

Minutes: Minutes of the Proposal Update for the Hills of Gold Windfarm Community Consultative Committee (CCC)

Wednesday, 29 September 2021

Meeting Venue: Held via Microsoft Teams commencing at 6:00 pm

Members Present: Brooke Southwell (C7EVEN); Bruce Moore (Community Representative); Christine Robinson (Upper Hunter Shire Council); Ian Worley (Community Representative); Jamie Chivers (Someva Renewables); John Krsulja (Hills of Gold Preservation Inc Representative); Kay Burns (Tamworth Regional Council); Margaret Schofield (Community Representative); Megan Trousdale (Nundle Business Tourism & Marketing Group Representative); Meredith Anderson (Engie); Michael Chamberlain (Community Representative); Nathan Skelly (Liverpool Plains Shire Council)

Apologies: Peter Schofield (Community Representative)

Independent Chair: David Ross

Secretary: Debbie Corlet

Agenda Items	Who to Present
1. Introductions and Apologies a. Explanation of nature of meeting and forthcoming CCC meeting	David Ross
2. Declaration of Pecuniary or Other Interests	David Ross and All
3. Correspondence	All
4. Update on Proposal a. Response to Submission Process b. Key Project Amendments c. Transport Route Changes and Commitments d. Revised Design and Assessment e. Program to Submission and Determination f. Feedback and Discussion	Someva Renewables
5. Next Meeting	All

