

Robert and Margaret Stewart additional submission Turitea Windfarm hearing July 2009

Physical location of property

The location of our property in relation to the proposed Turitea Wind farm is detailed in our written submission. In brief, our property is located at 662 Pahiatua Track; it's western boundary borders Joseph Poff's property and it's southern boundary borders Mike Grassick's property, with the remaining boundary northern and eastern boundaries completed by the Pahiatua Track. The proposed Turitea windfarm, should it proceed, would be located in a south-westerly direction from our property on Joseph Poff's land, with our house located 1 kilometer from the northern edge of the Turitea windfarm. (Refer to Powerpoint).

In addition, our property is located 1.5 kilometers distant from the current Te Rere Hau windfarm, located to the north of us. Our property is also located approximately 2 kilometers from the recently gazetted Te Rere Hau extension which, should it proceed, would be situated in a north-easterly direction from us. The extension is also currently calling for submissions which were due by 27 July 2009. *We are therefore in a unique and vulnerable position sandwiched between two wind farm developments so are affected more than most.* Our property is also situated approximately 280 m above Palmerston North amongst hill slopes and valleys which from experience appear have specific audible characteristics making them capable of channelling sound towards the house from directions behind the house.

Should all these separate proposals succeed, we may soon be in the unusual and unenviable position of being sandwiched in a 2 km gap between two major windfarms, together with their likely cumulative impacts. We are, as extremely distressed by all these plans and activities, especially given the close proximity of the Turitea proposal to our house. *To us the cumulative effect of these developments is more that we should have to put up with.* We have had a great many difficult moments contemplating how we might resolve our particular circumstances for the better. *We feel we are reasonable people being put into an increasingly unreasonable situation.*

Personal circumstances

We have both lived and worked nearly all of our working lives in and around Palmerston North, roughly thirty five years, have raised our children here and regard this area as our home. We consider ourselves integral to the local community and have many ties here built up over many years. It took us many, many, years and considerable sacrifices to reach the point where we could afford to move out of town and into the countryside around Palmerston North.

While we support initiatives which could enable New Zealand to become sustainable in renewable energy, our recent experiences around the cumulative impacts of the proposed development of multiple wind farms has created a situation where loss of enjoyment of life has already for us become a grim reality.

We purchased our property at 662 Pahiatua Track in May 2000 and have lived here since then. We chose this spot because of its beauty and tranquility. It is a unique environment and for us the move to this location was particularly to enjoy the rural environment and to experience and participate in activities that we value most highly, for example, gardening, entertaining friends,

relaxing outdoors, enjoying views across city and plains and rearing animals. Already wind farm noise levels are interfering with this. The environment and surroundings of our property are entirely of a rural nature and we do not consider use of this countryside for windfarms is normal under the terms of the RMA of a rural area.

Workload imposed

There has been considerable work involved in keeping abreast of submissions, involvement in meetings with wind farm staff, contact with City Council, and lawyers. The workload associated with 3 different proposals at the same time has for us been almost overwhelming. We are exhausted with need to monitor developments and maintain continuous participation on several different fronts, very disturbed at the level of direct impacts we are currently experienced, very concerned by the possible future impacts, and distressed that we end up opposed to wind farm companies who come into this area from elsewhere to build, with government ownership and backing; our local city Council who are involved in the proposed development against our interests, and our own neighbours motivated in part by receipt of direct financial benefit from wind farm presence. These very stressful circumstances have had a profound effect on our everyday lives, on attitudes to living in the Manawatu, and to those who would profit directly from our changed circumstances. The goal should be sustainable countryside management for NZ's future so that people can live and work in their surroundings, but for us this is absolutely NOT sustainable. For months on end we have been essentially unable to go away for any length of time, to take a break, should we miss a significant step of any one of these proposals or relax vigilance over any part of those processes. The changes which have occurred since we arrived at our property plus those that are proposed have made us feel the most insecure that we have ever felt in our lives, has affected our health and personal relationships and has created an environment of profound uncertainty regarding our future. We do not particularly wish to stand in the way of reasonable development; however what we are experiencing is beyond anything that we could have ever imagined.

Major issues of concern – excessive noise

As outlined in our submission, our main objection is about noise. This concern has been amplified by our experience with noise associated with the continued development of the Te Rere Hau Wind Farm since our written submission. I wish to relate this experience to you in order to help you understand the reasons for the depth of our concern over the noise issue.

Our most pressing concern with the Mighty River Power proposal, we believe, will be difficulty with unacceptable noise levels from operational turbines at the Turitea windfarm. Drawing on our first-hand experience with Te Rere Hau, since mid-April this year, around 56 turbines have progressively been erected from a total of 95, the nearest being at a distance of around 1.3 kilometers from us. We have experienced rising noise levels which have grown to become completely unacceptable, particularly when there is a strong wind speed difference between the turbine location and our property. *Te Rere Hau is consented to the same noise standard as those proposed for the Turitea wind farm. If Te Rere Hau is compliant with the 40 dB limits of NZS 6808 as claimed, then the noise limit is inadequate. Is the main objective of the standard to allow development, or to protect near neighbours? If the former then it may well be working adequately; if the latter then it patently is not. Given the level of noise we currently experience, and the level of complaint from recent windfarm developments elsewhere, we believe that the noise standard for windfarms, based on urban industrial experience and not actual windfarm noise, is inadequate. There are now enough operating windfarms for real, not modeled noise evaluations to be made*

and the standard revised. Until then we submit that no windmill should be built within 2, and preferably 3 km of any occupied dwelling. We do not want to be subject to another "unfortunate experiment", this time by the wind farm industry in determining how close to dwellings a windfarm can be built. Given the level of almost continuous noise, some times audible within our house, we have lost faith in NZS6808 being an adequate control. We believe that our recommendation that Turitea turbines 68, 94, 95 and 96 be removed is essential to mitigate the risk of such noise intrusion, rather than have to fight later to ensure compliance.

