

Turitea Wind Farm Proposal- Introductory Remarks of Clive Anstey

Landscape - Palmerston North City Council Submission

I have been asked to comment on the caucusing outcomes with regard to key landscape issues. I will comment briefly on each of the issues and then focus on those that seem most critical in determining a position on landscape effects. I should note that neither Mr Brown nor Mr Coombs attended caucusing so that the valuable perspectives they provided were not adequately represented (although they were discussed.)

Landscape Classification.

- All but Mr Wyatt agreed that the skyline, which all agreed included **a series of ridges**, would be described as an *outstanding natural feature*.
- Mr Wyatt agreed that that the skyline was a distinctive feature but not outstanding in the way the Forest Parks Ridges to the north and south are.

(Mr Brown notes in his evidence the Proposed One Plan classification of the skyline as an *outstanding feature* and does not take issue with this. Mr Coombs refutes the classification of the skyline as outstanding.)

- All agreed there are areas within both Harding's Park Scenic Reserve and the Turitea Reserve that have outstanding qualities. Ms Lucas holds the view that both are *Outstanding Natural Landscapes*. Mr Wyatt believes they are *High Amenity Landscapes*. It is my view that there are significant areas that are outstanding but the quality is mixed at the upper northern margins where there is a 'transitional area'. Mr Bray seemed to agree.

(In his evidence Mr Brown agrees that at least parts of the Reserve "when viewed from within" are outstanding.)

- All agreed that areas of private land included within the proposal (the foothills and front ridges) were *High Amenity Landscapes*.

Turbine Grouping.

- All except Mr Wyatt agree that this is helpful. All agreed with Mr Wyatt that in the final analysis individual turbines can become critical in assessing effects.

Community of Interest.

- All agreed at caucusing that they had not used a community of interest analysis. This is not entirely consistent with the evidence however.

Photomontages

- All agreed that these were useful (in my view essential) and that those prepared by Mr Wyatt were a fair representation. Mr Bray expressed reservations about the “technical accuracy” of some simulations. This was discussed further later in the caucusing.

Landscape ‘units’.

- All agreed that Mr Wyatt and Mr Brays use of units was helpful to underpin their analysis.

Viewpoint Selection

- All agreed that the selection of viewpoints was fair and representative.
- All agreed that there are limits on the number of views that can be simulated and we always want more. It was agreed that the numbers simulated by Mr Wyatt were adequate given the agreed limitations.

Perception Studies/ Focus Groups.

- All agreed that perception studies are useful.
- Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I believe that **perception studies are of limited use for visual amenity assessments.**
- Mr Wyatt finds perception studies useful (for visual amenity assessments) to “show the difference between wind farms and other forms of development in the landscape” (from his write up of caucus findings.)

Distance and turbine height.

- Mr Bray, Mr Wyatt and I all find tables that provide some guidance on visual impacts in relation to height and distance useful.
- Ms Lucas expressed the opinion that the magnitude of effects was not adequately captured in terms of height and distance alone. Ms Lucas argued that the context of effects is of primary importance and how ‘prominent’ turbines are is of secondary importance. Ms Lucas seemed to be saying that knowing that turbines were present was an adverse effect and they didn’t need to be ‘prominent’ to register their presence.

Reserves Act

- Mr Wyatt was unaware of case law that would limit development next to a scenic reserve (Hardings Park).

- The management plan was referred to but discussion was limited and there was no resolution of what constraints a scenic reserve might impose, if any.

Assessment of Effects.

Road Users

Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I all agreed that Mr Wyatt understates the visual impacts of the proposed wind farm for road users.

Public Spaces

Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I all agreed that Mr Wyatt understates the levels of visual impact of the proposed wind farm on public spaces.

Residential Impacts

Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I agreed that many of Mr Wyatt's assessments of "more than minor" adverse effects as being able to be mitigated is not supportable. Mr Wyatt should accept many of his simulations as showing "High" visual effects and not able to be mitigated (as per his definitions)

Tracking and Earthworks

All agreed that tracking and earthworks are unlikely to have significant visual effects from vantage points beyond the reserve. The visual effects of earthworks on private land were not discussed.

Cumulative Effects

Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I all find the cumulative effects unacceptable. This is based on the opinion that:

- Turbines would fill the last gap on the city's backdrop.
- The variation in turbine style either side of Pahiatua Track would exacerbate the adverse visual impacts.
- There are internal cumulative effects because turbine rows overlap and turbines register as dense groups from many viewpoints.

Mr Wyatt disagrees with the above views. Mr Wyatt is of the view that based on his experience views can always be mitigated by planting when a resident finds turbines unacceptable as a part of their view.

Mitigation

All were in agreement that views from public spaces cannot be mitigated.

- Mr Bray, Ms Lucas and I all agreed that planting is not an adequate form of mitigation.
- Mr Wyatt is of the view that planting can always be an adequate form of mitigation.

K2Vi & Memory Maps

“The caucus agreed that both were useful tools and would be of assistance to the board of enquiry in making their decision.” Mr Wyatt and Mr van der Leden had a lengthy discussion on the technical aspects of simulation and appeared to enjoy a level of agreement on angles of view and lens focal lengths.

