.

Jayne Apps: Is there a new mast?

James Beckett: There seems to be some confusion on this however there have not been any new monitoring masts installed on the proposed wind farm.

Christine Hawkins: I would like to thank Cr Frost for his attendance particularly given that YVC has the least

to gain from the project.

Chair: with recent discussions with the Department, once the project construction commences it is suggested meetings should be held every two months. Also, it is a good idea to have the lead contractor attend meetings to address immediately any community concerns.

8. Next Meeting

Next meeting to be held, 7pm Thursday 25th February 2021, Yass Soldiers' Memorial Hall Annexe.

Meeting closed at 9:00 pm