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
1.	<p>Introduction and Apologies.</p> <p>David welcomed everyone to the meeting. David explained that this meeting is not a formal CCC meeting but we are here to talk about the changes to the proposal and for Jamie and his team to answer questions. A formal CCC meeting may happen later in the year when Jamie and the team will talk about responses to submissions.</p> <p>David also wanted to thank a few members who are no longer part of the CCC: Donna from Liverpool Plains Shire Council and also Sandra from WEP. Nathan was welcome to the CCC, having replaced Donna and also welcomed Brooke from C7EVEN who is supporting the Hills of Gold windfarm team.</p> <p>Jamie explained Meredith's role. Meredith has a background in renewables for over a decade now and a degree in Environmental Science. She'll be the environmental representative on the proposal.</p>	
2.	<p>Declaration of Pecuniary or Other Interests</p> <p>David advised that he is paid a fee to chair the meeting as is Debbie for taking the meeting minutes.</p>	
3.	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>David observed that he had received some emails from CCC members on the day of the meeting about the nature of the meeting and clarification about roles on the proposal team, specifically who is the Environmental Rep. He hoped that his opening comments clarified any confusion.</p>	
4.	<p>Update on Proposal by WEP</p> <p>Jamie – I'll discuss some of the key changes in the project and some of the revised assessments that have been done. There will be a lot of detail in the Response to the Submissions later in the year but today is about what the key changes are.</p> <p>We received 593 unique submissions through the public which came from 60 NSW LGAs as well as nine interstate LGAs. There has been a lot of interest in this project and a little over half came from Councils that the project is located in.</p> <p>Jamie - observed that, with the recent announcement by the NSW Government of 50% emission reduction by 2050 as well as the NSW Governments Renewable Energy Policy, he believed that there's a real pull for projects like this. The key theme is that this project received more submissions for a wind farm than for any previous proposal, including supporting submissions. There is obviously a divide in views with some strong views of concerns also on the project of course.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>Engie has revised the Community Enhancement Fund commitment which has increased to \$3,000 per turbine, based on the number of turbines that were previously presented in the public exhibition which was 70 turbines. It is subject to any further material changes, but Jamie observed that Engie are trying to maintain consistency in what has been offered. Engie have also committed to a construction phase community grants program which is still in preliminary discussions at the moment but that's a commitment of \$150,000 during the construction phase and really open to ideas and feedback on how best that money can be spent. The \$150,000 will be at Engie's discretion and will not be allocated by the Community Enhancement Fund committee.</p> <p>Key Issues and Consultation – the key issues are landscape and visual, jobs forecast, traffic and transport, biodiversity, soil and water, Devils Elbow Bypass, noise and vibration, hazards, Morrisons Gap Road access. We've met with community groups. There are residents who have specific concerns who are quite close, and we have tried to meet with some of those people to better understand and present back to them some of the changes and reassess impacts.</p> <p>Project Amendments – Removal of and minor relocating of facilities and turbines. Realignment of roads. Realignment of transmission line. Removal of transport route options. Low intensity aviation lights and shields, increased neighbour agreements, increase in Voluntary Planning Agreement offer, new community sponsorship budget during construction, transport commitments around Nundle and Morrisons Gap Road.</p> <p>Jamie - we have removed five turbines from the project layout, mainly due to the visual impact and biodiversity impact, specifically around bats and koalas. Changes have been made to the realignment of roads and transport route options to avoid earthworks and biodiversity and community impacts and reduce the footprint. We have reduced the development footprint from 513ha down to 300ha. Within that 300ha, 100ha is permanent roads and hard stands and 200ha is temporary and also committed to being rehabilitated. A lot of the reduced impact is in native vegetation (75ha) reduction.</p> <p>Jamie - we've had quite a lot of consultation with CASA as aviation lights was something that we heard was a concern from the community. We had agreement from CASA to lower the lighting requirements from 2,000 to 200 Candela. Also agreed to an Aviation Lighting Plan, so we will not need to light every turbine – CASA agreed to 28 of the 65 turbines being lit. Engie have also committed to install lighting shields on those turbines which will prevent light spill.</p> <p>He observed that changes were made along the transmission line route to reduce the biodiversity impact.</p> <p>Map – Transport Route Changes and Commitments – Jamie described the new proposed transport route. The tower transport route for oversize / over mass through Tamworth coming down through Nemingha, Dungowan, Woolomin and into Nundle has been removed and the route along Lindsay's Gap Road previously proposed for the blades and other components is now the route for all components.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>Jamie noted that increases proposed traffic on the route. To address that, a lay-by is proposed to help with any build-up of traffic behind oversize / over mass, predicted to be less than six per day over the nine months. Routes through parts of the Nundle including residential areas have been removed and parking restrictions proposed for project related traffic and restrictions for project workers on the main street. A temporary car park has been proposed for them. Changes will avoid the roads with potential heritage impacts in Nundle and a number of creek crossings. Traffic would be focused on Barry Road and proposed additional laybys on Barry Road and on Morrisons Gap Road to address potential congestion with road widening on Morrisons Gap Road.</p> <p>Jamie - proposed traffic numbers have been changed from 500 trips per day to a little over 300. That includes light vehicles, water trucks and regular trucks during peak construction, compared to an existing 850 return trips in and out of Nundle per day and 72 forestry related vehicle movements per day. Additional commitments have been made, for example, to provide residents on Morrisons Gap Road and Shearers Road with radios so they can contact Site Managers. There will be a text service that people can register with so they can receive text messages about transport including the oversize / over mass transport. Engie propose to set up a permanent office in Nundle during construction and employing someone from the local region to provide information on the project.</p> <p>Further Assessment / Detailed Design – Reduction in native vegetation removal by 75ha from 208ha to 132 ha – rehabilitation of 200ha committed. Reduction in impact to Koala Habitat by 14ha. Commitment to “spot and relocate” to identified greater than 3,000ha of neighbouring nature reserve habitat. No Class 7 or 8 soils on development footprint and suitable for wind farm construction. It was noted that only two koalas were spotted during the surveys.</p> <p>Jamie noted that the team reached out to the business community to understand their views on some of these changes and received confirmation from the majority of them that they did support these transport routes being proposed and committed to and particular a lot of support on the transport route itself.</p> <p>A member asked if landholders required for laybys and road upgrades on the transport route had been consulted. Jamie - all required landholders for road upgrades had been consulted on the transport route.</p> <p>A committee member observed that they were pleased with the proposed traffic changes. Hopefully what improvements are there will be long lasting. Anything done on the main road will have a longer lasting benefit.</p> <p>Another member observed that they were approached by people, concerned that Crawney Road data wasn’t included in the EIS, including the school bus route. The concern was that it is an unsealed road. The residents want confirmation from Jamie that Crawney Road will not be utilised for any of the workers or will the data for the roads be provided and the dirt</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ACTION 1 – Road upgraded on Crawney Road – is it related to the project or a landowner</p>

