

Minutes

Community Advisory Group meeting #23

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| Chair | Ian Gibson | Time | 4:00pm – 6:00pm |
| Minutes | Jason Pickering | Date | 2023-11-15 |
| Location | RW May Pavilion - Yarram Recreational Reserve; Buckley Street, Yarram VIC 3971 | | |

Attendance

| Members | | Project team | | Apologies | |
|--------------------|---|--------------|-----------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Ian Gibson (Chair) | Anne Roussac-Hoyne | | Erin Coldham | | Nina Barry -Macaulay |
| Allan Rogers | Tony Cantwell | | Paul Johnson | | Harry Mitchelson |
| Wendy Farmer | Glen McColl | | Jason Pickering | | Jess Lee |
| Julianne Peavey | Jonathan Pintus | | Adam Mitchell | | Travis Dillow |
| Nicki Jennings | Deb Lucas | | | | |
| Tony Wolfe | Glenn Stagg | | | | |
| Jack Winterbottom | Nick Dudley | | | | |
| Darren McCubbin | Jenny Smith | | | | |
| Peter Mooney | Marcus McKenzie | | | | |
| | *Ken Fraser (<i>attending for Nina</i>) | | | | |

Key discussion points

| Item | Discussion points |
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| 1 | Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country |
| 2 | Standing items and actions from previous meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Apologies – Endorsement of minutes from CAG meeting #21 (CAG meeting #22 was a site visit) – Declaration of potential conflicts of interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Darren indicated that he has joined the Marinus Link Community Advisory Group. Ian added that CAG members would continue to participate in other advisory groups including offshore wind projects and at some point further clarity might be |

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| | <p>required from within the industry to determine the best way to mitigate any potential for conflict of interest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nick said that participation in multiple Technical Reference Groups will also need to be considered. |
| 3 | <p>What's happening on the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to presentation for key updates. - Paul spoke of recent events and presentations delivered by the SOTS project team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ian asked more about the presentation given to the Manns Beach Improvement Committee. <p>Jason explained he and Lachlan McKinnon, SOTS Fishing Liaison Officer, presented to around 60 people in the Manns Beach Hall and that the primary interest was potential impacts that could affect the local recreational fishing community.</p> <p>There is fear among some community members in that community that regulatory decisions could exclude recreational fishers from accessing the project site altogether. Staff explained that SOTS expects the more likely outcome will be a 50m or 100m setback from each turbine which will enable fishing to continue.</p> - Allan added SOTS have a recreational fishing factsheet which provides the same messaging, and this has been shared amongst the Mcloughlins Beach fishing community. Allan wondered if this information gap highlights the need for a Manns Beach CAG member. - Ian answered that when the CAG was initially conceived, that he as Chair, Erin (SOTS Chief Development Officer) and Sarah (SOTS Head of Public Affairs) mapped representation from across Gippsland, aiming to achieve appropriate coverage for key stakeholder groups and community interests and unfortunately the CAG can't represent every town. - Darren agreed with Ian that we can't realistically have every town or group represented as the group would be too large to function and added that the objective of the CAG is an advisory group that represents various sectors of the community and not to be the sole distributor of information, and he is comfortable that when knowledge gaps are identified the project team responds accordingly. - Jason concluded that SOTS now has a well-connected contact within the Manns Beach community and will ensure she is kept updated as the project advances. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our CAG site visit to Port Anthony and Toora Wind Farm took place on Friday 6 October and was well received by the members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nick added that he gained many insights from the site visit and the opportunity to visit these sites was typically limited for community members. Nick noted it is critical that any proposed development considers remnant native vegetation and any other natural environment assets at this location. - Ian added that despite living in Gippsland for decades, he hadn't visited either site before and found the visit very enlightening. This was seconded by other CAG members with a consensus that other relevant site visit opportunities should be further explored. <p>The visit also highlighted for Ian the volume of work still required on supportive infrastructure before any offshore wind project generates its first power.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allan agreed with Ian and recalled Ben Anthony's comment that their development could take approximately two years to complete. |
| 4 | <p>What's happening in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wendy reported on the success of the inaugural TRANSFORM Renewable Energy Community & Jobs Expo 2023 held over two days in Traralgon and of the important relationships formed with local schools who have a desire to build their renewable energy knowledge and engage more with industry. Wendy can provide a contact from Lowanna College in Newborough who has expressed a desire to further engage with SOTS. <p>Action 1: SOTS project team to engage with Wendy's contact from Lowanna College to facilitate further discussion.</p> <p>The TRANSFORM Expo provided a platform for young people in the Latrobe Valley to understand, engage and more importantly build hope that there are opportunities to take part in energy transformation and enjoy long careers in the industry. The event will be repeated next year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Darren spoke of the success of the 2023 Gippsland New Energy Conference, thanking SOTS for their attendance and support, and in particular helping to contribute to event sustainability as the event's Sustainability Sponsor. <p>Over 500 people attended the two-day conference in Sale, and the variety of speakers and topics provided industry information, networking, and positivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jenny shared that the Great Victorian Bike Ride itinerary this year includes Port Albert as a destination on 1 December. An invitation was extended for SOTS to attend and host an information stall whilst riders visit Port Albert. - Julieanne shared the Giffard group to be continuing their fight against overhead transmission infrastructure and that sentiment remains positive towards SOTS given the project's commitment to deliver an underground transmission solution. <p>Ian closed by saying transmission remains a key topic for discussion and the CAG need to keep up to date with any developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Darren added that there is a lot happening more broadly with State Electricity Commission (SEC) and the Community Power Agency launching a community benefits scheme. - Nicki commented on the community discontent rising in the Illawarra region, largely based on offshore wind industry effects on whales however much of this information has already been contested as inaccurate by leading scientific organisations. This situation highlights how quickly misinformation can spread. - Julieanne shared the common argument still used against the offshore wind industry is the inability to recycle all expired components - the blades remained the final element that couldn't be recycled. <p>Paul suggested we will share a link from turbine manufacturer Vestas which has announced an innovation to recycle the blades.</p> <p>Action 2: SOTS project team to distribute the Vestas information on blade recycling.</p> |

