

Minutes: Minutes of the 1st Meeting of the Hills of Gold Windfarm Community Consultative Committee (CCC)
Held at the Tamworth Regional Council Office, Nundle

Wednesday 12 June 2019

Members Present: Michael Chamberlain (MC) – community representative, Kay Burnes (KB) – Tamworth Regional Council, Donna Ausling (DA) - Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Christine Robinson (CR) – Upper Hunter Shire Council, Megan Trousdale (MT) – Nundle Business Tourism and Marketing Group representative, Margaret Schofield (MSc) – community representative, Marcia Ajani (MA) – community representative, Michael Stranger (MSt) – Someva representative, John Krsjula (JK) – Hills of Gold Preservation Inc representative, John Willcox (JW) – Inclusive Engagement / Someva representative, Simon Chivers (SC) – Someva representative, Jamie Chivers (JC) – Wind Energy Partners representative, Ian Worley (IW) - community representative

Apologies: Nil

Independent Chair: David Ross (DR)

Agenda Items	Who to Present
1. Introductions and apologies	David Ross
2. Declaration of pecuniary or other interests	David Ross and all
3. Introduction to the CCC process and guidelines	David Ross
4. Overview of the proposal	Jamie Chivers
5. General Business	All
6. Next Meeting – 18 September 2019	All

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Meeting commenced at 6:30 pm. DR welcomed all and commented that he had received more committee applications for this CCC – 23 in total – than any other he has been involved with. This was a sign of great local participation and spirit. He noted that he had allowed Wind Energy Partners (WEP) to have four representatives present for this meeting in order to give the committee an understanding of the WEP project team; however, in future meetings, WEP would only be allowed to have three representatives present.</p> <p>Furthermore, while a community representative was allowed to attend via the phone because it was important for them to be involved in this initial induction, this would not be allowed in the future as there are numerous alternate CCC representatives who are keen to play a role; namely: Bruce Moore, Edward Hughes, Megan Carberry, Nick Bradford, Selena Sylvester and Teresa Eather.</p>	
2.	<p>Declaration of pecuniary or other interests – The chair advised that he is paid a fee to chair these meetings.</p>	
3.	<p>Introduction to the CCC Process and Guidelines</p> <p>DR gave a presentation on CCC roles, the process for taking minutes and the code of conduct.</p> <p><u>CCC Roles</u></p> <p>Key to the role for the CCC members is the necessity to be a conduit between the community and the committee, sending information out and bringing information into the committee. Should a CCC member be unable to attend, they are to notify DR who will arrange for an appropriate alternate to attend instead. Should a council representative be unable to attend, Council can nominate an alternate.</p> <p>DR must be independent, allowing all members to raise their views and questions and ensure that all issues are properly considered. DR committed to allowing CCC members to provide feedback on his independence every three or four meetings.</p> <p>WEP / Someva representatives must provide timely and accurate information to the CCC. Responses to meeting actions are required within 28 days.</p> <p>With respect to observers, the guidelines state that DR would have to seek feedback from the committee before deciding whether to let an individual be an observer. In the case of Hills of Gold, DR declared that he had knocked back requests for observers for the present meeting in accordance with Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) guidance that individuals who are on groups already represented on the CCC cannot attend.</p> <p>A discussion was then held on observers before the committee unanimously agreed that no observers would be allowed at CCC meetings. This decision could be revisited in the future.</p>	

	<p>Introduction to the CCC Process and Guidelines (continued)</p> <p><u>Minute Taking</u> DR noted that the minutes would be a summary of each meeting’s proceedings, rather than a transcript. Draft minutes would be provided for review within a week. Members would then have a week in which to provide comments. DR noted that there had been a request for meetings to be livestreamed. After a discussion on this, the committee unanimously agreed that the minutes would be the sole record of meetings. The minutes would also be uploaded to the WEP website [https://www.hillsofgoldenergy.com/ccc]</p> <p><u>Code of Conduct</u> DR reminded members that all, including himself, were to comply with the code. Should anyone not comply, they can be given warnings. Three warnings and people could be removed from the committee. Furthermore, if a member misses three consecutive meetings without an appropriate reason, they can also be removed. With respect to media interest, DR is the only committee member who can talk on behalf of the entire CCC. Should the situation arise, members can talk to the media on their own behalf (or on behalf of the group that they represent) but not on behalf of the committee.</p>	<p>MT to provide DR details of local media contacts so that they can be informed of the CCC’s commencement</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Overview of the Proposal</p> <p>JC introduced himself, confirming that he is a Director in WEP, which has four shareholders. He gave a presentation, summarising the proposal. This commenced with a timeline of works required to get to a decision on the proposal. A Preliminary Environmental Assessment has been prepared by WEP and lodged with DPE [http://bit.ly/2KtvONI]. The PEA has been distributed to government agencies who have provided requests for further detailed assessments. This information was used to create the Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). It is anticipated that it will take about two years to prepare the Development Application (DA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) before public exhibition occurs. Exhibition of the assessment document is for a minimum of four weeks for interested people to make submissions. WEP must then respond to the submissions before a determination is made. MT noted that a copy of the PEA is to be placed at the library shortly.</p> <p><u>What is Proposed</u> Up to 97 turbines are proposed ~ 410 MW generated. This will require: upgrading existing roads and creating new roads; up to two substations and underground cabling between turbines and 24 km of overhead powerlines; and an operations and maintenance building. Foundations can be slab, pile or rock type depending on ground conditions. The slab type is most common with slab sizes generally between 17 to 20m diameter and 2-3 metres depth. This will be determined through the assessment process.</p>	

Overview of the Proposal (continued)

A discussion was then held about how deep the 33 kV cables would be buried with some members concerned that cables may not be buried deep enough. JC noted that the cables would be encased and buried to comply with Australian standards. Furthermore, a resistivity test would identify the cable diameter and depth.

