

Turitea Wind Farm Community Liaison Group meeting

Date: 5.30pm, 6 June 2019
Venue: Manawatu Golf Club, Palmerston North
PAGES: 5

1 Welcome

DENNIS RADICH (Generation Development Manager, Mercury) welcomed the residents and stakeholders who were in the room, and introduced the Mercury team and the contractors including ecologists from Wildlands Consultants. He also acknowledged the employees of Councils present. He noted that, following discussion at the previous meeting, the invitation had been extended to dwellings within 3.5km of the southern turbine cluster, noting this amounted to an additional 49 properties.

Dennis introduced Margaret Kouvelis, former Mayor of Manawatu District Council, who has agreed to be Independent Chair of the Community Liaison Group, and bring her skills and experience at running meetings and holding the Group (including Mercury) to account.

2 Preliminary discussion

MARGARET KOUVELIS (Group Chair) introduced herself and her role to the meeting.

A member of the meeting questioned whether all the relevant people had been invited to the meeting, including those who had submitted to the original Board of Inquiry. DENNIS confirmed that the invitation to this meeting had been extended to those within 3.5km of the northern and southern turbines (as specified by the Consent), as well as those along transmission lines and access roads. Invitations had not been specifically sent to those who made submissions to the earlier Process, as the Community Liaison Group was to address the effects of construction, rather than general interest in the project. DENNIS noted that advertisements advising of the meeting had also been placed in the Manawatu Standard.

3 Terms of Reference

MARGARET introduced a discussion of the Terms of Reference. The Terms had been available on the Mercury website, and hard copies were distributed to the meeting. The discussion, below, is set out under the sub-headings from the document.

3.1 Introduction

The meeting had no comments on this section of the document.

3.2 Membership

Concern was expressed that the two named iwi groups were not attending the meeting. MARK HENRY (Environmental Resources Manager) confirmed that the groups had been invited, but had expressed a preference to engage separately. Mercury has a Memorandum of Understanding with one group, and both will be a significant part of the community engagement around the project.

A member of the meeting said that they would be interested to hear the views of iwi, to have a more holistic view of what the community think.

ACTION: MARK to follow up with the groups

A member of the meeting asked whether the list of members was still draft, and whether some might fall out. MARK said that the list was written 10 years ago when the Consent was given, and included groups such as The Friends of Turitea Reserve and the Tararua Aokautere Guardians, both of whom have indicated that they are no longer active and therefore will not be attending. MARGARET told the meeting that a wide invitation was extended to anyone who wanted to attend the Group, with no sense of excluding any groups.

A member of the meeting asked for the 'representative/alternate' wording next to the residents to be removed from the Terms of Reference to better reflect this broad invitation, and this was AGREED

ACTION: Terms of Reference to be updated to reflect above point.

3.3 Functions of the Community Liaison Group

Concern was expressed at the lack of information from Mercury prior to announcement of wind farm construction. MARGARET asked Mercury to be transparent in their operation and construction phase, and noted that they would be held to account by the Consent conditions including the Community Liaison Group

Concern was also raised that Mercury had asked for two variations on the Consent. MARGARET agreed that Mercury needed to let the Group know when variations were being applied for, and the reasons why. DENNIS pointed out that the Consents are governed by the Resource Management Act, and a robust process is followed when a variation is applied for. There were also thresholds beyond which no variations were allowed without consulting the community.

3.4 Specific functions of the Community Liaison Group

MARGARET noted that these specific functions were taken directly from the Consent. A member of the meeting asked whether there was another way to address infringements between the monthly meetings. DENNIS told the meeting that there was an 0800 number and a dedicated email address that could be used to contact Mercury directly. He said that this Group's role was not to police consents, but they should call the Council if they wanted to raise any potential infringements of the Consents.

3.5 What is not the function of the Community Liaison Group

A member of the meeting said that the CLG is to be informed of the proposed variations to the consent, so that they could discuss them. MARGARET said that variations could be discussed, but what is already in the Consent is no longer up for debate.

3.6 Variations to the Community Liaison Group functions

There was no comment on this section of the Terms.

3.7 Protocols

With construction set to begin in August 2019, MARGARET confirmed the assumption that Group meetings would take place once a month in July, August then November (quarterly after construction started). A member of the meeting suggested that meetings might be needed more often than three-monthly during construction. MARGARET said that the Group had the power to change the meeting frequency if they wanted to meet more often, and MARK confirmed that Mercury was happy to discuss this.

A member of the meeting asked if Mercury would give out the email distribution list for the Group. Mercury said that they would not give out this list due to privacy concerns, as the email addresses had been given for a specific purpose, to receive information from Mercury.

