

Community Consultative Committee (CCC) Meeting Minutes Gullen Range Wind Farm (GRWF)

Date:	Wednesday 15 th May 2024
Location:	Bannister Hall
Time:	5pm – 6pm
Attendance:	Peter Gordon (PG) – Chair Dimity Taylor (DT) – Community Representative Councillor Paul Culhane (PC) – Upper Lachlan Shire Council Lachlan Lamberton (LL) – BJCE, Asset Manager Andrew Sinclair (AS) – BJCE, Site Manager Erin Fletcher (EF) – BJCE, Community Manager Diana Forrester (DF) BJCE, Community Liaison Officer
Apologies:	Scott Martin (SM) – Goulburn Mulwaree Council

Introductions and Welcome

- PG welcomed everyone to the CCC meeting.
- Given the changes in personnel from BJCE, PG invited each person to introduce themselves. This provided an opportunity for EF and AS to provide some history and context for the new members of the group.

Conflicting and Pecuniary Interests

- Declaration of pecuniary or other interests: None

Minutes of Previous Meeting

- The Minutes for the last meeting in November 2023 were agreed out of session and are on the website

Action Items from Previous Minutes

Action item: “LL to advise DT which RFS visited GRWF earlier in the year to re-familiarize themselves with Gullen Range Wind Farm and the Bushfire Management Plan.”

- LL advised he believed the RFS in question was Bannister RFS – but he will confirm this so **these minutes will reflect this accordingly** *Post meeting note: LL confirmed that the RFS station involved with this was Yass*

Items Raised by Community Representatives

- DT mentioned a film crew from ‘The New Joneses’ had been in touch to advise they would be coming to Goulburn soon. Their documentary, which will run in mainstream TV and social media, is focused on the energy transition. They want to include the Gullen Range Wind and Solar Farms in their program and want to talk to DT about the community benefits of the development. She intends to highlight contributions to the football club and pony club. They will not be going to the site itself but will look at some turbines. DT explained they seem to be taking a light hearted and positive approach and want to promote the benefits in terms of the community co-living with wind and solar technology. The program is expected to go to air in July. EF and DF offered to provide more details about GRWF’s community benefit programs to DT.

Correspondence

- There was no correspondence tabled

Terms of Reference

- The Terms of Reference for the GRWF CCC need to be updated.
- The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Terms of Reference template for CCC committees was included in the meeting pack for discussion at this meeting.
- PG explained that last year all the rules were changed and slightly updated. PG was involved in that process and offered to draft the new version of the GRWF CCC's Terms of Reference which he will then distribute to the group for feedback, prior to the next meeting. He suggested the new version could then be finalised at the next meeting.
- PC said he was sure they had adopted something years ago but agreed that updating it now was a good idea.

Company Reports and Overview of Activities

Operational update

- LL reported that the project is running as expected
- He explained that the turbines at GRWF and Biala Wind Farm (BWF) will be switched off for a couple of days soon due to the annual scheduled high voltage maintenance.
- LL said there may be some cranes around for the next 6 months too as there will be some regular maintenance on the turbines. This is the scheduled 10-year maintenance check when it is necessary to take a close look at all components to ensure they are in good order. The inspection considers what might need to be changed and upgraded such as the bearings or generator. In some cases, they will take off the whole blade to enable this inspection to occur.
- DT mentioned this activity could have great potential for a school visit.
- LL explained this could be too risky and they could not be sure which days, locations or times the removal of blades for maintenance purposes might take place.
- DT wondered if some of these activities could be filmed for education purposes.
- General discussion followed about the design life of the turbines.
- LL explained that, as the technology matures, the design life for wind turbines is pushing out because they can now predict it will last longer. GRWF has been approved for 25 years with an option to renew. At that point the technology could be updated.

Monitoring and environmental performance

- LL explained that the annual Nest Box inspections would occur in the next week or so. These outcomes will be included in the next Annual Environmental Management report.
- LL said the next powerful owl outage has just concluded. It is a period from November to April when the turbines are turned off within certain times to protect birdlife.
- DT asked if there have been any eagle strikes. LL said none had been reported.
- PG asked if any other birds had been struck. LL advised that while some may have been, they did not include any carrions.
- LL advised that GRWF's Annual Environment Management Report (AEMR) was submitted in March for the calendar year 2023. It is available on the website.

Energy generation

- LL talked about the generation reports. He explained the wind has been trending downwards over the last four quarters LL explained how much power had been sent to the grid and the curtailment rate.