Some land agreements are still being finalised so the boundary of the proposal has also not been finalised. Turbines would be delivered from Newcastle.

JC noted that the proposal would reduce the wholesale cost of energy and provide more renewable energy in the national electricity market.

Questioned on whether WEP would “walk away” if they don’t get an investor, JC responded that the company needs an investor with expertise in construction and operation. Further questioned on whether the PEA or future environmental assessments would be funded by a private investor, JC could not comment, citing commercial-in-confidence.

A committee member questioned whether the grid would cope with both Hills of Gold and the Walcha wind farms? JC responded that the Integrated Systems Plan is produced by AEMO in conjunction with TransGrid to manage consistency of flow [<http://bit.ly/31N1OkZ>].

Other benefits from the proposal were noted by JC including: a reduction in coal fired power; 34 operational jobs forecast and 272 construction jobs; renewable energy for 193,000 homes; a community enhancement fund (CEF) for \$2,500 per turbine; and a general economic injection into the regional economy by associated landowners and those employed by the project.

Questioned on whether the figures quoted were based on a “worst cast scenario” of 97 turbines, could the number of turbines decrease, JC said yes.

It was noted that there is not a lot of residents living within 3 km of the project area. The number was confirmed by the committee as being 42 dwellings.

A member questioned whether the ridge line is a good place to build turbines, based on the Nation Wind Farm Commissioner’s Report. JC noted that the key requirement for best placed wind turbines is where the wind is strongest and most consistent – this is usually on ridge lines but there are other considerations. DR noted that the National Wind Farm Commissioner could be invited sometime to discuss this as well.

A discussion was then held on who administers the fund. A section 355 committee, a council advisory committee or an environmental trust? Furthermore, questions were raised with respect to the risk of the CEF disappearing should an investor come on board. JC observed that the company would need to enshrine the CEF into the DA conditions. A member expressed concern how Nundle or Hanging Rock groups were to believe they could borrow funds against the CEF to build infrastructure like heated pools, retirement homes, funding for clubs etc.

WEP to present at next meeting on forecasted calculations

DR and JC to identify who administers the CEF [see s5.2.1 of <http://bit.ly/2MY90ax>].

	<p><u>The SEARs</u></p> <p>A detailed environmental assessment will need to be undertaken in a number of specialty areas; namely, landscape and visual, noise, biodiversity, traffic and transport, hazards and risks, heritage, water and soils, waste, social and economic. Consultants have now been engaged to work on survey and design work to satisfy the SEARs.</p> <p>A concern was raised about how the company can do an EA if they don't have agreements in place, particularly if some agreements are being disputed and boundaries between the prominent host landholder property and Ben Halls Nature Reserve is in dispute and may change?</p> <p>JC noted in response to questioning by a member about potential turbine or transmission line host landholders that he couldn't disclose where agreements have been finalised as these are commercial in confidence. This discussion then turned to potential future conversations at the CCC meetings, including having a site trip, having a presentation on heritage and biodiversity issues and the methodologies employed to conduct such surveys, as well as inviting the National Wind Farm Commissioner to attend. A member requested that all CCC members be granted access to the potential development site to see the location of proposed turbines identified in the PEA to gain insight. JC noted that this is private property so access may not be granted.</p> <p>As a consequence of that discussion, biodiversity and heritage are to be the focus for the next meeting.</p>	<p>JC to look into a site trip for our Nov / Dec meeting</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>General Business</p> <p>A discussion was held around the anticipated visual impact associated with the proposal. Some members believed that there would be an impact, citing what the PEA had identified. They were concerned that the proposal would be a dominant image in the area. Other members believed that the proposal wouldn't be as dominant, with just some parts of the area impacted. JC noted that a more detailed landscape and visual assessment is required as part of the SEARs, which will call on the preparation of visual montages.</p> <p>A member handed out a media release from DPE about the Crookwell 3 Wind Farm (close to Crookwell 2 Wind Farm). The proposal has been referred to the Independent Planning Commission for final decision saying it should be refused due to significant cumulative visual impacts on the landscape and residents. The CCC member observed that not all wind farm proposals are a fait accompli.</p> <p>Finally, a member asked WEP if they were aware of a possible DA to build within the project area and the possibility of ten turbines being removed. Would this affect the project? JC noted that WEP was aware of the DA and would wait and see.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Next meeting date - Wednesday 18 September 2019 at 6:30pm.</p>	

Meeting Closed: 8:55 pm

Appendix 1: Actions

Page No	Action No	Description	Date Raised
3	1	MT to provide DR details of local media contacts so that they can be informed of the CCC's commencement	12 June 2019
4	2	WEP to present at next meeting on forecast calculations	12 June 2019
4	3	DR and JC to identify who administers the CEF	12 June 2019
5	4	JC to look into a site trip for our Nov / Dec meeting	12 June 2019

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