

THUNDERBOLT ENERGY HUB WIND FARM CCC
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MEETING 1

TUESDAY 3rd AUGUST 2021
3:30PM – 6:30PM

LOCATION
MEMORIAL HALL
SALISBURY STREET (Opposite Council Chambers)
URALLA

Chair:	Dr W.E.J. Paradice AM
Members	
Community:	Wayne Ames; Angus Carter; James Croft; Chris Page; Phillip Roberts
Councils:	Clr Eric Noakes; Clr Natasha Ledger (Kate Jessep Alt); Sam Lobsey
Neoen:	Joanna Murphy, Lisa Stiebel (via Zoom)
Minute taker:	Anne-Marie Ward

Agenda item	Responsibility	Time
1 Welcome and Introductions	Chair	3.35

The Chair welcomed all Committee members.

2 Apologies	Chair
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Sam Lobsey was a late apology this afternoon.

3 Declaration of pecuniary interest	Chair
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The Chair confirmed that he has all community members forms completed and signed. Clr Eric Noakes indicated his was still to be submitted. Nobody has declared a pecuniary interest other than the Chair. If this situation changes it should be declared at the beginning of the meeting so that there is a record kept. The Chair made it clear to the committee that he is an independent chair appointed by the NSW Department of Planning, but the proponent pays expenses related to the role.

4 NSW Department of Planning CCC Guidelines	Chair
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The Guidelines were outlined with emphasis on the following points:

- The CCC is not a decision-making group or regulatory body. It has an advisory and consultative role.
- Representatives on the CCC are appointed by the Department of Planning, not Neoen. As is the Chair. Councils and the proponent (Neoen) appoint their representatives.
- The Chair reiterated the importance of Guideline 3.8 Alternative representatives – if anyone is unable to attend, they must notify the Chair as soon as possible in case other arrangements need to be made.

- 4.3 Minutes of meetings – currently Anne-Marie Ward (Thunderbolt Energy Hub Community Engagement Officer) is the minute taker of this group as arranged between the Chair and Proponent. If anyone would like this decision reviewed, please contact the Chair to discuss. Minutes will be formally accepted at the next meeting but, as per the guidelines due to the possible length of time between meetings, the Minutes will be sent to the Chair asap and then the Chair will forward to the CCC members for verification so that they may be published in a timely manner.
- 4.5 – reminder to be respectful of others. If someone outside CCC members wants to attend or present to the meeting this should be directed to the Chair and a decision will be made with the committee. The Chair has the final say if there are any issues with decision making within the Committee.
- Guideline 4.6 – reminder that if any circumstances changes re pecuniary interest this should be advised at a meeting asap.
- Committee training could be provided by the proponent if needed.
- The Chair reiterated that members could comment to the media on behalf of themselves, not on behalf of the committee. Any issues in relation to confidentiality need to be raised with the Chair. Requests from the public for items to be included on the agenda should be through the Chair. There is no quorum as the CCC is not a decision-making body. If someone has a particular issue, members can direct them to information e.g., the project website. The Chair reminded members that any issues they feel need to be discussed can be sent to the Chair for the next meeting agenda.

5	Role of the CCC	Chair
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The CCC is not a decision-making body. It is about communication and information sharing. The committee's role is also to alert the proponent about issues of concern in the community– the CCC would be a conduit in helping to identify such issues However it is not the CCC's job to resolves the issues.

6	Governance and administration	Chair
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The minute taker will prepare the minutes and forward them to the Chair. The Chair will send the minutes out to the members. The date for the next meeting (and in some cases meetings) will be decided at each meeting. Preferably these dates will be set for the next 12 months. Communication will be mostly through email. We must remain mindful that things can change quickly at this time due to Covid restrictions.

7	Project Overview and Update	Neoen
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- Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEAR's)
- EIS progress

Neoen provided a PowerPoint overview of the project including information about recent changes to the project following feedback received from stakeholders, councils and MPs. These changes include separating the project into two stages. This information has recently been uploaded to the website and sent out via email to stakeholders.

The Chair confirmed that the CCC only needed to be established for the wind farm part of the project (not the solar part).

The proponent outlined the consultation process and explained that part of that process is the formation of the CCC.

Questions asked during and after the presentation are outlined Agenda Item 8 – Questions and Clarification.

8	Questions and clarification	Chair
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Q – How is the Community Benefit Fund amount determined.

A – It is based on the MW Hours that will be generated.

Concerns were raised re: access to the grid. This is part of the assessment process and is quite complicated. There are 3 fulltime specialists at Neoen who work solely on connection to grids.

Transmission line upgrade is part of current State Government Initiatives. Connection agreements are part of all project requirements and are usually done closer to construction time. Discussion ensued about whether this is an issue for the CCC or more for the Regional Energy Zone (REZ) Roadmap Team.

Action: Possibility of having a connection expert e.g., Neoen connection expert/Transgrid or REZ Roadmap Team present at the next meeting. Neoen to enquire as to who the most appropriate group would be to provide information to this group.

Q – What is the feedback on the changes made? Feedback from Council & MPs has been positive. Email bulletin and website update was mid-July (two weeks) so there hasn't been much feedback yet. There is a Community Day planned for September so feedback will be gathered then. Discussion ensued about access to communication. Some CCC members have not seen newsletters of bulletins.

Action: Add CCC members to the communication register so that they receive information/newsletters at the same time as everyone else.