Clean Energy Program Update

- EF reported 137 buildings have now completed Stage 1 of the program, with 91 Stage 2 applications approved so far.
- There were four (4) new applications approved in Q4 2023.
- There were no new applicants in Q1 of 2024 despite various efforts to promote the program during this period.
- The current funding round closes on 22 June so it is hoped more will apply before then.
- This year each approved residence can receive up to \$8,130 for clean energy improvements to their residence.
- The Year 9 Annual Report and Audit Report for the Clean Energy Program will be completed in coming months.
- EF reported the Clean Energy Program is still oversubscribed and is working well.

Community Enhancement Fund

- EF reported there is approximately \$90,000 available and there has been 11 applications this year.
- They include a wide range of large and small community projects, from the arts to infrastructure and the RFS. EF explained there are still some questions to be asked and answered before the committee can make its final decision.
- EF clarified who sits on the committee.
- EF said had heard that all of the local wind farm funds had received a good number and range of grant applications this year.
- EF also reported that GRWF had been contacted by the Bannister RFS seeking advice regarding an application so an independent consultant went to meet and discuss this with them. They have a large relocation and building project to get underway soon but will seek further advice and intend to apply to the fund in the next round.
- PG talked about a recent meeting with representatives from other nearby wind farms, with the aim to encourage the various community enhancement funds to collaborate by focusing on substantial local ventures that recognise the area's long-term access to funding.
- EF talked about the outcomes of the recent Workshop hosted by Biala Wind Farm to explore how the Grabben Gullen community might work together to apply for a larger project that could benefit the town/local community. She explained this activity had helped to get some ideas going. The workshop discussed what could improve the Grabben Gullen Hall, what things could attract tourists to the town, and different ways to use the public land available but no definitive outcomes were agreed.

Sponsorship

- EF reported that GRWF had sponsored the Crookwell Show again this year, providing a \$400 donation through the face painting initiative.
- AS reported going to the Goulburn Bowling Club where GRWF had sponsored the popular Rose Tournament.
- EF explained the Crookwell Bowls is also sponsored by GRWF, while Biala Wind Farm supports the Crookwell Devils.
- DT requested a copy of BJCE's sponsorship list so she can share it with the film crew -

ACTION

Education initiatives

- GRWF is keen to support STEM activities in schools. LL and his team will contribute to the next STEM Day at the Crookwell High School which is coming up in August.

Government visits

- EF reported that, in February, GRWF was selected as the location for the The Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change, to announce the outcomes of Commissioner Andrew Dyer’s Community Engagement Review of renewable energy infrastructure projects to the end of December 2023.

Community Information Plan annual review

- A copy of the latest plan was tabled at the meeting
- EF explained that for the most part GRWF is achieving very good engagement and the plan, as it sits, is working well.
- EF offered to share a soft copy of the Plan with the meeting minutes and asked CCC members to provide any comments or feedback so these can be part of the next meeting.

General Business

- PG talked about the meeting that was held with the other wind farms recently.
- EF said she had seen Paul Hewitt today who reported he had been given a contact for the Collector Wind Farm
- There is general agreement that it makes sense to co-ordinate efforts for the community when there is so much clean energy development in the shire that can produce a collective
- DT said ...”Everyone is keen to make it happen but there is not a good send of how to get there...and how it really could be impactful.”
- EF said “We have had a look at the possibility of combining Biala and Gullen Range as a starting point, but the VPA for each is quite different”
- PG’s advice is that “Everyone just has to persist because the wind farms will be here forever....and it’s a very long time to put money into the pot.”
- DT agreed “But like a lot of communities we find it very hard to think in such a big and long term way.”
- EF said “There are lots of great ideas...but the skill set and time required to put into this may not be available”
- PC said “I think it would be a great idea to have a Master Plan and put that to every wind farm and then let individual committees consider it.”
- DT asked “Who would own the Master Plan? There would need to be a driving body...and not just Council (they would need to be represented). Perhaps a combined Council body could be established for the region which funded a person to lead such a project”
- PC said there is sometimes a grant person working for Council. Linus used to do this and was great, but now she’s working for Goulburn. The role was to find the grant programs available and then help both Council and community organisations write the grant applications. Council has not found a replacement for her yet.

Complaints

- EF reported there have been no complaints received for GRWF since 2021, only inquiries for general information and tour opportunities.

Close and Next Meeting

- Meeting closed: 6.10pm
- Next meeting: Wednesday 30 October 2024 at 4pm at Gullen Range Wind Farm