In spite of raising our concerns with both the NZ Wind farms Company and with the PN City Council over current noise, we have been offered no respite or alternative solution. As far as we can see, as the most affected residents, it appears that trial and error noise monitoring is being undertaken only as a result of resident's complaints to PNCC and the wording of the TE Rere Hau consent conditions is being used to avoid routine monitoring. We therefore endorse Dr Trevathan's statement (section 5.3) that it is unacceptable to use subsequent noise monitoring to provide feedback to a trial and error process as a substitute for a reasonable degree of certainty that the wind farm operation will comply with the acoustical criteria from commissioning. There are many more turbines yet to be erected at TRH which seem very likely to make the existing noise problem far worse. We are profoundly concerned that the addition of any Turitea turbines operating at 40 dB to the current mix, in our view already frequently at or in excess of the 40 dB noise level, will make our already difficult position completely untenable from the perspective of day to day living. The Turitea turbines are planned to be so much closer to our house, at a distance of only 1 kilometer (compared with 1.3 km for TRH), and therefore potentially even more difficult from a noise perspective. The selection of the Turitea turbines has not been decided and so the impacts are still an unknown. It will, however, mean that we potentially could experience noise effects from most wind directions.

Our reading of the report by Dr Jeremy Trevathan only serves to reinforce our skepticism about the modeled noise impacts. The information about shortcomings in the noise assessments has only very recently become available and was certainly too recent to be able to be considered for our written submissions, for example, the final agreed location of the 35 dB noise contour. We note that Dr Trevathan has recommended that a 35 dB secondary limit be set for night time operation (Section 3.31 of his report), as we have requested in our submission. This particularly affects us as the sleeping areas of our house are nearest to the boundaries of the wind farms. Our experience with Te Rere Hau is that under certain conditions we have heard the mechanical noise of the turbines inside with the windows closed. We therefore absolutely endorse Dr Travathan's statement (4.52 of his report) that there are a number of matters relating to cumulative effects which require further discussion and resolution. We totally support Dr Travathan's statement (5.22 of his report) that it may be necessary to assume the most stringent noise limit under all conditions at locations already affected by wind farm noise.

We meet the suggestion that Turitea turbines would be de-rated in certain conditions to reduce noise and generation potential with great scepticism. The technology supporting this is unproven and the notion appears commercially unsound. We estimate that de-rating of the turbines affecting us would need to occur around 33% of the time, according to MRP's own wind direction monitoring. We would need much more meaningful information on de-rating of turbines and noise mitigation measures before becoming convinced of its effectiveness as a solution. No evidence has been presented by the applicant to date of how derating is to be done and what the noise profile of a derated turbine is likely to be. We note that this view is also expressed by Dr Travathan in his report (section 6.3).

If they have to be derated then the turbines MRP have planned within 1 km distance from our house cannot comply with noise limits at for significant periods of time by their own modeling estimates. We challenge this deliberate action to put turbines so close to our dwelling and assert it to be unworkable.

We freely accept that the Turitea turbines and wind farm layout are very different from the proposed TRH project. However the real issue here is that both wind farms are within the precincts of the same consenting authority (PNCC) which has already demonstrated that cannot effectively monitoring noise in a timely fashion, very little or very slow control over the current operator TRH, and TRH appears unwilling or unable to effectively fulfill its obligations in achieving compliance under provisions of the RMA and we could be faced with two companies both saying "not me".

Other concerns and impacts

Another concern is that despite having queries and expressing concern regarding the visual impact of such huge turbines, suitable photomontages have not been made available to enable us to properly assess the likely visual impact from our property. The closest photo montage was taken from Harrison Hill Road, which is 2 km away, looking back towards the hills but the view is partially obscured by an intervening ridge and therefore adds little value in assessing our situation. The closest turbines to us will certainly be very different in scale from our perspective than the photomontages supplied suggest.

We have assumed that we are one of the properties most affected by the proposed Turitea development but nowhere is this formally acknowledged. If the most affected dwellings have been identified, as is suggested in Dr Trevathan,s report (section 4.36), then a significant gap in the RMA process is that the owners of those affected dwellings should be formally notified that it is the case.

Finally, we are also concerned that there will be a negative impact on the value of our property. Although we have heard arguments that a survey carried out in Ashhurst showed no effect of the Te Apiti wind farm on property values, Ashhurst is not located in a 2 km gap between windfarms. Our situation is unique and very different and the Ashhurst survey therefore of little relevance. We are exposed to the effects of some surrounding properties being purchased by wind farms and marketed at lower values. We do not believe that it is reasonable that any of the value of our property should be transferred to the balance sheets of wind farm companies, in the name of public good.