Q – How much traffic is the Website getting?

Don't have this information right now but will be able to access it.

Action: Neoen to investigate website traffic and provide information to the CCC.

Members asked for clarification - During presentation there was mention of the total amount of community benefit funds in Australia (for all Neoen projects) by 2022 will be approximately \$500 000. This project is around \$200 000 per year based on the whole project (Stage 1 & 2). Those communities closest to the project will be given the highest priority in the grant process.

Q – Is Neoen able to provide battery storage directly for towns?

Neoen projects feed into the transmission network (high voltage transmission lines). Towns are fed by a distribution network, so this means it works in two different ways/levels – Transmission/Distribution – so not able to provide power directly to households. The batteries proposed for this project sit on the transmission network (very large batteries). Neoen operates in the large level transmission network side more than in distribution.

Q What percentage of project generation (revenue) would the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) be? E.g., Is it 1% or 10%.....

The fund amount is based on the energy generated not on how much the energy is being sold for as this amount fluctuates too much. CCC members requested more information about what percentage of the profit this fund would be. Need to have a basis for comparison to nearby projects.

Neoen clarified that the CBF is over and above any neighborhood agreements.

Action: Neoen will investigate possibility of creating a comparison chart with nearby projects to provide further information on this issue for the next meeting.

Clarification was sought re the jobs to be generated and whether this is open to locals. Neoen responded that they are looking to employ as many local workers as possible as this helps with other areas like accommodation. Employment opportunities information is in the booklet and on the website. Once the Local Participation Plan has been finalised Neoen would like to share it with the CCC.

Q – Who administers the Community Benefit Fund (CBF)?

Sometimes it is a local group or a council but because this project is across several council areas, we will be working with an alternative administration fund (a not-for-profit foundation). A Community Advisory Committee would be the decision makers and decisions would be made in line with the criteria set for administration of funds. Representatives sit on this committee from councils, community and Neoen.

Q – Would the number of turbines in an LGA determine how funds are administered?

Maybe but geography / proximity of the project would be a greater consideration. Will need to think this through so that the flow of funds is equitable to the people most affected.

Q – Why is the solar component not part of the CCC?

The SEARS for the wind farm and the solar farm were issued separately. The establishment of the CCC was part of the requirement for the wind farm but not for the solar component. This is a decision made by the NSW Department of Planning. Neoen is happy to share information for the whole project to this group (i.e., not just for the wind farm). See the CCC as for the whole project.

Clarification was sought regarding the project accessing the transmission lines. Stage 1 will access the transmission line from that side of the highway and Stage 2 may access the same line or the one on the same side as the Stage 2 area.

Q After 25-30 years what happens? The project may be extended (re-energised) or decommissioned, this is part of the landholder agreements. The life of a Substation is 50-60 years so if the project was re-energised the same substation could be utilized. There are two options with the landholders, to re-sign or decommission. Decommissioning is factored in to all Neoen projects and are happy to provide an outline of that at the next meeting.

Action: Neoen will provide an outline of the decommissioning process to the next meeting.

Clarification was sought on the Community Benefit Fund – it is based on Stage 1 and Stage 2 so if only Stage 1 goes ahead the CBF will be reduced.

9	Issues for future meetings	Chair
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The Chair requested that CCC members email him directly if they have any agenda items for the next meeting.

Some discussion was held as to interested stakeholders joining the CCC e.g., RFS or Fisheries. Under the guidelines of the Department, they wouldn't be an official member of the committee, though they could present following a request to the Chair. As a part of the approval process all those agencies are consulted with and provided an opportunity particularly around the EIS. They are considered referral agencies and are part of the consent process while the role of the CCC is consultative rather than a consenting group. We could request a presentation from them (e.g., RFS) at a future meeting if the CCC would like. Neoen is happy to facilitate experts presenting to the group as required.

An advertisement that was put in the local Walcha paper was tabled for information and a request made that Neoen comment on this at the next meeting. Is the information in it true or is it fiction?

Action: Neoen will respond to the information in the advertisement at the next meeting.

The Chair requested information re the Friends of Kentucky Action Group. Have the changes made to the project appeased the group? Have not had any feedback yet. The group agreed that it has only been a couple of weeks so we will wait and see.

Actions from this meeting:

- *Possibility of having a connection expert e.g., Neoen connection expert or Transgrid or REZ Roadmap Team to present at the next meeting. Neoen to enquire as to who the most appropriate group would be to provide information to this group.*
- *Add CCC members to the communication register so that they receive information/newsletters at the same time as everyone else.*
- *Neoen to investigate website traffic and provide information to the CCC.*
- *Neoen will investigate possibility of creating a comparison chart with nearby projects to provide further information on this issue for the next meeting.*
- *Neoen will provide an outline of the decommissioning process to the next meeting.*
- *Neoen will respond to the information in the advertisement at the next meeting.*

10	General business	Chair
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- Potential technology options for future meetings		
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Online e.g., Zoom/Teams use may be needed in future. All CCC members indicated they will be okay if we need to change the format due to covid restrictions.

- Other business		
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The Chair proposed meeting before the EIS is submitted and then meetings are usually held on a quarterly basis.

11	Next meeting(s)	Chair
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Thursday 16 September 2021 3:30-6:30

Thursday 10 February 2022

12	Meeting close	5:53pm	Chair
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