

# Collector Wind Farm – Community Consultative Committee (CCC) - Meeting Notes

<b>Date</b>	10 March 2022	<b>Time</b>	6.30pm – 8.10pm
<b>Location</b> - Bushranger Hotel, Collector			
<b>Attendees</b>			
Margaret Harvie (MH) Chairperson – PlanCom Consulting			
Brian Mor (BM)		Neil Weston (NW) - RATCH-Australia	
John Hoskins (JH)		Mieka White (MW) - RATCH-Australia	
Andrew Chiswell (AC)			
John Hoskins (JH)		Notetaker: Kaye Paterson	
Terry Lovelock			
Edward Geishofer (EG) - representative of the Collector Community Association (CCA)			
Upper Lachlan Shire Council - Mayor Pam Kensit			

**Apologies:** Dean Horne, Paison Sutjarit of RATCH

**Guest:** James McKay (re enhancement item submitted)

Item number	Subject	Actions
1	<p><b>Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p>Margaret Harvie (MH) Acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land we are meeting on.</p> <p>Welcomed Mayor Pam Kensit who is the newly elected Mayor and the representative of Council to the CCC.</p> <p>Introductions around the room for the benefit of Pam and Andrew’s first in-person meeting.</p> <p>Neil Weston indicated that this would be his last meeting.</p>	
2	<p><b>Declaration of pecuniary or other interests</b></p> <p>Andrew informed the group that his son and daughter in law own the Some Café and another son runs the Collector Markets.</p> <p>Ed is a member of the Collector Community Wind Farm Community Trust</p>	
3	<p><b>Correspondence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Email from James McKay circulated prior to the meeting</li> </ul>	

4	<p><b>Report on Actions from the last meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dean Horne (DH) to post notice on the Collector/ Currawang Facebook site about the Community Benefit Fund on behalf of RATCH - Complete</li> <li>• DH to give Mieka White (MW) information about the community comment on the Facebook site. - Complete</li> <li>• Andrew Chiswell (AC) to provide more information to Mieka about the Collector Village website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AC advised that there is space on the website gallery. RATCH indicated that they are open to a sponsorship application for the maintenance of this website that communicates to the community of Collector. (Applications potentially via the Community Trust or the Collector Wind Farm s355 committee)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The under allocation of Council funds to be an agenda item of the next meeting - see below discussion about need for more coordination of the funds.</li> <li>• Noise monitoring results meeting/ briefing for the CCC in November/ December - as per this item for this meeting</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b> - Ed will try to keep Mieka up to date on comments about the Collector Wind Farm that appear on the Collector/ Currawang Facebook site</p>
5	<p><b>Update on RATCH personnel on site - Mieka White</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paul McDonald who is based in Queensland has overall responsibility for the operations and maintenance of the Collector Wind Farm.</li> <li>- Paison Sutjarit, based in Sydney, has day-to-day responsibility for managing the Vestas O&amp;M Team, and will regularly spend time on site</li> <li>- Mieka White remains the first point of contact for the community.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>Operation Noise Management Plan - Neil Weston</b></p> <p>Presentation from Ratch on the Noise Monitoring Report/ Results which had been distributed to the CCC members prior to the meeting and is available on the Collector Wind Farm website:  <a href="#">CWF Post Construction Noise Report 2022</a> .</p> <p>Neil indicated that noise is a complex subject based on a range of factors including how it is experienced by different people.</p> <p>There is a lot that goes into the assessment of noise. The Noise Report has been developed by an experienced noise consultancy, with the project manager (who has undertaken work for the project from the start of development) currently based in the UK which made his attendance at the meeting difficult.</p> <p>Neil noted that there may be questions that he can't answer but he will find the answers as required.</p> <p>A summary of the outcomes was presented. The monitoring work and associated reporting is a condition of the Development Approval. The wind farm must demonstrate compliance with the noise limits that are specified in the Approval.</p>	