The caucus viewed the simulations prepared by Mr van der Leden and was satisfied that the simulations were helpful after some ten minutes. Mr van der Leden was prepared to show more of the work he had done but all agreed that he had shown sufficient to satisfy the caucus as to their value.

What did I take from the caucusing?

It was unfortunate that neither of Mr Brown or Mr Coombs were able to attend. I say this because it seems to me that the evidence of Mr Brown, Mr Coombs, and Mr Wyatt needs to be read as a comprehensive body of landscape evidence. Without this having been made explicit it seems to me that:

- Mr Brown assessed the values attaching to the landscape context under consideration, providing a comprehensive overview with reference to legislation and policy.
- Mr Coombs provides some useful guidance based on his experience dealing with the Horizons Proposed One Plan, and his expert interpretation of the ‘skyline values’.
- Mr Wyatt provides a very comprehensive assessment of ‘visual effects.’

As only Mr Wyatt attended the caucusing it was left to him to explain all aspects of MRP’s position with regard to landscape effects.

Essential similarities and differences in our positions.

We all agreed that the whole site had at least *High Amenity Values*. Ms Lucas was of the view that both reserves were *Outstanding Natural Landscapes*. For Mr Bray and myself large parts of the reserves were outstanding but we agreed that there was a transition area at the northern end where we had reservations. (Although my view is that with time and current management intensions the area would trend towards outstanding.)

Assessment of Effects.

Ms Lucas was clearly of the opinion that the effects were totally unacceptable and that none of the turbines should be consented. For Mr Bray and I the effects are for the most part unacceptable. Mr Wyatt acknowledges that the adverse effects on views from some properties are unacceptable but believes that any adverse effects can be adequately mitigated with planting. Mr Wyatt is therefore of the view that all proposed turbines should be consented.

In arriving at his position Mr Wyatt appears to be saying that if particular individuals don't like looking at turbines they can remove them from their views (so that the adverse visual effects no longer exist.) Mr Wyatt argues that such effects are acceptable because:

- The effects can be mitigated by planting.
- Perception studies show that people generally are accepting of wind farms in their landscapes, and even those who have them located where they live accept them, often seeing them as a positive feature in the view.

The implication of Mr Wyatt's position is that individuals who find the visual effects of turbines unacceptable are in the minority and therefore must bear the burden in the interests of the majority. However Mr Wyatt suggests that if individuals found turbines sufficiently unacceptable MRP would assist in planting for mitigation.

Unfortunately there was insufficient time to explore the implications of Mr Wyatt's proposition. Having in mind that only representative viewpoints were simulated we are not aware of how many actual viewpoints might suffer adverse visual effects and how many residents may find these effects unacceptable. How mitigation might be negotiated and implemented by MRP was not discussed by Mr Wyatt.

The critical issue is one of 'perception'.

At caucusing only Mr Wyatt argued that perception studies/ focus groups were of more than limited use for visual amenity assessment. Mr Wyatt believes they are useful in comparing different forms of development. While I might agree with Mr Wyatt that perception studies can help in comparing different forms of development, in my opinion they are of very limited use in assessing the values of the landscape itself and whether these values can be sustained by either of the options Mr Wyatt might wish to compare.

Under the Resource Management Act it is my understanding that its purpose is to sustain resources and the relationships individuals and communities have with those resources. Managing the landscape of the northern Tararuas and foothills to sustain relationships of importance requires an understanding of the particular

values and relationships existing. Perception studies of other communities living in other landscapes are unlikely to assist in gaining this understanding.

Mr Wyatt's assessment is entirely focused on the sensitivity of the viewer (a globally averaged viewer in an unspecified landscape with a wind farm in it) rather than on the significance of the Tararua ranges and foothills-

- In the context of legislation, policy, and ecology
- In the context of those individuals and communities who have an association with the Tararua Ranges and foothills.

Mr Wyatt's narrow and limiting exploration of 'perception' is simply not adequate, which is why his position was not supported by the rest of us. While Mr Bray and I believe that visual impacts are a consideration in an overall judgement of landscape effects, Ms Lucas appears to be less convinced. Her opinion would appear to be that the magnitude of visual effects is not the primary issue; turbines are intrusive in a more comprehensive and fundamental way. Turbines threaten established relationships and meanings in ways that are beyond mitigation. I agree with Ms Lucas but have difficulty in making judgements at such a level of sensitivity.

What individuals 'see' and its significance to them depends on the relationship they have with the 'view' and what it means to them. Ms Lucas would appear to be of the opinion that if you see turbines that is sufficient to awaken a comprehensive and adverse response.

In my judgement of effects I relied on both an assessment of visual as well as more comprehensive landscape effects. Landscape effects include effects on the values of the site itself and effects on community associations. I attempted to gain some appreciation of the sites values for rural residential communities through focus group meetings and a reading of submissions. I provided an 'expert view' of landscape effects for the community. Ultimately however it is for the members of the community who appear before you (or their representatives) to tell you how they feel about likely effects on their relationships with their landscapes, and one another.

Clive Anstey

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