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| | <p>Darren added that its perfectly reasonable to expect new industry will recycle at the end-of-life for components, but it's also reasonable to suggest we need to decarbonise as soon as possible.</p> |
| 5 | Break |
| 6 | <p>Focus topic: Project approvals update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to presentation for key updates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam Mitchell, SOTS Head of Approvals, provided an overview of the project's approval process and timeframes acknowledging that it is too early to present specific findings or data from our various surveys which are undergoing phases of analysis and review. <p>Additionally certain elements of the project changed following the declaration of the Gippsland Offshore Wind Zone which has required the scope to be updated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOTS is undertaking a coordinated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) which is a Commonwealth Act and an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) which will be under a Victorian State Government Act. <p>As the first time this will be coordinated in Australia, there will be some challenges to meet what the Commonwealth and the State Governments will be individually looking for under their respective assessment processes and to form a coherent document that works under both jurisdictions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From a process point of view, it's important to recognise that the EES/EIS process SOTS is completing is advisory and all the work we complete within this process informs the approvals. - There are still many unknowns and a challenge for SOTS to manage, therefore the Approvals team remains adaptive. For example, regulations under the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act that are imminent and could arrive any day now could potentially alter the way SOTS is putting together its approvals documentation. <p>Fundamentally a lot of the assessments and modelling being done at a technical level can still progress, however the way it is presented or the way it might be required interact with an approval could potentially change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOTS is looking for elements of project design that directly respond to identified environmental impacts and how it can minimise those impacts. SOTS is committed to use existing mitigation measures to reduce impacts. <p>For example, double bubble curtains are one such mitigation measure used to lessen the impact of piling activities on marine wildlife.</p> <p>Ian asked if there are any videos we can share to show this mitigation.</p> <p>Action 3: SOTS project team to share our video "How turbines are installed" as this also depicts the use of a double bubble curtain.</p> <p>The video can additionally be viewed here https://youtu.be/h3Kn1nlnzIQ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is also a very significant onshore component to this project and SOTS has undertaken extensive work over the last few years to understand the values within these areas too. |

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| | <p>SOTS will use our study to determine if certain areas which require different construction strategies, for example using horizontal directional boring as opposed to open trench and fill at certain locations within our transmission solution.</p> <p>SOTS will also explore making localised changes to the transmission alignment if required to avoid any significant values. There is suitable width within the specified alignment to move the trench to avoid areas of high significance native vegetation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SOTS is finalising its analysis and pulling the impact assessments into reports that are robust and address any issues. Ultimately SOTS needs to get to a point of confidence that impacts are acceptable. From here it is anticipated SOTS would progress to public exhibition most likely towards the end of 2024. A public enquiry and panel process would likely occur early 2025 and approvals would then progress. - Nicki asked if there would be enough native vegetation impact to consider offsets. Adam that an offset strategy forms a key part of our approvals process. The requirement will dictate that any offset site SOTS proposes would need to be approved by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) as containing the right type and quality of vegetation or the right species if it related to habitat for animals. This would require a covenant put on the title of that land that declared the site to remain an offset or reserve in perpetuity. - Allan asked whether SOTS has decided where the project would commence installation of offshore infrastructure within the project field. For example, would installation commence closer to where the export cable makes land or would it be further away and working back to this point. Recreational fishers are keen to learn where access restrictions may first occur during construction. <p>Question taken on notice 1: Erin and Adam both indicated that it might be too early to provide absolute clarity on this question yet and this is more an engineering team response rather than environmental one but agreed to take this question notice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nick queried if we have an approximate km/h figure on blade tip speed for an 18 MW turbine. <p>Question taken on notice 2: Adam answered that figure will be included in our modelling studies and couldn't recall it accurately but agreed to provide it for a later response.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Other business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farewell CAG Member Jess. - CAG Annual member survey will be distributed early December - Carrajung Estate Winery will host our CAG End of Year break up on December 14, 5:30pm – 7:30pm. We hope all members will be able to attend. |
| 8 | <p>Meeting close</p> |

Actions – new

| No. | Action | Owner | Due |
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| 1 | SOTS project team to engage with Wendy's contact from Lowanna College to facilitate further discussion. | Paul / Jason | 7/12/2023 |

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| 2 | SOTS project team to distribute the Vestas information on blade recycling. | Paul / Jason | 7/12/2023 |
| 3 | SOTS project team to share our video "How turbines are installed" as this also depicts the use of a double bubble curtain. | Paul / Jason | 7/12/2023 |

Next meeting

| Date | Time | Place |
|--|---------------|--|
| Thursday 14 December 2023, CAG End of Year Dinner (CAG#24) | 5:30 – 7:30pm | Carrajung Estate, 32 Lays Road, Willung South VIC 3847 |
| Wednesday 7 February 2024 (CAG#25) | 4 - 6pm | Latrobe Valley, [Town and Venue TBC] |

Questions taken on notice

Question 1: Where would SOTS offshore infrastructure first be installed? Recreational fishers are keen to understand where any access may be limited once construction starts.

As the project progresses through the range of approvals needed to start construction we'll know more about the final design, layout and construction timeframes and program. We'll share this information with fishers and the community.

Question 2: What is the rotation speed (km/h) of an 18 MW turbine?

The largest offshore wind turbines commercially available today are 15 MW, which has a blade tip speed of approximately 100 m/s or 370 km/h.