	<p>Under the condition, Ratch was required to undertake noise monitoring as soon as possible after operations started. Originally, this was to be completed within 3 months of the wind farm being fully operational, with the deadline subsequently extended to 5 months. On June 7, 2021, noise monitors were placed around the wind farm perimeter, plus one extra monitor at Terry Lovelock’s home. There were at the original locations where monitoring was undertaken in 2015 to assess the pre-wind farm ambient noise level.</p> <p>The noise monitors were placed for an extended period of 6 months rather than the typical schedule of 6 weeks. This extended timeframe was a result of a combination of COVID challenges, and wind farm and noise monitor technical problems. These included some turbines being out of commission for extended periods when the monitors were recording and problems with the acoustical recording gear and restrictions on getting out to fix these. The monitors remained in place until December 2021.</p> <p>Other issues affecting the assessment were extreme weather causing ambient noise from rain, insects and frogs impacting on the recordings; excessive vegetation growth disrupting power systems &amp; recorders; and even one monitor being destroyed by cattle (with limited data recovery).</p> <p>This extended monitoring campaign, approved by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), led to extended deadlines for reporting, to 25 Feb 2022.</p> <p>A large amount of data was collected during the monitoring, which was subject to a filtering process, designed to provide a balanced assessment of the existing ambient noise environment without the external influences that may influence the real levels of ambient noise levels.</p> <p>The collected data was compared with the ambient noise level from the area in 2015; to assess the variation of noise levels resulting from the installation and operation of the wind farm (noting how ambient noise levels vary through the year due to factors such as seasonal changes etc.) The data is analysed to determine and report the contribution from the wind farm.</p> <p>The key objective is to assess whether the wind farm is compliant with the noise limits specified in the conditions of approval.</p> <p>The results in the report (providing ~40 pages of assessment, supported by ~100 pages of appendices with relevant data and graphs) demonstrate that the Collector wind farm is compliant with the specified noise levels at the monitoring locations and therefore (given the monitoring locations) anything beyond those locations is also considered compliant as it is a further distance from the wind farm.</p> <p>RATCH was required to submit the noise assessment report to DPE by 25 Feb 2022. Feedback was received from DPIE on 1 Mar 2022, acknowledging submission of the report and noting the conclusion that the noise levels from the wind farm were below the applicable noise criteria within the approval. It was also noted that the acceptance of the report is not endorsement of the compliance status - this is left open should there be need for further analysis such as in the case of noise complaints. The report and response from DPE is</p>	
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available on the [Collector Wind Farm website](#), as well as from the major projects website of the DPE.

### Questions

AC – Have the people expressing concerns with noise levels been contacted and sent this report?

- MW – yes, they have been sent the report and no questions about the report have been received by RATCH at this stage.

TL – Is there marginal difference between the allowed decibel amount and what has been recorded? Is it lower or very close to the noise limit, I know it would vary between sites? This question is in the context of Terry hearing the turbines at his place.

- NW- There were a couple of locations where the compliance graphs are close the noise limit, however the outcomes show that the wind farm is below the specified noise limits.

It is noted that sensitivities and hearing vary for different people - there may be circumstances where people hear the wind turbines, but the assessment concludes that the project is compliant the specified noise limits.

JK- When were the noise monitors removed and when did the full operation commence?

- NW- All noise monitors were removed in December 2021. Regarding 'full operations' DPE was advised that the commencement date was 20 May 2021; the formal contractual Commercial Operations Date was 20 June 2021.

RATCH did have all wind turbines operating before 20 May – with the final Hold Point of operational testing for AEMO taking place in March and April 2021. By the end of May 2021, the wind farm was fully operational with all turbines operating under normal operating mode.

JH- The report suggests they do not like to place the monitors too close to a home or village as other noises will be affecting the recordings. TL confirmed that the monitor on his property was 30 meters from his home.

- NW- They try not to locate monitors close receptors or residences due the potential for noise reflection and other ambient noise generation. The specification for monitor location is defined by relevant standards.

JH – Referred to the 'Collector Intermediate' noise monitor that was placed between the wind farm and Collector village, almost 3km from the closest wind turbine. Why is this not closer to Collector village?

