

An opportune time for reflection:

After 4 long years from when the local community was formally notified of a proposal to construct the HOGWF, and after thousands of man hours analysing and hypothesising how this project can be sensitively constructed, little progress appears to have occurred.

The proponent, supporters and objectors all share a common belief. The assessment process for this particular project has become significantly more protracted than most people would think is reasonable.

The many issues raised by the objectors in the community I believe are not unreasonable concerns. The proponents' presumption is to resolve objections by way of financial incentives. As our community has witnessed first hand, this is a flawed solution to addressing legitimate grievances and thus the "social licence" expires before it is even required to be used.

I believe this project is a perfect example for policy makers to study the implications of having pro-biased wind energy guidelines. Whilst the current guidelines, arguably were fit for purpose a decade ago when governments were trying to incentivise and encourage renewable development, the guidelines are now failing to protect vulnerable public and private assets from inappropriate wind energy development.

Had more rigorous criteria been applied way back at the scoping stage for the project, considerable anxiety, frustration, expense and disappointment by all could have been avoided.

Even before the detailed EIS and subsequent studies were undertaken, any armchair expert could determine the original 98 turbine proposal was based on the maximum commercial exploitation of the known wind resource and zero realistic consideration to three fundamental questions.

1. Can sympathetic citing of turbines near a Nationally significant public asset (BHGNR) occur?
2. Can sympathetic citing of turbines near unassociated neighbours occur without contractual agreement?
3. Is there clear acceptance and approval granted for site access?

The proposition that 98 turbines was a genuine and considered proposal is about as realistic as me building a spaceship in my shed and flying to the moon, yet the "process" facilitated this pipe dream. The proponent has spun the reduction in turbines to 64, as a concession they have generously gifted the community, when the reality is the extra 34 turbines were never a realistic proposition.

The dozen or so turbines that are effectively on the immediate boundary of the BHGNR and adjacent to lot 47 DP753722 continue to demonstrate the proponents' contempt towards these natural assets and their values.

With the benefit of hindsight now available, this project should be refused consent.