
Date/Time: Tuesday, 21 July 2015
12.30-2.30pm

Location: Council Chambers, Gunning
123 Yass Street, Gunning

Attendees: Nic Carmody, Chairperson
Mayor John Shaw, Upper Lachlan Shire Council Representative
Kathy Cosgrove, Committee Member
Vince Heffernan, Committee Member
Charles Knight, Committee Member
John McCue, Committee Member
Annmaree Lavery (Newtricity), Applicant Representative
Murray Curtis and Erin Dethridge (ERM), Applicant Representative
Chris Mackenzie Davey, Regional Clean Energy Program Coordinator,
Office of Environment and Heritage (Observer)

SUMMARY NOTES OF MEETING

1. Welcome and Introductions

Nic Carmody welcomed everyone to the first CCC Meeting. Representatives from Newtricity and ERM introduced themselves and their role in the Project.

Committee members introduced themselves and declared any pecuniary interests. Mayor Shaw, Kathy Cosgrove and Charles Knight foreshadowed a possible interest in the transmission line corridor.

Chris Mackenzie Davey attended as an observer and introduced his role as the Regional Clean Energy Program Coordinator.

Discussion Items

Question: Where is the transmission line connection up to?

Whilst the transmission line will be assessed separately to the wind farm, Newtricity acknowledge that it is essential for the Project and is therefore open to questions/discussions about the transmission line during the CCC meetings and other consultation activities.

Newtricity has commissioned an options report to consider the transmission line connection to the electricity grid. This assessment has determined that the western corridor to the Essential Energy 132kV Yass to Goulburn line is the most feasible option. Discussions with landholders along the route together with Council and Crown Lands are continuing to determine the final route. Detailed environmental investigations and assessment will then be undertaken.

Question: Why can't Biala Wind Farm take advantage of the TransGrid 330kV transmission line connection near the Gullen Range Wind Farm?

Newtricity has considered this option given it involves a shorter connection, however the significant costs do not make this a feasible option. Newtricity has also considered an eastern corridor to the Essential Energy 132kV Yass to Goulburn line, which would follow (in part) the easement of the transmission line for the Gunning Wind Farm. Due to capacity issues, the Project would not be able to connect to this existing line and would require the easement to be increased to accommodate the new transmission line.

2. Project Update

ERM provided the following update on the Project status:

- ERM wrote to the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) in December 2014 requesting that the transmission line be removed from the Project Area. DP&E issued revised environmental assessment requirements on this basis in May 2015.
- The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Technical Studies have been completed and the State Significant Development Application will be lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) by 24 July 2015.
- Following lodgement, DP&E will review the EIS and determine its adequacy for public exhibition, expected to take place during Quarter 4 2015.

ERM provided a brief overview of the Project, with the following key points emphasised:

- The Project Area involves 37 land parcels that are owned by four landholders.
- A total of 31 wind turbines are proposed together with associated infrastructure including on-site substation, internal access tracks, maintenance and operations facility and temporary facilities including a concrete batching plant, site offices and storage.
- The proposed turbines are a minimum of 2km from a dwelling associated with a non-involved landholder.
- Whilst the transmission line does not form part of the Project, as part of the EIS Newtricity was required to provide information to demonstrate that a connection to the existing electricity grid was feasible. The preferred transmission line corridor runs to the Essential Energy 132kV Yass to Goulburn line, approximately 22km south of the wind farm.
- The technical studies have concluded that the Project is compliant with the relevant assessment criteria related to noise and shadow flicker; will not significantly impact on identified ecology, heritage values and aviation safety; and can manage potential impacts to communications, bushfire risk and traffic.
- Potential visual impacts have been considered, including the preparation of photomontages from public and private viewpoints surrounding the wind farm site.

The following community consultation activities are planned in the coming months:

- Public exhibition period for the EIS expected to occur in Quarter 4 2015.
- A community information session will coincide with the public exhibition period and will be held at the Grabben Gullen Hall.
- Newsletter #4 will be distributed in the coming weeks.

