

THUNDERBOLT ENERGY HUB CCC

MINUTES - COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MEETING 5

MONDAY 25 JULY 2022
5:00PM – 7:00PM

LOCATION
Neighbourhood Centre, Salisbury St, Uralla NSW 2358

Chair:	Dr W.E.J. Paradice AM
Members	
Community:	Angus Carter; James Croft; Chris Page; Wayne Ames
Councils:	Clr Sarah Burrows; Clr Eric Noakes
Neoen:	Joanna Murphy, Matthew Parton
Minute taker:	Anne-Marie Ward
Apologies:	Sam Lobsey (Tamworth Regional Council); Phillip Roberts

Agenda item	Responsibility	Time
1 Welcome and Introductions	Chair	

The Chair welcomed all Committee members in attendance.

2 Apologies	Chair
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Phillip Roberts and Sam Lobsey were apologies.

3 Declaration of pecuniary interest	Chair
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The Chair made it clear to the committee that he is an independent chair appointed by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (NSW DPE) and that the proponent pays expenses related to the role.

Anne-Marie Ward (Thunderbolt Energy Hub Community Engagement Officer) is the paid minute taker of this group as arranged between the Chair and Proponent.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting	Chair
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The Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and declared final via email. The minutes were formally approved as final at this meeting.

Joanna Murphy went through the business arising from the previous minutes, which included four actions from the last meeting. These questions and answers are listed below and are also provided in the presentation document.

Action 1: Neoen will circulate to the CCC members the methodology behind neighbour payments.

As discussed in the previous CCC meeting, Neoen's Neighbour Benefit Program is a voluntary program to benefit neighbours who own a dwelling within 3.5km of the Project. The payments are considered in the operating costs of the Project, meaning they do not vary based on whether the project is profitable; neighbours get paid before Neoen in this scheme.

Neoen analysed the options of providing either a higher annual fixed payment versus an indexed payment throughout the operations phase starting at a lower amount. The indexed payment would start at a lower figure and increase with CPI over time. The sum received throughout 30 years would be equal in both models. Neoen chose the fixed payment option because it is more transparent and provides neighbours with certainty of payment. The indexed model can be more complex in that a new figure must be calculated each year.

James Croft asked Neoen what percentage was used to compare the overall fixed payments over 30 years to the indexed option. Matthew Parton informed the group that the percentage used was 2.5%, which is the average of the RBA's target inflation range of 2-3%. Historically, from 2001 – 2021, the average inflation has been 2.4%¹. James further asked what would happen if the inflation is much higher than expected, considering that current inflation is above this figure. His view is that there should be an adjustment of the neighbour benefit payments based on increased inflation rates. It was suggested that if inflation is higher than a certain amount, the neighbour payment should be adjusted.

Clr Eric Noakes said that the Winterbourne Wind Farm neighbour payments were based on how many turbines would be visible to a neighbour and that the amounts promised were much higher than Neoen's proposal.

Joanna Murphy and Matthew Parton reiterated that the neighbour payments were fixed payments because it is transparent, easy-to-understand and provides neighbours with certainty of payment, without any complex calculations. The payments are an act of good-will by Neoen.

Action: Neoen to review the neighbour payments and provide the CCC with an update.

Action 2: Clr Sarah Burrows will investigate what Uralla Council currently requires of UPC with regards to Council roads.

Clr Sarah Burrows informed the CCC that existing quarries are not required to pay Uralla Shire Council any fees to repair and maintain Council roads. Neoen and Uralla Shire Council also recently met to discuss this topic.

Clr Sarah Burrows noted that Uralla Shire Council would be requesting a payment from proponents of renewable energy projects for the maintenance of roads as a result of additional truck movements required by the project (i.e. sand and gravel trucks). Uralla Shire Council would like to continue working with Neoen to find a solution.

Water access and water rights were also discussed. Clr Eric Noakes noted that Councils do not have the right to sell water to companies for construction purposes, but are allowed to sell water for manufacturing. Neoen is investigating possible water sources and will continue conversations with Councils on water access rules.