- NW- This was primarily due to the distance from the wind farm, using intermediate locations as proxies for more distant locations. There are a number of these used as part of this noise assessment; based on development of the strategy developed and agreed with DPE prior to the baseline noise testing conducted in 2015.

AC - What about the influence on wildlife? Any further development / reporting on how the wind farm is affecting the birds and bats etc.?

- NW- The noise report is about compliance with defined noise limits, focused on human impacts (not wildlife).

	<p>Separately, the <a href="#">Bird and Bat Adaptive Management Plan</a> (BBAMP) is focused on assessing / managing potential wind farm impacts on avifauna and describes how RATCH will monitor bird and bat presence and strikes within the area of the wind farm through an initial 2 year period. This monitoring work is undertaken throughout the year, to build up a picture of impacts arising, based on the numbers of species of any carcasses found. The BBAMP incorporates an agreed algorithm to assess whether the impacts are considered significant for any species. If so, RATCH will work with the regulator at DPE, to determine what extra measures may be required to reduce such impacts (as described in the BBAMP). Both bat and bird carcasses have been found and these are reported to DPE. These included a grey-headed flying fox. RATCH was required by DPE to undertake additional survey &amp; assessment - looking at the potential for roosts in and around the wind farm and to assess for potential impacts given this species was badly impacted by the bushfires in 2019. At this stage it appears that the wind farm is not having an abnormal impact on any species. The work is ongoing and there is a minimum two year bat monitoring program. Professional avifauna consultants undertake the survey work using both human observers and scavenger dogs trained to sniff out carcasses. At the end of each year a report is submitted to DPE that shows the work and the findings. This report will be on the website at the end of each operational year – shortly after May 2022.</p> <p>TL- Will the landholders with monitors on their land receive a copy of the noise report?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW- Yes, they will and Mieka will make sure that this is completed.</li> </ul> <p>Mieka suggested if CCC members agree she will send out a Newsletter in April to announce who received the first round of Community grants from the Collector Community Enhancement Fund and include with this a summary of the noise report. The report is also on the Collector Wind Farm website.</p> <p>MH also suggested that a link to the noise plan on the DPE website be provided to the CCC with these meeting notes.  <a href="https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/collector-wind-farm">https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/collector-wind-farm</a> (not yet published but should be able to be found under the 'Post Approval' tab)</p> <p>MH – Asked if there are any registered complaints about the noise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW – We have a formal reporting system which includes recording and tracking all complaints – based on the relevant Australian standard. Mieka is the guardian of all enquiries and complaints. Any contact received is recorded and follows through the process to respond to each complaint in a timely fashion. One resident had concerns in the early stages. Mieka and the assets team have been liaising with this resident for some time.</li> </ul> <p>MH- Are the complaints registered with DPE?</p>	<p><b>Action</b> – Mieka to provide a copy of the Noise Report to Landowners with wind turbines on their property.</p> <p><b>Action</b> - MW will distribute a newsletter to Collector residents in April with information about the community funding and about the noise report.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW- No we don't have to register these with DPE, what we must do is have a register and a process if DPE comes to us and need more information.</li> </ul> <p>MH- Confirming that there is only 1 noise complaint to date?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW- Yes.</li> </ul> <p>JH- Reported that he had posted on the Currawang/Collector Facebook site on Wednesday afternoon to see if there were concerns about the noise in advance of this meeting. He has had four responses to this post.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MW- advised there is a number to call for noise complaints - 1800 280 013. All residents should call this number or email <a href="mailto:enquiries@ratcaustralia.com">enquiries@ratcaustralia.com</a> if they have concerns or to register their questions. NW suggested JH ask the residents to call the 1800 number so they can be addressed by the team.</li> </ul> <p>JH- What is the windiest time of the year for the Wind Farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW- advised that he can't give this information without referring to data - he and the team tend to work in averages for the entire year.</li> </ul> <p>MW – stated that she feels residents heard a lot more noise during lockdown due to less highway traffic passing the community.</p> <p>TL- feels the turbines were noisier during testing stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NW- confirmed that this could be true due to there being a lot more stop/starts. There is a lot more movement of the turbines themselves as their functionality is tested – mechanical noise.</li> </ul> <p>JH- Spoke to the resident responses via the Facebook page. These have been noted by RATCH but not included here for privacy reasons.</p> <p>MW – Committed to following up each of these people.</p> <p>MW – Informed the group that the only non-noise complaint received post construction was about poor TV reception that the resident thought to be caused by the wind farm. The resolution was a change to the direction of their TV antenna by a technician. This was facilitated through RATCH. The issue is now closed.</p> <p><b>Around the table for question from other members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pam – taking it all in.</li> <li>Ed – is comfortable.</li> <li>BM – OK</li> <li>TL - Hears the wind turbines, it is not excessive and depends on weather conditions. He understands that the wind farm cannot be completely silent. He lives approximately 1.5km away from the closest turbine.</li> <li>AC- Has listened to various people's complaints and the noise is there. AC has not heard the wind turbines, but he is aware that temperature inversion can make a difference. He lives 4 km from the highway and on temperature inversion days they can clearly hear the highway. AC will in future advise any resident to call 1800 280 013.</li> <li>NW- advised that the 1800 number has a 24-hour answering service and all call details are sent through to RATCH.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action:</b> RATCH to make the 1800 280 013 number and <a href="mailto:enquiries@ratcaustralia.com">enquiries@ratcaustralia.com</a> contact options more prominent and known to the community. RATCH urges the community to report any issues early so that they can investigate what is causing the issue.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> JH to give RATCH details of the responses to his Facebook page in relation to potential noise issues.</p>