Discussion Items

Question: Has OEH been consulted about the Superb Parrot flight path through this area?

Whilst the ERM representatives could not comment on the Superb Parrot specifically, ERM consulted with OEH as part of the preparation of the Ecology Impact Assessment and to inform the targeted, seasonal surveys undertaken at the site.

Question: Have cumulative impacts with other wind farms in the area been considered?

As required by the environmental assessment requirements for the Project, the EIS has considered cumulative impacts, particularly with regards to ecology, noise, visual, aviation, traffic and electromagnetic interference to communications. It is noted that the consideration of cumulative impacts is based on a desktop review of available information/assessments from other wind farm development applications.

Question: Is the Project likely to impact on television reception in the area?

An assessment of potential electromagnetic interference (EMI) issues associated with the Project has been undertaken by DNV GL. This assessment concluded that the Project may impact on six dwellings within the immediate vicinity of the Project. It is expected that any interference to television reception can be mitigated by improving the equipment at individual dwellings.

Question: The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) has indicated that the Project may impact on one of the Fixed Point-to-Point Links passing over the Project Area?

The NSW RFS operate one of the links that pass over the Project Area and were consulted as part of the preparation of the EMI assessment. ERM understands that the RFS are willing to re-route the link, provided that specified conditions are met by the Project.

Question: How is the Project Newsletter distributed?

The previous newsletter (Issue #3) distributed in February 2015 was circulated by mail/email where contact details have been provided, as an insert within the Crookwell Gazette, posted to the Project website and copies made available at Upper Lachlan Shire Council. Newtricity is open to further suggestions to distribute the newsletter and other consultation material.

Feedback provided by the Committee included the Gunning Lions Club Newsletter, copies made available at the Grabben Gullen Pub and Newtricity to engage Council to undertake mail out (given privacy requirements).

3. Community Consultative Committee

Nic Carmody provided an overview of the role and purpose of the CCC and referred to the Wind Farm CCC Charter released by the Department of Planning and Environment. It is anticipated that CCC members will communicate information discussed during the meetings back to the wider community.

ERM advised the Committee that after three separate requests for expressions of interest to join the Committee, only four applications were received from members of the community.

Committee members are therefore welcome to nominate parties that may be interested in joining the Committee.

It is the responsibility for Committee members to advise Nic Carmody of an alternate representative if they are unable to attend a meeting.

The frequency of all CCC meetings will be dependent on the Project process, however it was agreed that the next meeting should take place prior to the public exhibition period (in approximately 2-3 months' time). Thursday lunchtime was agreed as a suitable time (excluding the third Thursday of the month). Meeting notes are to be circulated by Newtricity to the Committee Chairman for endorsement before being posted on the Project website within 28 days of the meeting.

Discussion Items

Question: How will the next community information day be advertised?

Similar to the last two sessions, it will be advertised in the Goulburn Post, Crookwell Gazette and Gunning Lions Club Newsletter as well as on the Project website. Newtricity is open to further suggestions to advertise the community information day.

Feedback provided by the Committee included noticeboards on-site and public notices at Upper Lachlan Shire Council and the Grabben Gullen Pub.

4. General Business

Question: What impact (if any) will the downgrading of the Renewable Energy Target (RET) have on this Project?

Newtricity advised that following consultation with the Clean Energy Council, the revised target would still drive investment over the next five years such that it will have no impact on the Project.

Question: Has potential bushfire risks been considered?

The EIS is supported by a Bushfire Hazard and Risk Assessment. All turbines and associated infrastructure are located in areas mapped as low fire hazard and with the implementation of the prescribed measures documented in the EIS, the risk of bushfire can be effectively managed.

Question: Is a power purchase agreement required for the Project prior to submission of the planning application?

Newtricity advised that a power purchase agreement was not required until later in the development process.

Question: What is the expected timing for approval of the Project?

