

**BIALA WIND FARM
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE – MEETING 25**

Date/Time:	Tuesday 19 November 2024
Location:	Grabben Gullen Community Hall, Grabben Gullen
Attendees:	Nic Carmody (NC), Chairperson Paul Hewitt (PH), Committee Member Kathy Cosgrove (KC), Committee Member Cr Sue Reynolds (SR), Upper Lachlan Shire Council Representative Erin Fletcher (EF), (BJCE), Owner’s Representative Andrew Sinclair (AS), (BJCE), Owner’s Representative Diana Forrester (DF), (BJCE), Community Liaison Officer
Apologies:	Vince Heffernan (VH), Committee Member Jenifer Heffernan (JH), Committee Member George Shepherd (GS), Committee Member Lachlan Lambertson (LL), (BJCE), Owner’s Representative Karl Schubert (KS), (BJCE), Owner’s Representative Shane Laverty (SL), Committee Member

SUMMARY OF MEETING MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NC welcomed everyone to the 25th CCC meeting • NC welcomed Councillor Susan Reynolds from ULSC who replaces Paul Culhane on this CCC, following his election to Mayor. NC asked SR to pass on his thanks and appreciation to Paul for his many years of service to this committee • NC also noted the apologies (listed above)
2. Code of Conduct and Agreement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declaration of pecuniary or other interests: N/A
3. CCC Meeting Minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minutes for the 24th meeting were circulated and agreed out of session and are on the website.
4. Correspondence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
5. General Discussion
<p>Project update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AS explained there were no turbines spinning this week at both Biala Wind Farm (BWF) and Gullen Range Wind Farm (GRWF) because scheduled maintenance is in progress.

- NC asked how often this happens and AS said annual maintenance occurs but particularly for GRWF this is a bigger, 10-year scheduled maintenance so it involves more work.
- AS reported Divall's is currently doing some road works in the vicinity of Turbine 1 checking for soft spots, repairing as necessary and replacing a pipe.
- AS said Mine Soils were on site last week conducting an in-house audit to check on all the battered banks and any general erosion. They also ensure the roads and drains are working well.
- AS explained Goldwind is currently carrying out weed spraying at GRWF and they will move across to BWF soon. They check the whole farm with a focus on hardstands and roadsides, banks and drains.
- AS reported that they will be transporting some replacement generators and blades to GRWF early next year, with the parts to be stored there for possible use if needed across both GRWF and BWF. These are large loads so they will require some traffic management in Crookwell where there are easements in place to facilitate this. The council and the relevant landholders will be given suitable notice when the dates have been confirmed.
- KC asked why spare generators and blades are necessary and where they will be located. AS explained they will be placed undercover at GRWF and are just to provide a back-up for both GRWF and BWF if they are ever needed.
- SR asked how big the generator will be and AS explained they are about 5 metres – so they fit on a long load truck.
- AS reported there had been 4 Rural Fire Service groups visit recently (27/9/24) to familiarise themselves with access points and fire plans for both BWF and GRWSF
- AS said bushfire preparedness activities are now underway – making sure everything is clean and ready, water containers full etc.
- Bush fire preparedness inspections are carried out monthly throughout the bushfire season.
- The RFS visit was well attended and the attendees enjoyed a BBQ at BWF after the site inspection.
- AS provided the CCC with a snapshot of the power generation figures for BWF over the last 12 months and noted that from October 2023-September 2024 the wind farm generated enough to power more than 150,000 average homes.

- KC asked if that power all goes to Sydney and AS explained how the power generated at BWF can go anywhere, depending on requirements. It might go to Victoria or South Australia or wherever it is needed at any given time.
- NC asked if they ever need to be turned off due to oversupply. AS explained if there is no demand it might, very occasionally, be necessary to turn them off.
- SR asked what happens in really strong weather. AS explained how the blades feather out and, if there are significant wind gusts of more than 25 metres per second they automatically shut down.

Community update

- EF reported on the **Community Fund Workshop** which took place in the Grabben Gullen Hall in April. About 15 community members attended. The Fund's guidelines were presented together with the outcomes of some community research about the sort of initiatives local residents would like to see pushed forward. There was a proactive discussion around the idea of pooling funds across the region. It's an ongoing discussion – but EF explained that the different VPAs involved in each wind farm approval makes this quite tricky to achieve. Overall the workshop was a very positive experience for participants.
- EF explained that the **Landscaping Program** officially closed in August, with more than 20

residents taking part and one outstanding application being dealt with now.