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<p>7.</p>	<p>Collector Funds update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collector Wind Farm Community Trust</li> <li>• Collector Wind Farm s355 Fund</li> </ul> <p><u>James McKay</u> – James recognised that the issues with the split fund’s structure is historical, however he feels there is a complex administration process of these funds and there is an opportunity to streamline this process, making it simpler for the community and for Mieka/ RATCH.</p> <p>This would potentially lead to better decisions around funding.</p> <p>James feels that the CCC might provide advice back to the Community Trust and Collector Wind Farm s355 Committee on ways to streamline fund administration. James joined the Community Trust’s Advisory Committee after it was operational and has been impressed by the work of Tony, Ed, Penelope and Ian Lawrence (RATCH) who developed fantastic governance and guidance documents. The material developed should be leveraged by both advisory committees. He respects that the ultimate decisions on allocating grants lie outside of the CCC remit.</p> <p>Ed, Penelope and James provide advice to the trustee (RATCH-Australia), the s355 Advisory Committee provides advice to the Council to make the spending decisions.</p> <p>James feels there is an opportunity to streamline the administration of both funds so that the community is presented with it as one bucket of money with the committees working collaboratively to source and distribute funds.</p> <p>For example, a community project might be worthy and in need of additional funds or the surplus funds from previous year’s allocations from RATCH. If there is need to source money from both funds, it makes sense for the people advising on these funds to be in the room at the same time.</p> <p>PK – Pam is recently appointed to the s355 committee (as Mayor) and recognises the need to make the process as straight forward for the community as possible.</p> <p>MW – Advised that the Collector Community Trust did ask for a meeting with Council before Christmas but it was when the Council was in caretaker mode prior to the December 2011 elections.</p> <p>The issue is that there are two different application processes at different times of the year. Mieka is also concerned about the delay in the distribution of s355 funds in 2021. Applications opened 16 April 2021, the Advisory Committee meeting was held 6 July and grant recipients were not paid until 16 November. This is embarrassing and a reputational risk to RATCH.</p> <p>PK - indicated understanding and willingness to take this onboard.</p> <p>MH- There must be a range of operational improvement opportunities for the Council in the context of monies it receives from several wind farms. What is required, in part, is a good communication process. A commitment to make it work with focus on the recipients/ those requiring funding.</p> <p>MW- There is \$296,846.36 in the Collector s355 Fund to be allocated in 2022. There is \$70,182.72 that the Collector Community Trust can allocate in 2022.</p>	
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	<p>EG - The objective is to give the money to the community - to date the s355 Fund experience has not been so good. There is a need to improve the Governance and increase the social impact on the community as much as possible. There needs to be visibility and capacity to fund bigger projects if relevant. We don't want it the work in the siloed way it is currently.</p> <p>NW - Suggests that the CCC should be a conduit on all matters associated with the project including the issues around the funding.</p> <p>JMc- If you draw an impacted area of say 10km radius of the wind farm it not just Upper Lachlan Council, its Yass Valley, Goulburn Mulwarre and Palarang and to the credit of RATCH the community enhancement fund allows for monies to go to these people who would be otherwise dis-enfranchised from any benefits. For this reason, James suggests that the Community Trust is a far better arrangement. When developing the benefits sharing scheme for the Collector Wind Farm, the funding structure was discussed at many CCC meetings and this outcome was agreed between the Council, DPE and the community to be fair.</p> <p>DPE had perhaps feared that the Community Trust idea would fall over.</p> <p>James reminded the group that he understands that there is provision for the s355 fund to provide \$5K toward the administration of the Trust fund.</p> <p>This money has not been requested to date and the pre-work of Ian, Tony Ed and Penny has provided a robust governance framework. James suggests that from his experience if you get good process, good administration it will lead to good outcomes. He suggests using this \$5K it can be administered in a far more efficient way.</p> <p>Currently it appears that there is the possibility for applicants to play each other off. The program is called a community enhancement program not a community division program! It needs more socialising or promotion in the community.</p> <p>James suggested that Mieka organise a meeting between the directly interested parties. The outcome of that meeting and agreements would then be reported back to the CCC.</p> <p>Any outcome will be of interest to this committee and to the community association and people who follow the project via the website.</p> <p>TL - suggested that any changes to how it operates would need to be put to the community to be sure that they are comfortable with any proposed changes.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Mieka to work with Council to convene a meeting between Council (s355 committee and/ or appropriate Council operations), and representative of the Trust and RATCH. The objective is to find ways to improve the future grant advertising and distribution process toward the creation of better outcomes for the community.</p>
8	<p>Community Engagement</p> <p><b>Status and Landscape screening</b></p> <p>MW – in general there has been good feedback. One person was not happy with some of their landscaping, and this issue has been since resolved. There has been delays and frustration due to the weather and this week the landscaping activity is back in action. Any expression of frustrations around the landscaping should be directed to Mieka and she will call and discuss.</p>	



