

Appendix One

Report of West Wind Community Liaison Group For year ended October 2008

Membership:

Amarjit Maxwell (convener, Wellington City Council)
Deb Compton (elected community representative)
Dave Bennett (elected community representative)
Ruth Paul (Makara Ohariu community board representative)
Mark France (Meridian Energy representative)

The group met 12 times, approximately monthly, during the period under review.

Role of the group

At its first meeting on 18 October 2007 the group recorded its responsibilities as:

- To review Meridian's performance in terms of noise control, the impact of construction traffic, and parking management.
- To make recommendations to and receive feedback from Meridian in respect of any of these matters
- To produce an annual report for presentation to Wellington City Council's Strategy and Policy Committee
- To review implementation of the Project West wind noise management plan.
- To work with Meridian to facilitate the establishment of a suitable mechanism for the well-being and the enhancement of the communities adjoining the site.

The attention of the group over the last 12 months has largely been focused on the issues of construction traffic and the establishment of the background noise monitoring program. This monitoring program will form the basis of the noise management plan once the wind farm is operational.

Noise monitoring program

The role of the group in relation to this program was the subject of considerable discussion, with the community representatives contending that their role required them to be consulted in the development of the noise monitoring program. In particular they wished to have the opportunity for input at this stage when the council were considering the draft noise prediction report which Meridian was required to provide to Council.

This report was prepared by consultants for Meridian Energy, presented to Council, and referred by Council to its expert reviewer, Nigel Lloyd, to consider whether the report was appropriate for approval. Meridian requested the Council to treat this report as commercially sensitive and therefore confidential until approved

Release of the information was sought under the Official Information Act by the Makara Guardians. The community representatives on the liaison group were concerned that they were not being offered an opportunity to comment on this report before it became approved as they were representing the community most likely to be affected by noise from the wind farm.

Eventually the council decided to release the report in its draft form to both the Makara Guardians and the community representatives on the liaison group. Both parties made

submissions, albeit in tight timeframes, and these were considered by Nigel Lloyd in the course of his review of the Meridian report. The report was subsequently approved by Wellington City Council following advice from Nigel Lloyd. There was further lengthy debate within the group as to whether there should be more monitoring points for pre-installation monitoring than was required by the report.

Arrangements were made for Nigel Lloyd and Meridian's noise expert, Paul Botha, to attend a meeting of the liaison group in early February to explain the report and his decision. The Makara Guardians were also invited to send representatives who could question these experts and table their concerns.

At the liaison group meeting on the 5th February 2008 Mr Lloyd outlined his process and confirmed his view that the report was accurate for the new turbines and that sufficient monitoring had been provided for. He confirmed that he believed the turbines would comply with condition 17. The issue of the number of pre-installation monitoring points was discussed at length together with the accuracy of the 35 dB contour which the report predicted. The Guardians and the community representatives on the liaison group expressed concern that there will not be a sufficiently accurate picture of pre-installation conditions (particularly low background noise conditions) to enable meaningful assessment of possible non-compliance once operations commenced.

The Guardians proposed to provide a list of 16 additional sites at which they wished to see pre-installation monitoring carried out in addition to the four sites that would become permanent monitoring sites. Meridian agreed to have these sites assessed by Nigel Lloyd, Matthew Borrich and Paul Botha for their suitability as monitoring sites and to provide an additional relocatable monitoring device that could be used to monitor these sites in priority order before installation. The list of sites provided by the Guardians was subsequently assessed by the experts and seven sites were considered appropriate to provide potentially useful additional data. Monitoring devices were installed at the four permanent sites and the first of the temporary sites in late July 2008.

At subsequent meetings, discussion has continued about whether the noise emission report provided by the turbine manufacturers complies with the conditions of consent imposed by the Environment Court; how background noise contamination (for instance, caused by refuelling operations at night on site) can be adequately "filtered out" of the noise monitoring to ensure accuracy; and how the noise data obtained should be stored, interpreted and made available.

Some of this debate was caused by the complexities of noise monitoring processes, such as the L95 exceedence standard. Debate has also focussed on the ongoing construction and traffic noise generated by the project while background noise monitoring is taking place. While the experts appear to be confident that the turbines will comply and that any noncompliant occurrence will be able to be clearly identified, the community representatives on the liaison group continued to have concerns about the information and assurances received.

In respect of the storage and reporting of data from monitoring a small group has been established to agree the process and protocols. Dave Bennett is representing the liaison group on this working group. It is worth noting that Ruth Paul was appointed to represent communities on a national committee established to review noise standard NZS P6808.

Traffic management:

The environment court concluded that "the construction traffic will create two years of disruption..." the court anticipated that "the proposal to barge the overweight and over dimensioned turbine components will be a major mitigation outcome in terms of lessening the effects on the Makara community." The court also recorded that "a Construction Traffic Management Plan is intended and a community liaison group to liaise with Meridian over traffic issues is intended".