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>road sealed? Would all proponents and constructions workers utilise only one route that you have identified up through Nundle and up through Hanging Rock and Morrison’s Gap Road and won’t be coming along Crawney Road?</p> <p>Jamie – The work that is going on down there now has nothing to do with the project which I assume is the landowner upgrade. To be clear about the 300 trips a day, this is the accumulation of roughly 120-130 light vehicles, water trucks, roughly 120 heavy vehicles and over size and over mass. We have assessed Crawney Road for use by light vehicles, including light vehicles travelling over Crawney Pass from the Hunter Valley. There will be no heavy vehicles using that road as it is not suitable coming over the Crawney Pass. The numbers provided would be clarified in the Response to Submission Report.</p> <p>The community member emphasised that the main concern people want addressed is the sealing of Crawney Road up to the bypass and the school bus route along Crawney Road that wasn’t assessed in your EIS.</p> <p>Jamie – School bus routes will be in the Transport Management Plan. We aren’t proposing to seal any of Crawney Road as it won’t be used for heavy vehicles, only very light use for light vehicles.</p> <p>Community member observed that could be hundreds per day once you get to the western end.</p> <p>Another community member asked Jamie if there was an intention to plan an access point for traffic at that western end of the project either off Crawney Road or off a property on Crawney Road?</p> <p>Jamie – No it is not part of our Project proposal. It was assessed in the earlier days, but it was determined not to be the most efficient for a number of reasons including biodiversity and community impacts.</p> <p>Community member noted they’ve been chatting to CASA re the lighting plan, and would like to know if there is a wind farm in Australia that is currently using the 200-candela strength lighting and the shielding, please?</p> <p>Jamie – I think that is a fairly recent change by CASA and I know we’re not the only project being allowed to do that. Where those projects have been built with the new reduced lighting requirement, I’ll need to take that away.</p> <p>Jamie then received questions on laybys (no layby proposed along the length of Lindsay Gap Road) and the location of the temporary car park. He noted that the location of the layby is subject to discussion with Tamworth Regional Council there will be one somewhere on Lindsay Gap Road. Furthermore, the team haven’t finalised a location for the car park, although it will need to be close to town. Will need to work with local landowners to find a suitable place.</p> <p>There were follow-up comments and questions from community member as to whether the location of the temporary car park will be finalised before the Response to Submissions as that’s very important from a tourism perspective. Some of the issues that have been raised with them from people in town are: where is it going to be? What’s the visual impact of that</p>	<p>ACTION 2 - Jamie to provide breakdown of vehicles</p> <p>ACTION 3 – Transport Management Plan to be discussed at next CCC meeting</p> <p>ACTION 4 – Jamie to get more information from CASA</p> <p>ACTION 5 – Jamie to share examples of the shielding from CASA</p>