- NC recalled a previous concern from a resident about the Landscaping Program, and asked if this had been resolved. EF advised that she would follow up internally to see if additional action is required in relation to any outstanding/previous applications. **ACTION ITEM**
- EF said the **TV program** officially ended in June. Eligible residents received up to two VAST boxes free of charge with some also receiving new aerials on their rooftops. More than 70 residents benefited from the Program with one or two still in progress. EF mentioned the excellent job Hudson had done installing the TV systems for BWF.
- PH mentioned some new residents he was aware might need this assistance and EF said they should be directed to the website where they could still make a request if they believe they have reception issues, even though the program is officially now closed.
- EF explained the most recent round of **BWF Community Fund** grant applications has now closed. Mayor Paul Culhane is chairing the assessment committee and an initial meeting to consider these has already taken place. EF reported there had not been as many applicants this time. She also mentioned that the initial three year period of priority funding for those within 5km of the wind farm has finished, with applications now considered up to 20km from BWF.
- EF noted there were five projects funded in 2023.
- SR asked how the distance is calculated, and whether projects close to, but outside the area, could be considered. SR explained Laggan Primary School sits just beyond the boundary areas of a number of these grant programs, yet has real needs. EF suggested they should check the new eligibility map on the BWF website and consider making an inquiry to explain the nature of the project they wish to put forward.
- KC asked if the funding was rolled over if it wasn't all used and EF confirmed that is correct.
- EF also noted the GRWF Community Fund had approved 6 different projects for grants this year and had received a wider range of applications.
- EF provided an update on the considerable **school students/activities** for the wind farm this year.
- EF explained, BWF was a proud supporter of the annual Southern Tablelands STEM Challenge, organised by Goulburn Rotary and Newcastle University. It took place at Veolia Arena in early August and the BWF team attended with an information stand for students. They also helped to judge the final bridge building challenge.
- Later in August, Goulburn Mulwaree High School hosted a *Keep Local and Build a Career in STEM* event across two days. EF explained she, AS and DF were in attendance and hosted an information stand with career information as well as a hands-on activity for the students who had to build a wind turbine. AS explained how the turbine building exercise worked, with each school group trying to produce the highest energy levels from their model. EF noted it was a close competition which Crookwell High ultimately won.
- In September Crookwell High held a Careers Day which AS and other company representatives attended. EF reported this was a successful day with both primary and secondary students taking part in the event.
- EF also mentioned that a group of Year 8 students from Crookwell High School had enjoyed their visit last month to both the wind and solar farm sites at Gullen Range.
- PH said he believes these initiatives are really important for the local children because it encourages them to think about alternative careers that are possible in the local region now.
- EF agreed and said she was working with the local STEM co-ordinator to increase this kind of activity.
- EF said local **Sponsorships and Donations** continue to be an important part of BWF's community outreach.

- She noted the Crookwell Devils' sponsorship will continue into 2025 and plans are currently underway for Christmas, when BWF is likely to do something similar to last year by providing support to a local charity for Christmas Hampers.

General business

- NC explained there had been a question asked at the previous CCC about the Community Enhancement Fund possibly supporting loans for groups who are taking on projects that are larger than the funding possible through one round of the program.
- EF explained there are two options for funding in the Community Enhancement Program – a one off project or a strategic multi-year project. She explained the community fund S355 sub-committee would have to ultimately decide based on the application but there is nothing explicitly saying that an application for support towards loans can't happen.
- NC and KC expressed their view that the community funds from the various clean energy projects in the region should be pooled in order to fund major projects
- SR said this would be greatly appreciated because there is a need to demonstrate the money is going back to the whole of the shire through projects or into roads for example. She said the Crookwell outdoor pool and the toddler pool is re-opening this Saturday but the heated indoor pool still needs funding. SR suggested the wind farms could see this as a multi-year project – for example they could put solar panels on the roof – and perhaps the funds could also be used to improve to showground and parks.
- NC said it would be up to the Council to get all of the wind farms together to discuss this.
- SR said too much of the funding is rolling over and not being used.
- PH said there is over 700K available every year and suggested it just needs some big picture thinking. He explained they have already started the conversation with the chairperson for some of the other wind farm projects in the region and they are trying to follow this up. NH believes wind farms can look great if this is done cleverly.
- DF asked if the funds being held by Council were earning some interest.
- SR said she would look into that. **ACTION ITEM**
- Discussion followed about the complexity of establishing a pooled fund, whether it would be under the guidance of council or the need for a separate entity to manage the major project.
- EF emphasised BWF and GRWF's commitment to this idea and said it's more the specifics and its management that would be the challenge.
- SR – suggested the possibility of investing the funds with the Upper Lachlan Foundation – which is managed by the Public Trustee in the ACT.
- NC believes the council could write to the wind farms to support this in principle. He believes a portion of the money every year could go into the project fund and Council could oversee and manage it.
- PH suggested the money could be used to open an industrial area that attracts clean energy companies and new initiatives to the district. He said big ideas need to be kicked around to find one that will really create jobs and growth for the district.
- SR agreed the need to have new initiatives that could encourage more regional growth. She also thinks ULS doesn't get the recognition it deserves for its carbon negative achievements.
- PH explained that agriculture is still the biggest industry – but the facts are misleading because a large percentage of owners live elsewhere so the benefits don't go back into the local community. They don't support schools, shops or hospitals here.
- SR agreed with PH and said we need to attract people to live here and support the local community. She explained her concern that families with young children are leaving the district because their parents can't get work locally.

- PH said that's why the STEM initiatives are so great because we need a younger vibrant community – not just growth in aged care.
- KC said there's not enough for young people to do in Crookwell.

Community Information Plan (CIP)

- EF explained the CIP was recently updated because BWF is now operational and a couple of the programs, namely the Landscaping and TV initiatives, have now concluded. EF circulated some copies of the updated version for review and NC suggested it should now replace the previous CIP on the website.
- EF agreed to have the new CIP uploaded to the BWF website. **ACTION ITEM**

Meeting Frequency

- NC said the project has moved into its next phase and the CCC only needs to meet once a year, if all members are happy with this arrangement. This was agreed.
- NC emphasised that the group can call an extraordinary meeting if necessary at any time.
- PH suggested the meeting take place at this time of year – to enable an update on the power generation stats and all the activities that have taken place across the year.
- It was agreed the best annual meeting time would be the 3rd Tuesday in November.

6. Next Steps and Close

Next meeting: Tuesday 18 November 2025

Location: Grabben Gullen Hall

Meeting closed: 6:35pm