A member of the meeting asked about the process for reporting Group discussion, and DENNIS confirmed that the meeting summaries along with other reports would be put on the Mercury website.

ACTION: it was AGREED that the Terms of Reference would be updated to reflect that the contents of Group meetings would be recorded and put onto the Mercury website.

A member of the meeting asked whether the potential health issues of low frequency noise had been considered. MARGARET said that this was an issue for the Regulator, the Councils who would monitor and take readings. MARK confirmed that there was a Review Clause in the Consents where new information could be considered, but that low frequency noise was something that had already been considered.

A member of the meeting asked about a change to the District Plan since the Consent, with a 1.5km set-back from the wind farm where new building was not allowed. CRAIG AUUCKRAM (Palmerston North City Council) confirmed that there had been a change to the District Plan during its annual review, but that valid building consents were allowed to stand.



A member of the meeting raised the cost of the venue, and the amount of voluntary work involved by attendees. DENNIS said that Mercury paid for the venue and provided the opportunity for the group to meet, and it relied on interested volunteers. DENNIS said that Mercury was happy to continue the current 'town hall' meeting style. MARGARET agreed that the attendees of the meeting are taking their community responsibility seriously and are here to have their say.

3.8 Frequency of meetings

MARGARET said that it would be possible to add a meeting between August and November, and suggested this was revisited and evaluated at the July and August meetings.

ACTION: An additional meeting between August and November would be considered on the agenda of the July and August meetings

ACTION: The meeting agreed to set future meeting dates as shown on the slide, and to advise the Group by email

Before construction – 4 July and 1 August

During construction – quarterly meetings with indicative project activity

Nov 2019 – Roads / Turbine foundation construction and lowland transmission pole construction

Feb 2020 – Turbine construction about to begin

May 2020 – Turbine construction in full swing, stringing transmission line conductors

Aug 2020 – Turbine construction continuing and some commissioning. Transmission line and substation complete

Nov 2020 – Wind turbine commissioning

Feb 2021 – Wind farm build complete

After construction – meetings every six months (timing to be arranged and advised)

A member of the meeting asked whether decisions of the Group will be taken by vote. MARGARET said that she would look for consensus, with no standing orders. She had agreed to the position of Chair based on her personal values of robustness, accountability and transparency.

A member of the meeting asked about the timeline for the next (southern) turbines. DENNIS said that although no decision had been taken at this stage, there was another two years available on the current Consent, and Mercury fully intended to go ahead with building the second tranche of turbines as long as the commercial rationale was there.

A member of the meeting suggested that once the decision was taken to construct the next group of turbines, that would re-trigger the monthly meeting timetable for the Group, and DENNIS said that Mercury was open to that.

4 Project update

DENNIS confirmed that there was a lot of work going on in the background to ready the project for construction to begin in August. Detailed designs were being prepared, including the micro-siting of turbines within their Consented positions, which would enable traffic management plans to be created. These would be shared with Councils and made available to this group to see how the construction might impact on the community.

Enabling work was taking place ahead of construction, dealing with site entrances, Geotech work to understand ground conditions, and the establishment of a site office.

DENNIS showed the meeting two slides showing works to address safety concerns. One, to immediately improve the safety signage is being installed at each side of the entrance to South Range Road and bollards installed to create a slip lane to provide safer entry and exit until South Range Road is permanently realigned. This work will take place in the next 1-2 weeks.

In response to a question, DENNIS confirmed that Mercury was applying for an additional Consent variation to allow three additional Meteorological masts to help test turbine performance.

A further safety enhancement was around the proposed future site access road. Road widening is planned at 856 Pahiatua Aokautere Road. This is the location that South Range Road will be realigned to and will also create a turning bay for traffic coming from Palmerston North. Work on the road is planned to take place prior to the start of windfarm construction, and the new South Range Road alignment inside the windfarm site will be completed during windfarm construction. DENNIS confirmed that Mercury would pay the costs associated with this roading.



DENNIS said that a site village would be constructed at 856 Pahiatua Aokautere Road, a house and property owned by Mercury. This would involve some heavy vehicle movements to bring Portakabins in etc, to create site accommodation.

DENNIS said that Electrix will construct the new transmission line that will connect the windfarm to Linton substation. The line will consist of a 11.4km long, 220kVA Transmission line from Linton substation to Plantation substation. The line will consist of 20 Poles & 18 Towers. Transmission line engineering was progressing well, finalising the specific designs and locations of the Poles and Towers. These locations were set by the Consent, but it was planned to install fewer, minimising impact. Enabling works including tracking would be undertaken, although the project is limited in activity that can take place prior to construction in August. Access for the tracks would be via the Reserve to the North, or at 251 Kauterewa Road, or through Linton Substation.