The community impacts of the construction traffic during the period under the review can be broadly categorised as:

- road improvements
- transport to and from site of large loads
- the hours of operation.

A related matter is the effectiveness of the 0800 number provided for members of the public to raise issues or seek information.

Road Improvements

The conditions of consent required that certain road improvements be completed "prior to commencement of construction". The conditions of consent also required that a construction traffic management plan be prepared and approved by the Chief transportation engineer.

Work on the road improvements commenced in August 2007. A review of the 0800 log records approximately 26 calls during the period up to the end of October. Six were associated with the way the improvement works were being carried out (delaying traffic, trucks not giving way to private vehicles, punctures and dust). The rest were seeking information on what work was to be carried out. The most contentious piece of road improvement was the proposal to widen the road adjoining the frontage from Hook near the junction of Makara Road and Takarau Gorge Road. Mr Hook contends that there is no road reserve available for the widening, and to date the council has been unable to establish whether a road reserve exists. The work has not been carried out pending a clarification of this issue. Particularly during winter months the substantial widening works on South Makara Road caused some disruption to traffic with minor slips and consequent sediment blocking the carriageway on occasions.

Large Loads

In October, delivery began to the site of large plant to carry out enabling works in advance of construction. The construction traffic management plan (TMP) provided for a large loads to be escorted to site by pilots. Because of the narrow dimensions of the road, in the interests of safety, a process was provided whereby the leading pilot would go ahead of a vehicle coming to site and stop traffic at Makara village to enable the transporter to travel down Makara Hill to the village. Those vehicles held up at this point would then be released and the pilot proceed down South Makara Road to stop traffic until the transporter moved to site.

This process, particularly during the period of establishment, proved to be quite disruptive of commuting traffic and was a cause of considerable discontent and occasioned many calls to the 0800 number. The community expected that they should receive regular advance warning of these loads with accurate predictions of timing. This information proved difficult for the project to provide because of the uncertainty of travel times which meant that arrival times were unpredictable.

Initial attempts to provide advanced traffic advice were also unsatisfactory because of difficulties with signage.

In an endeavour to avoid disrupting traffic through Wellington city, many of these large loads were scheduled for early morning (between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.). Arrival of these vehicles, which often then parked in the village for a period before being escorted to site proved a significant disturbance to some residents.

At early meetings of the liaison group (October 2007 to February 2008) the focus of the group was primarily on the noise monitoring program, on the uneven performance of the 0800 number in its initial stages, and on ensuring that complaints from residents were appropriately addressed. In February 2008 a member of the community liaison group went to the community board meeting and tabled a number of issues about how traffic management was being carried out and monitored. The liaison group then focused on the appropriateness of the TMP particularly in relation to how the provisions of the plan were being complied with (signage, trucks giving way to other vehicles); whether the terms of the plan were appropriate (hours of travel permitted; avoiding interaction with the school bus); and on whether the process of managing oversized loads was lawful and best practice. The lack of prior and accurate notice of the arrival of large loads continued to be an issue.

Over the next several months Meridian and Wellington City Council worked to agree on amendments to the TMP which would reduce the impacts complained of by the community. This process took several months, although some interim measures were adopted voluntarily by Meridian, such as limiting the hours of heavy vehicle travel through the village to between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m.

The amended TMP was provided to the liaison group in draft form in June 2008 for their review and feedback before it was finalised. The most significant change was a different procedure for escorting vehicles to and from the site, which avoided the need to stop commuting vehicles; and further constraints on the times of travel of large loads to certain less disruptive time windows during the day. The arrangements around avoiding the school bus were also clarified.

The new TMP became operative in August 2008. The liaison group reviewed and approved a notice (ready reckoner) prepared by Meridian which was circulated to all residents to explain what traffic movements were permitted, how loads would be escorted, and how to seek information or raise issues about traffic. Subsequent to the change in escorting procedure only a very limited number of large loads required road closure. Several days notice of the two-hour window within which these loads would be delivered was able to be provided by an illuminated sign in Makara village. This amended procedure proved to be largely satisfactory.

All of the large deliveries had been completed by mid November 2008, and in addition the daily delivery of large volumes of bulk supplier for concrete making was also completed. An illustration of the reduction in disruption is shown from the 0800 log. Between 1 November 2007 and 31 October 2008 there were nearly 100 calls about traffic related issues. During November 2008 there were three calls and no calls were received during December 2008. While the significant reduction and large loads clearly played a part in this change, the role of the liaison group in raising the concerns of the community, and obtaining voluntary changes from Meridian and subsequently a number of significant modifications to the TMP played a significant part in reducing impacts on the community.