



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: BULLAWAH WIND FARM (SSD-50505215)

EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL MEETING

COMMISSION PANEL:	NEAL MENZIES (Chair) SUELLEN FITZGERALD MICHAEL WRIGHT
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	JANE ANDERSON GEOFF KWOK
EDWARD RIVER COUNCIL:	MARK DALZELL HARVEY MCKINNON MADDISON GUNTER ELLIE DANCKERT
LOCATION:	ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
DATE & TIME:	10:00AM – 10:45AM FRIDAY, 28 th AUGUST 2026

THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **MR NEAL MENZIES:** I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the land of the Jagera and Turbal people here in the Brisbane River Valley. I acknowledge the traditional owners of all of the lands from which we're meeting virtually today and I pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

10 Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Bullawah Wind Farm state significant development application which is currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant, BayWa r.e. – and I will have mispronounced that, but the Applicant did correct me, so it's somewhere in that range – BayWa Projects Australia Pty Ltd, proposes to develop a wind farm with an electricity generation capacity of up to 804 megawatts in the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

15 The project site is approximately 28 kilometres southeast of Hay and extends across three local government areas – Hay Shire, Edward River, and Murrumbidgee. The project involves construction of up to 141 turbines with a maximum tip height of 300 metres, a 359-megawatt/718-megawatt-hour battery energy storage system, transmission connection, and ancillary infrastructure.

20 My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the Chair of the Commission Panel. I'm joined by my fellow commissioners, Suellen Fitzgerald and Michael Wright. We're also joined by Jane Anderson and Geoff Kwok of the Independent Planning Commission.

25 In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure a full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission website. The meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination.

30 It's important for the Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and are not in a position to answer, you may take the question on notice, and following the meeting, the Commission will advise you in writing of any questions taken on notice that the Panel considers require a formal response. Any subsequent response or information
35 provided to the Commission will then be published on our website.

40 I request all participants here today to introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure that they don't speak over the top of each other, to ensure we have accuracy of the transcript.

Okay. So, now we can move to a more informal mode. Mark, I'm assuming you're leading?

45 **MR DALZELL:** Looks like I'm leading. No, thank you, Chair and Commissioners, and thanks for the opportunity today for Council to discuss the project with you. Just at the start, I'd like to put in my apologies for our Mayor, Councillor Ashley Hall, and our Chief Executive Officer Jack Bond. Unfortunately, they are elsewhere up in Sydney today, so a bit of a clash, but very interested in the process.

5 In terms of REZ developments, Council has by formal resolution adopted a position statement regarding how this council in representing the community deal with and support the REZ developments. So, just noting in that that Council has taken a position of being supportive of the Renewable Energy Zone developments, noting that the benefits it can provide for the community as well as wider state-based objectives.

10 In saying that, they are state significant developments and have impacts on the community, especially in areas that don't tend to have these scale of developments. So, for Council and for the community it's been an interesting learning curve and process, being involved with these developments.

15 I'd also like to note from the developers, the Proponents for this project, they've been very engaging with Council, with quite a number of meetings, regular meetings, keeping us involved with the project, giving us opportunities to provide feedback. And I think that's coming through in the documentation. And from Council's point of view, it's very much appreciated.

20 Again, saying that though, there are concerns around just the size and scale of the project impact, but Council has noted in its submission regarding the EIS and will be of further discussions during today.

25 The major one for Council is in terms of the road infrastructure. These are a local road network that serve the purpose of serving the agricultural land with low volumes of traffic, usually a bit higher during harvest times, but definitely not supporting these sized developments such as the REZ project wind farms will be. It continues to be a concern for Council, noting that proposed conditions around traffic management plans and there is some detail in there. So, that's a step that goes beyond any approval, if the project was to be approved, then also is like an ongoing thing for Council to be
30 involved with and work through with the developers.

35 Other impacts on Council infrastructure around waste, water and sewer, and naturally they continue to be something that Council works with the proponents about. And noting that a lot of is worked out following the approval/any consent approval that's provided.

40 Also included in Council's submission was cumulative effect. At Edward River Council, we actually have all four developments in the South West REZ zone coming into our area. So, that is a cumulative effect within a small geographic zone with roads and services that are coming from a small number of places in that. So, it continues to be something, we're working with EnergyCo as well as each of the proponents about to ensure that the cumulative effects are being looked at and being managed with that.