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>temporary car park, the fencing, or any paving? What you're talking about is a very big change to the whole character of Nundle and surrounds that they didn't think had been communicated thoroughly to all residents.</p> <p>Jamie – We need to make sure that we are sensitively sighting it from existing heritage buildings within Nundle and we have received feedback from the community on those heritage buildings specifically. I'm happy to take that away and talk to you about some of the proposed locations as we're able to and whether they are suitable or not. The car park is a reaction to try to find ways to respond to some of the concerns that have been raised and also sighted appropriately.</p> <p>Jamie was asked about whether there is a proposal to bus half the workers up to the work site from Tamworth? What number of vehicles are you talking about now and is that number consistent with what is in the EIS?</p> <p>Jamie – There has been a change in the assumptions for how people will travel to site due to covid, to consider safety as well so that anyone that is up there can get back down safely. We haven't made changes to the assumptions for the transport numbers but on the whole the number of vehicles has come down. I'm looking at some of the transport numbers and in terms of light vehicles, it's 70 one-way trips in peak and 155 daily trips (that's return).</p> <p>A community member commented about the proposed layby on Lindsay Gap Road. The log trucks are already a problem. So, you're going to bring all the heavy vehicles along there with just one layby between there and coming into Nundle. The member believed that there had been an inability to answer community questions about the location of the car park – there has been plenty of time to sort that out – and the four other laybys.</p> <p>Jamie – Those four laybys are where we are proposing them. One layby is labelled incorrectly, and I can change that. In response to member's concerns about extra traffic, Jamie observed that he is talking about 63 one-way trucks a day during peak construction compared to the 72 forestry trucks that already use that road. Likewise, the traffic data we have is 845 movements in and out of Nundle every day (peak) including over size / over mass trucks and 155 light vehicles.</p> <p>David – 63 truck movements one way during peak construction. How long will peak last for?</p> <p>Jamie – I know transport over size / over max is a 9-month period. Peak construction may be different to that – it may be a little longer than a year.</p> <p>Jamie – We have worked to avoid impact in a number of ways, and this will become more refined as we go into final design. What is being presented now is not the end and there will be further opportunities to reduce impact. Some of the assessments that were changed and hopefully pick up on some of the concerns that you had: more flora and fauna surveys completed over a couple of weeks which included the bat and other species' habitat surveys; geomorphology, looking at the detailed topography and what would be suitable for bat habitat. We undertook additional flora and fauna biodiversity assessment to get more certainty as there were concerns that we might have missed some species. We needed to do a detailed design of Devils Elbow for a number of community members, that is proposed as a private bypass, not a public</p>	<p>ACTION 6 – Re-label one layby</p> <p>ACTION 7 – Confirm number of trucks through the peak construction time</p>