Action: Neoen will provide an update on possible water sources for construction.

¹ Reserve Bank of Australia's Inflation Calculator: <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualDecimal.html>

Action 3: Neoen to send a USB containing the EIS directly to each CCC member when they are available.

This has been completed.

Action 4: Neoen to provide a summary of the issues in relation to the Bald Hills Wind Farm Court Case to the next meeting.

A written summary of the technical matters is provided in the presentation slide pack.

Joanna Murphy outlined that the court case related to nuisance to neighbouring residents of the Bald Hills Wind Farm. She further explained that the noise assessment was based on a New Zealand standard (NZS 6808:1998), which requires nighttime noise to be a maximum of 40 decibels or the background noise plus 5 decibels at neighbouring residences. Joanna explained that NSW wind farm projects, including Thunderbolt Energy Hub, are subject to stricter criteria with the nighttime noise limits being a maximum 35 decibels or the background noise plus 5 decibels at neighbouring residences. Furthermore, the Bald Hills Wind Farm could not prove compliance with the noise standard.

Matthew Parton added that the other issue for Bald Hills Wind Farm was that the proponent did not engage early enough with neighbours to try to rectify the noise issue.

Angus Carter suggested that it may be a good idea for the CCC to visit an operating wind farm to hear what a wind farm sounds like. Options could be Sapphire Wind Farm or White Rock Wind Farm. Angus noted that he has visited the Windy Hill Wind Farm, near Ravenshoe on the Atherton Tablelands, which was commissioned in 2000. He found them to be very quiet.

Action: Neoen to organise a possible site visit to a wind farm for CCC members.

6	Project Overview and Update	Neoen
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Joanna Murphy explained that the public exhibition phase for Stage 1 of the Thunderbolt Energy Hub ended on 24 May 2022. A total of 119 submissions were received, with 14 submissions in favour of the project, 7 commenting submissions and 98 objecting to the project. There were a few submissions provided after 24 May, so these numbers may change slightly. Neoen noted that Tamworth Regional Council provided a commenting submission, while Uralla Shire Council objected to the project.

Clr Eric Noakes asked Clr Sarah Burrows why Uralla Shire Council submitted an objection to the Project and commented that this could potentially set an expectation from the Walcha community for Walcha Council to object to the Winterbourne Wind Farm once it is on public exhibition. Clr Sarah Burrows explained that Uralla Shire Council is not against renewable energy projects, but provided an objection to this project as there were a number of unknowns in the project, including exact wind turbine dimensions, material quantities needed for construction, and exact road routes and lengths. Joanna Murphy noted that the assessments submitted in the Development Application were based on the maximum dimensions of the wind turbines, being a tip-height of 260m and a maximum blade length of 90m. While exact turbine dimensions are not yet known, they would be equal to or less than these dimensions. The maximum impact or 'worst-case scenario' was therefore assessed, not just for turbine dimensions, but in all areas of impact.

Clr Sarah Burrows further asked if the turbine dimensions would be known prior to the Development approval. Joanna Murphy clarified that the exact turbine dimensions will not be known at the time of Development Application approval, but would be finalised closer to construction once a turbine model is selected. Slight adjustments to the location of wind turbines within the development footprint during construction are also typical, which is known as micro-siting. Therefore the exact road lengths and dimensions, as well as material quantities will be known only at the time of construction.

Key Concerns raised in public submissions

Joanna Murphy outlined that while the results of the public submissions were still being assessed, the key concerns raised by objecting submissions related to:

- Biodiversity impacts

- Visual impacts
- Noise and vibration impacts
- Community consultation undertaken by Neoen
- Foreign ownership of the host landholder property and Neoen
- Perceived reduction in property values
- Perceived inability to undertake aerial firefighting

Joanna Murphy explained that an updated response on key items raised in public submissions would be provided at the next CCC meeting. Joanna Murphy also provided an overview of some of the feedback received from agency submissions, which are outlined in the attached slideshow.