	<p>In total 30 people have asked for landscaping within 5km of the turbines. An external company completes the landscaping on behalf of RATCH.</p> <p>AC - indicated that there is a definite interest from the village residents in the landscaping.</p> <p><b>Membership</b></p> <p>MH - Reminded the group that there is still a vacancy due to Martha's resignation. While MW has promoted this vacancy no application has been received. Interested applicants can contact Margie or Mieka with the appointment being made by DPE.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> CCC members to alert any others potentially interested that there is a vacancy on the CCC</p>
9	<p><b>Round the table with any further issues</b></p> <p>AC - Continues to be concerned about the question of what happened to left-over funds? He suggests that there is need to invest for future years? He thinks that there needs to a better process going forward.</p> <p>JMc- Considers that there is nothing to restrict the trust from investing in a project. Council has the larger share of the money. The community has the smaller amount. The trust can apply for funds from the s355. The Community Trust could be considered a 'project' because it is for the community benefit.</p> <p>The next funding round in May the trust may well make application for the balance of the funds.</p>	<p><b>Action:</b> Question of how to improve the funding allocation process and the under allocation of the Council s355 committee funds to be an item on the agenda of the next CCC meeting</p>
10	<p><b>Next meeting</b></p> <p>Given the issues around the community funds it was decided that there should be a meeting in 3 months.</p> <p>Decision to be made closer to the date about whether this is an in person or remote meeting.</p> <p><b>Suggested date for your consideration is 30 June at 6 pm</b></p>	