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>bypass. We will be presenting a detailed design of that as well as a revision on the Statement of Heritage Impacts. We wanted to look at the jobs and economic forecast again and a breakdown of where those jobs are actually coming from and make sure we were comfortable. There were concerns that some of those job numbers were “over” forecast.</p> <p>Jamie - The Biodiversity Assessment Report has had a significant overhaul, including through design revisions to look at bat, koala and glider habitat and see where we could avoid impacts. We have been able to reduce koala habitat affected by 14ha from 50ha. That still presents a 36ha impact which still is something we are sensitive to and can provide some context. There’s only seven koalas registered as being spotted within 10 kms of the site and we only found two in that extensive survey effort. Engie have committed to a spot and relocate. So, if we did find koalas through preconstruction or construction, there will be a spotter and handler onsite to move koalas from the area into high quality habitats surrounding the project. We’ve significantly reduced native vegetation impact by 75% to bring that down to 132ha. That 132ha is not high impact, high condition. There’s a lot of derived native grassland. It looks like pasture, but it’s derived from native species.</p> <p>Jamie also described the revision of geotechnical studies with respect to the presence of Class 7 or 8 soils. As part of that the team reassessed the erosion risk and the class and can confirm with certainty that there is no Class 7 or Class 8 which were considered to be conservation type soils.</p> <p>The team have also been working with neighbouring landowners to identify where there is high quality habitat and where biodiversity offset sites can be created to offset some of the impact that we can’t avoid. This has involved speaking to landowners about that and some of those sites will create wildlife corridor opportunities between Wallabadah Nature Reserve, Crawney National Park and Ben Halls Gap National Park. Jamie appreciated there was some concern around the level of detail of the Biodiversity Offset Strategy in the EIS; there is more detail on that in the Response to Submission.</p> <p>A community member wanted to ask about the reference to the majority of the businesses in agreement with proposed transport route changes. Was Jamie only speaking about businesses who are in the Nundle Business Marketing Group? Did that go out to the primary producer businesses as well? The member knew a lot of people who didn’t get it.</p> <p>Jamie – No, I’m talking about businesses that responded to the survey that was sent out. So, we had 55 responses to a business survey and I’m talking about the results of that which is a good sample size of the businesses in the area. We did get responses from primary production businesses, yes, within that survey. I’ll need to check as I don’t have the list of who it went out to, but it was quite an extensive list. By the looks of some of the results, there were quite a few primary production businesses who responded to that. It certainly has gone out to some. We are getting a lot of feedback from the Nundle Business and Tourism Marketing group and businesses on the main street of Nundle.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>A community member commented that only having one layby on Morrisons Gap Road is a concern. It would be an advantage to have more than one layby along a particular windy section with no double lanes to allow traffic to get past.</p> <p>In response to a question from a member asking what are the numbers of the turbines that have been removed, Jamie responded that they are: Turbine WP1 on the furthest western extent; WP19 on the southern side; WP23, WP27 and WP31 also removed. There were four turbines with potential high risk of impact to bat species and birds and three of those turbines were removed and modified the location of the fourth to avoid that impact. It's completely avoided impact to two bat species.</p> <p>A community member expressed concern that there is still a lack of detail in what was presented and is happy to wait until they see the Response to the Submissions; they still haven't seen the Hydrology address. Jamie – The detail will be presented including an updated Soil and Water Report that has responded to a detailed geotechnical investigation.</p> <p>Jamie then described that the team will be working through finalising the submissions and the report, submitting this to the Department by 29 October. This will then be published on the Department of Planning's major projects website.</p> <p>Members were then asked if the proposed amendments present an improvement from what was exhibited, what are the greatest benefits from the amendments and were asked for feedback, good or concerning, in general. Members expressed a mixture of support and concern with respect to the amendments.</p> <p>A community member observed that the transport route change is sensible and that most of the people who live in Nundle and Hanging Rock won't be encountering a lot heavier traffic and more volume of traffic. This is a good relief.</p> <p>Others expressed concern that the questions raised by the team were seeking positive responses only. Furthermore, some members believed that there aren't improvements in the design. The design is still in the wrong location, where the affected will have to wear the impact for everyone else. Some observed that there are still a lot of neighbours struggling with the concept and not getting rapid responses. It was believed that the transport route is a massive issue with that Lindsay's Gap Road and all the way to the highway.</p> <p>Another member followed on from this, noting that the majority of the community have put in their objections and have serious concerns that haven't been addressed. The member observed that, in the last week, they've had people ringing in distress about being harassed to sign Neighbour Agreements. They still feel they are under this enormous pressure to sign Neighbour Agreements and they don't agree with the Project, and they don't agree with the changes to the character of the landscape and the impacts to the residents in the town and surrounds. What's been taken away is what we have now.