A member of the meeting asked whether 40m poles would be put on top of ridges. KEVIN SMALL (Electrix) said that they would follow the ridge line up the hill. A member of the meeting asked about the amount of helicoptering involved. KEVIN said that they were not planning to use helicopters at this stage, apart from 3-4 towers in native bush at the Reserve.

A member of the meeting asked when traffic plans would be released, and DENNIS said that once the plans are prepared and ready for submission, they would be shared with the Group. A member of the meeting asked that safety planning included a note of challenging sight-lines on Turitea Bridge.

5 Ecological monitoring

MARGARET introduced Dr Astrid van Meeuwen-Dijkgraaf and Keely Paler, Ecologists from Wildlands Consultants. ASTRID told the meeting that they had focused on the northern turbines area and transmission area. They had surveyed for birds, bats, lizards, snails, and made revegetation and weed control plans.

They had observed Turitea Reserve and Gordon Dear (another natural area, as a control).

5.1 Birds

- 100 hours observation, 9,500 birds over 38 species. The most common bird is the magpie. 62% were introduced species. Of indigenous birds, six were seen to be flying at turbine height including the native falcon karearea.
- 104 hours were spent looking at bird flight paths, with 1,100 flight paths plotted over 2,500 birds (30 species). They did not determine regularly used flight paths. A third of birds were higher than 13m (the height of turbine blades) but many of these were in the gully area where no turbines would be located.

5.2 Bats

- Bat boxes were used to detect bats through November to April, likely to be the most prolific months. 3,440 recordings of noise were taken, but on analysis, no bats were detected

5.3 Lizards

- Two experienced lizard experts looked for lizards in the site on September 2018 and April 2019.
- Three barking geckoes were identified in September 2018, necessitating a management plan for this species
- No additional lizards were found on site in April 2019

5.4 Powelliphanta snails

- The expert who was engaged spent six hours looking on site, but no powelliphanta snails were found, or even common garden snails

5.5 Revegetation plan

- The experts mapped vegetation on site and divided into clusters, with the aim of identifying revegetation methods. A report was being prepared. It was noted that the revegetation of Browns Flat was a condition of the Consent

5.6 Weed control

- A weed control plan was made based on the vegetation clusters established in the point above. The plans would be sent to Council, and made public once agreed
- A member of the meeting asked about the revegetation trial on South Range Road. ASTRID said that so plots of that trial were unsuccessful, and all information is included in the Revegetation Plan to identify what species to use for revegetation.



A member of the meeting asked about Astrid's overall impression of the ecology of the area. ASTRID said it was disappointing to find no bats, no lizards, no snails. Hedgehogs, cats, pigs and high rat numbers would prevent these species bouncing back.

A member of the meeting asked about management plans for conserving species observed at the site. ASTRID said that management plans would be made for at-risk species, at least five bird species and lizards, as well as plans for if such species were discovered during works. A member of the meeting asked if Council were aware of the study. ASTRID said that plans would be shared once available and approved. It was noted that the Reserve was a water catchment reserve not a bird reserve, so Forest & Bird were not involved.

6 Aquatic and water monitoring

MASON JACKSON (Consents & Compliance Manager) discussed controls around protecting water quality and in-stream ecology. A large construction project with bulk earth works, ground disturbance and spoil disposal activities, has potential to impact local surface water quality and in-stream ecology – particularly if sediment and erosion controls on the work site are inadequate or poorly maintained. Protection of water quality is especially important in this case because the construction site partially falls in the Palmerston North Water Supply Catchment.

Six months of pre-construction baseline water quality and in-stream ecology monitoring was taking place, of streams that the construction project has the potential to impact, in order to understand the health of the existing aquatic environment its response to events such as heavy rain. This baseline information will be used to develop a monitoring programme for the construction phase of the project.

We have more recently used this data to develop a construction phase monitoring programme and adaptive management response plan that will form part of the project's Construction Environmental Management Plan – requiring Council certification. A member of the meeting asked who would monitor compliance with this plan, and it was confirmed that the reports would be sent to Council for monitoring.

7 Background noise monitoring

MASON told the meeting that Mercury was also required to measure the current background noise environment. This data will help determine noise limits for the operating wind farm, and with the aid of noise modelling and predictions, determine any turbine curtailment required to ensure compliance with the noise limits.

MASON displayed a map (see slide 14 of presentation pack) showing the background monitoring locations (North and South). He confirmed that the equipment used was from Marshall Day, that had strict standards.

MARGARET thanked the residents and guests for attending, and closed the meeting at 7.30pm.

