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Our Reference: OUT-2336/21



27 April 2021

Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
4 Parramatta Square
12 Darcy Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Attention: Anthony Ko

Dear Sir,

Bowmans Creek Wind Farm (SSD-10315) - Environmental Impact Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the development application and accompanying environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm project (SSD-10315).

Upper Hunter Shire Council (UHSC) is generally supportive of renewable energy projects and acknowledges that the project represents the potential for a significant investment into the region.

Council has reviewed the EIS and provides the following comments for the department's consideration:

Community Enhancement Fund

The EIS indicates the intention to establish a Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) to which the project owner/operator will provide funding towards local environmental, social and community initiatives led by local residents residing within 20km of the project.

The proposed contribution of \$3,000 per turbine per year towards a CEF is consistent with the contributions paid by other recently approved wind farms including the Liverpool Range Wind Farm which established a precedent of \$3,000 per turbine per annum. Council would accept a minimum contribution of \$3,000 per turbine per annum calculated as follows:

Flat rate of \$535.72/turbine/MW/annum indexed with CPI.

This method of calculation would ensure that the contribution is linked to the turbine capacity and therefore minimise the impact of any future reduction in the number of proposed turbines and associated increase in turbine capacity on the total contribution payable towards a CEF.

All correspondence to:

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It is unclear if the proposed separate payment to each of the three Councils would deliver the best outcome for the community. It may be preferable for the proponent to enter into a joint VPA with Upper Hunter Shire Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council and Singleton Shire Council to enable the payment of development contributions by the proponent towards a CEF which is administered by the Councils and a CEF committee. The CEF committee should operate within an appropriate legal and governance framework such as that provided for under Section 355 of the Local Government Act 1993 to ensure full accountability, transparency and financial probity.

Traffic and Transport

It is noted that the proposed development does not intend to utilise any local roads within the Upper Hunter Shire Local Government Area (LGA) during construction or operation of the project. In this regard, should the application be approved, it is recommended that a condition of consent be imposed restricting the use of roads for the purposes of the project to those assessed in the EIS.

Visual Impacts

Wind turbines are very large structures and will be visible in the landscape. The visual impact assessment gives consideration in relation to: visual magnitude, landscape and scenic integrity, key feature disruption, multiple wind turbine effects and ancillary electrical infrastructure. Three WTGs will be located in the Upper Hunter Shire (Nos 12, 17 and 16). WTG No. 15 will be located almost on the LGA boundary (with Muswellbrook Shire). The EIS identifies four key viewpoints within the Upper Hunter (VP 13, VP 14, VP 15 and VP 16). No photomontages have been provided from these viewpoints and Epuron advises that the WTGs will not be visible from these locations due to the distance (greater than 4km). There are 6 rural dwellings within 2-4km from which some of the WTGs will be visible. It is recommended that the proponent be required to provide additional photomontages for at least one of the dwellings within the 2-4km range.

Shadow Flicker

The EIS identifies a particular phenomenon associated with wind farm development known as shadow flicker. This occurs at a particular location when the sun's rays pass through the swept path of the moving blades. It is dependent on the time of day, geographical location, meteorological conditions of the site and local vegetation. The EIS in the same section then refers to "blade glint" without explanation. Presumably this is the sunlight reflecting off the moving blades. The assessment provides the results of shadow flicker on residences identified as G15-3, G17-1, P22-1 and S17-2. It is not clear from the EIS whether blade glint is commensurate with shadow flicker. Blade glint may be an issue for residences particularly to the north. This issue needs greater clarification.

Noise Impacts

The Noise Impact Assessment set the project level noise criteria at 35dB(A) or the background noise (LA_{90, 10 minute}) by more than 5 dB(A), whichever is the greater. The NIA is based on sampling from four representative residential receivers (identified as G15-3, G17-1, P22-1 and S17-2). It is noted that no monitoring was undertaken in relation to the cluster of 8 WTGs that border or are within the Upper Hunter Shire. It is not clear why only four sites were used for monitoring – presumably they were considered to be sufficiently representative. Notwithstanding greater explanation needs to be provided about the selection of monitoring sites and how they are deemed to be representative.

Based on the noise assessment the noise criteria is met at all non-associated residences within the 4km Project Area limit with the exception of one residence (identified as P22-1) outside of the Upper Hunter Shire. It is recommended that a condition of consent is included that provides an opportunity

for potentially affected residents to request an independent review where they perceive noise impacts.

Biodiversity Impacts

The Project involves the “long-term” removal of 133ha of woody vegetation. The EIS advises that the Project is linear in nature and involves relatively narrow clearance corridors rather than large consolidated areas of clearing.

Lake Glenbawn is approximately 8km north/north-west of the site and Lake Liddell is approximately 18km south-east. There is the potential for waterbirds moving to and from these water bodies flying towards the turbines at night (when most waterbirds move around). There are concerns about the adequacy of coverage given to the impact of the WTGs on water bird species which could be in their flight path.

We trust the above comments will be given due consideration by the Department in its assessment of the proposed development.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mathew Pringle, Director Environmental & Community Services, should you have any questions regarding the content of this submission.

Yours faithfully



Greg McDonald
GENERAL MANAGER