Joanna Murphy provided a summary of the extensive community consultation activities undertaken by Neoen since early 2020. Neoen is proud of its efforts to engage with the community, supported by Anne-Marie Ward as community liaison consultant.

Clr Sarah Burrows asked if residents in the Balala area were also included in the consultation activities. Anne-Marie Ward confirmed that she spent several hours driving through the Balala area, dropping off project information booklets in all letterboxes that she could find. The information booklet also included Anne-Marie's business card and a note that the residents could contact her if they would like to arrange a meeting to learn more about the project.

Matthew Parton provided a summary of how the Community Benefits Fund (CBF) is administered throughout the operations phase of the Project. The CBF amount is agreed during development, and the community are invited to contribute feedback and ideas via the Project's feedback survey or through talking directly with Neoen.

The administration and structure are finalised during construction and the fund commences once the Project is operational. It is usually an annual sum for the lifetime of a project, the sum is set during development commensurate with the project's predicted yield. For Thunderbolt Energy Hub Stage 1 the amount has been set and is \$100,000 per year throughout the operations phase of the Project.

The governance and administration of the fund is through a non-profit foundation which specialises in community benefit fund administration. Neoen pays the funds into the non-profit foundation annually and the foundation is responsible for distributing the funds to recipients.

Applications to receive a share of the CBF are submitted via an online portal (and there is support from the foundation for community members if needed). An Advisory Committee reviews eligible submissions and decides on the grants annually. This Advisory Committee consists of local Council representative(s), Neoen representatives and local community members. There is a Terms of Reference which sets out the eligibility criteria for the CBF (proximity to project and agreed focus areas).

Joanna Murphy clarified that the \$100,000 proposed for the CBF are in addition to the Neighbour Benefit Program proposed.

7	Questions and clarification	Chair
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1. Clr Sarah Burrows asked whether wind turbines of the size proposed had been installed before on other projects in Australia or overseas. Neoen will report back on this in the next CCC meeting.

2. Clr Eric Noakes spoke about the Winterbourne Wind Farm CBF being \$500,000 per year and believes that the amount proposed for Thunderbolt Stage 1 is not sufficient and that it is undervaluing local communities. He asked if the CBF amount was fixed. Matthew Parton explained that the amount for the CBF is set.

3. There was discussion amongst CCC members about the New England Renewable Energy Zone (NE REZ) and how EnergyCo would be sharing benefits with the communities impacted by new transmission infrastructure. Clr Eric Noakes would like to see the benefits being distributed fairly based on the number of wind turbines in the LGA for example. The group asked Neoen if they had any further information about this. Neoen does not have any further information about the location of new transmission infrastructure or how benefits will be distributed by EnergyCo.

8	Issues for future meetings	Chair
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There was some discussion relating to when the next CCC meeting should be. It was decided to hold it after the submission of the Response to Submissions (RTS) report. It was decided that the next meeting would be on Monday 17 October from 4-6pm.

The CCC would like to know about the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) funding.

The CCC would like to know if the \$100,000 CBF can be reviewed as they believe it is not enough. The group would also like for more information to be provided on the CBF administration.

9	General business	Chair
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Covered under other agenda items.

10	Next meeting(s)	Chair
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Monday 17 October, 4-6pm was suggested.

11	Meeting closed	7:00pm
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Actions from this meeting:

1. Neoen to review the neighbour payments and provide the CCC with an update.
2. Neoen will provide an update on possible water sources for construction.
3. Neoen to organise a possible site visit to a wind farm for CCC members.
4. Neoen to provide an updated response on key items raised in public submissions.
5. Neoen to report back on what the largest wind turbines are that have been installed on-shore to date.
6. Neoen to provide a response on the proposed CBF, comparing the amount proposed to other wind farm projects.
7. Neoen to provide an update on the CBF administration.
8. Neoen to provide information about the CEFC.
9. Neoen to report back with respect to projects with lights, and discussions with CASA.