It is anticipated that the approvals process will take approximately 12 months. This includes a 60 day public exhibition period and allowance for the Proponent to respond to submissions, DP&E to assess the Project and then consideration by the Planning Assessment Commission.

Question: What happens to the transmission line corridor if a landholder does not consent to the alignment through their land?

Newtricity advised that if a landholder does not support the transmission line, then the route will deviate around the respective land parcels.

Question: It was requested that the Community Enhancement Fund be discussed at the next CCC meeting.

There was discussion between Committee members as to who should be responsible for overseeing the Community Enhancement Fund (CEF), i.e. Upper Lachlan Shire Council or the CCC. Other wind farms in the region have established a CEF by way of a Voluntary Planning Agreement with Council. Whilst the CEF remains community-based, it is managed by Council. It was agreed that the CEF would be discussed at the next CCC meeting.

Question: Can the host land parcels be 're-purposed' so that the wind farm can be considered in rates?

This does not currently occur in New South Wales.

Question: What contingencies (if any) would be in place for the local fire brigade to fight bushfires further west of the wind farm?

A Bushfire Management and Emergency Response Plan will be prepared in consultation with the RFS and other relevant stakeholders, prior to the commencement of any construction. It has been acknowledged by the RFS that wind farms are actually a benefit for fighting bushfires as they provide improved access by way of the network in access tracks. It was noted by a member of the Committee that access to the wind farm is primarily from Grabben Gullen Road and therefore access arrangements from the west should be considered.

Question: Is it likely that the density of wind turbines within the Project Footprint and along the proposed transmission line corridor will be increased?

No, it is not just a matter of adding more turbines within the Project footprint, unless you reduce the size, given the operational and wind turbulence requirements. Further turbines along the transmission line would need to be considered and assessed on their own merit and would be subject to capacity requirements of the transmission line. Newtricity is focused on the current proposal and has no intention of pursuing further turbines along the transmission line corridor.

Question: What is the expected lifespan of the wind turbines and who is responsible for decommissioning?

At this stage, the technology has a lifespan of approximately 25 years. Following this period, the wind farm owner at the time may elect to replace the turbines with new infrastructure or decommission the development. The wind farm owner at the time will be responsible for funding the decommissioning and rehabilitation of the land. It is anticipated that above-ground structures will be removed and in consultation with the respective landholders, the structures at and below ground level (i.e. turbine footings, access tracks and hardstand areas) will remain in situ and covered with topsoil.

Question: Will a Decommissioning Fund be established for the Project?

This has not been a specific condition of consent for other wind farms in the region. Recent studies have suggested that the price for scrap metal is more than the cost to remove the wind turbines.

Question: What is the maximum height of the turbines being considered?

The EIS and Technical Studies have assessed turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 185 metres.

Question: What megawatt is being considered?

The EIS and Technical Studies have assessed turbines of 2.5-3.5 megawatt.

Question: Is the Project likely to impact on any helicopter routes in the area?

An Aeronautical Impact Assessment has been prepared as part of the EIS and determined that the Project will not significantly impact on aviation safety and flight paths in the area.

Question: What happens to the transmission line easement at the end of the wind farm, would Essential Energy give it back to the landholder?

Newtricity is unable to comment as Essential Energy would be responsible for making arrangements regarding the infrastructure and easement.

Question: There was a request to discuss benefit sharing for the wind farm at the next meeting.

Whilst this matter can be discussed in more detail at the next meeting, Newtricity indicated that agreements were already in place with the involved landholders. It was acknowledged by Council's representative that the wind turbines had adopted a 2km separation from non-involved dwellings in accordance with the NSW Draft Wind Farm Guidelines and Council's Development Control Plan.

5. Next Steps and Close

Additional agenda items for the next meeting include the Community Enhancement Fund and Benefit Sharing.

The main point of contact for the Committee remains the chairperson, Nic Carmody.

It was agreed that the next meeting take place prior to the public exhibition period, in approximately 2-3 months.