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>The member asked if the proposal is included in the 34 gigawatts of Expressions of Interest that the State Government recently received in relation to the New England Renewable Energy Zone - and, they believed that the State Government has a huge suite of renewables to choose from and this project isn't needed.</p> <p>Jamie – Yes, the Hills of Gold is a part of the 34 gigawatts, that's expressed interest. You don't need to have land agreements signed or be that far advanced to lodge an Expression of Interest for the New England. There is commentary from the Government that even though there's a lot of interest in this area, there is still a requirement outside to develop more renewable projects. You are looking at quite a range of projects. I will say about suitability there is an updated NSW State and Environmental Policy that talks about ensuring that renewable energy projects are built in the right places. We don't have any proposed turbines close to the zoning restrictions that the new Draft Policy is proposing.</p> <p>A community member, to Jamie, noted that the presentation touched on the positives of the project and not the negatives. The member is also curious about the Community Enhancement Fund and how it'll be spilt. \$210,000 a year which equates to about \$570 a day. They didn't think it would be a benefit to the community as some of us believe it will be. They also pointed to the losses to businesses, farming and value of the lifestyle environment and that the losses will outweigh the benefits. The member said that they look forward to the responses, especially the Hills of Gold Preservation one, and all the members that have objected.</p> <p>Jamie – The HOG responses is going to be key for us and we will spend a lot of time trying to get that right and addressing those concerns with the level of detail that we know that will be expected. With regards to the Community Enhancement Fund, I don't think it is fair to compare that to dollars per day and what other businesses are creating. The project is going to bring in significant economic activity in the region, and that's been updated in the numbers. Our job is to ensure we manage the environmental and social impacts that also come with that.</p> <p>Brooke – In relation to what a member was saying about people calling them to say they are being pressured into signing Neighbour Agreements, if you could encourage them to give Meredith a call as that is certainly not the intention of Engie to pressure anyone in anyway, so it would be great to find out who that is so we can make sure that is rectified. It's obviously a voluntary thing to sign and if they do feel they are being pressured we would definitely like to hear about that.</p> <p>The member said that they will pass that information on to the landholders, but they would prefer for further communication to be in writing rather than phone calls. They want all the information to be provided in writing, so they have the time to absorb it and don't want to be harassed over the phone or Zoom meetings are not their communication choice of preference. The member continued that the Community Enhancement Fund has been plagued with challenges where community members have put up projects that have not had any basis in realism and it is very dangerous to start throwing around ideas about how this money can be spent when even in the FAQ, the actual mechanism for deciding how and which project will be funded is not even going to be finalised until "if" the project is going to be approved.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action/By Whom
	<p>Jamie – We have done a lot of consultation on the Community Enhancement Fund for governance both with Council and with members of the CCC, that’s been documented. It is made clear in the Project that the Community Enhancement Fund is only provided if the project progresses into construction.</p> <p>In response, a community member believed that it’s not just the financial benefit but also the lack of community consent. A large percentage of our population responded to your EIS, and we know there is a large percentage of that who objected. I don’t think you can put a value on this project as a whole if you don’t have the community consent. Sure, there is people that want the project with the financial benefits etc but there is also so many that don’t and so many non-associated landholders affected surrounding the project and the landholder agreements you don’t get have in place. What’s your other project you have up your sleeve if this one is rejected from the Department?</p> <p>Jamie –We are focused on this project and working on solving the problems that we understand from the community. We’ve spent the significant majority of the year working on this project and concerns that have been raised.</p> <p>A member noted that they were pleased with the changes with the light. They believed that what the area can gain from the wind continually amazes them and feels the community are misunderstanding what the wind resource is out there in comparison for having to use diesel or for the broader community using coal. For them, the bigger scheme of things is to harness a natural resource that long term our next generations are going to be better off.</p>	
5.	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>David – Response to Submissions to be submitted late October and once that is out, I think we’ll have a better idea of how much notice to give members and what sort of background information to provide beforehand.</p> <p>Jamie – you’ll be getting more information soon but if members would like to sit down and have a meeting and go through it all in Teams in more detail, happy to do that or happy to wait until the Response to Submissions is out as well.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 7:48 pm.</p>	<p>ACTION 8 – David to liaise with Jamie at the end of October re timing of next CCC meeting</p>

Appendix 1: Actions

Page No	Action No	Description	Date Raised
4	1	Road upgraded on Crawney Road – is it related to the project or a landowner	29 September 2021
5	2	Jamie to provide breakdown of vehicles	29 September 2021
5	3	Transport Management Plan to be discussed at next CCC meeting	29 September 2021
5	4	Jamie to get more information from CASA	29 September 2021
5	5	Jamie to share examples of the shielding from CASA	29 September 2021
6	6	Re-label the laybys	29 September 2021
6	7	Confirm number of trucks through the peak construction time	29 September 2021
10	8	David to liaise with Jamie at the end of October re timing of next CCC meeting	29 September 2021