45 So, yes, look, in summary, in Council's position, supportive of it, concerns that are raised, we understand in the draft conditions they'll be addressed as part of further studies, further management documents, that's, yes, we're a little bit concerned around that, as then that puts more work onto Council to work them out, and we're very mindful that, you know, we want to bring it back onto the proponents' responsibility to do that work and not have it sort of just palmed down to Council, which some of the

wording of draft conditions can seem like that, that the position taken has been that that will be worked out with Council, you know, an issue would be worked out with Council at a later date, rather than chasing that through as part of where the project sits at the moment.

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So, thank you, Chair, and happy for myself and Council's team to take any questions.

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MR MENZIES: Excellent. Thank you very much, Mark. Let me start with one of the very obvious ones, and we're already talked to Murrumbidgee and Hay, so their issues are going to be very like yours, I expect. One of the things that came up for both councils is an issue that we're aware of and concerned about is accommodation.

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So, in this particular instance, the Applicant is going to build accommodation on site. But clearly there's going to be other contractors who won't necessarily be accommodated. There'll be people in the early phases of development before the accommodation is built etc. Is this a particular concern for Council, and is there anything that we should be thinking about as a way of controlling that impact for you?

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MR DALZELL: Yes, thank you, Chair, I'll pass onto Ellie Dankert, our staff member, REZ Coordinator, who's done a lot of work in that space.

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MS ELLIE DANCKERT: Thank you. Good morning, my name's Ellie Dankert, I'm the Renewable Energy Coordinator for Edward River Council. In reply to that question, for Council, given the geographic location of this particular project, Council doesn't feel that there will be a lot of impact on accommodation in Deniliquin, particularly.

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Just in initial discussions with the project and with other neighbouring projects, we understand that around there OH&S requirements, that the timeframe and the distance for staff or workers to be travelling is too great for them to look at using Deniliquin particularly as a point of accommodation for workers.

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MR MENZIES: Thank you, Ellie, that's a sensible, pragmatic answer. The other one, well, and the other thing that comes up routinely in these discussions, and what you just said is probably an answer to it as well. We'll be interested in impacts on local roads. Part of that is the impact of the actual construction materials, you know, the over-size/over-mass, semi-trailer loads of gravel etc.

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But then another quite disruptive part is the workers themselves in their vehicles and the sort of rat-running along backroads etc. So, once again, distance from the site means that you won't get that second issue – the rat-running by workers, you know ... You look a bit puzzled. Have I asked my question [cross-talk 00:13:27]?

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MR DALZELL: No, no.

MS DANCKERT: Over to you, Mark, I'll let you answer this one. I have my opinion.

MR DALZELL: No, thank you, Chair, yes, no, I'll take that one in terms of the roads, and very much noting it. So, Edward River Council are very much working with

Murrumbidgee and Hay Shire Council as well as Murray River Council in terms of how management of roads and how we work with the proponents. We know that as part of their works, construction and ongoing that they will need to travel through several LGAs. So, we're trying to get a consistent approach across those, and that is a body of work that's going well.

The issue of construction traffic and sort of staff movements is a very good issue. We appreciate there's over-size/over-mass (OSOM) movements, and that's one issue. But it's this secondary issue. Council's experience with previous state significant developments has shown that that can have a great impact on our roads. As noted, these are agricultural roads, not really designed to support the amount of movements that are happening.

Our understanding is that a Traffic Management Plan, which at the moment is a requirement under the draft conditions, would highlight all roads that are going to be used by any traffic relating to a project, be it OSOM, be it construction, be it staff movement traffic. So, and in being included in the TMP is then included of how the developers are going to manage it and work with Council around it.

MR MENZIES: And Mark, I'm assuming that the –

MR DALZELL: So, it's an extremely important part for us, because in previous – ooh, sorry, can you hear me?

MR MENZIES: Yes, you're coming and going on us a little bit, Mark, that's all.

MR DALZELL: Yes. I'm getting a low bandwidth issue. I might just turn my video off, if that's okay for you, Mr Chair, it might free up some bandwidth. Yes. So, with this secondary transport, we're expecting the TMP to clearly show the routes that will be used, how they'll be managed, and therefore we can manage what the likely impact is on. Therefore, if development traffic is outside the routes nominated in the TMP, we would consider that a breach of the conditions of consent and would want it followed up to its fullest.

MR MENZIES: Yes. And the other aspect, Mark, the dilapidation and maintenance, do you have good mechanisms for assessing the condition of your roads and being able to expect the Applicant to intervene? Murrumbidgee told us they had some new technology they bought that gives them quite easy capacity to assess the condition of their roads on a regular basis.

MR DALZELL: Yes. Yes, through video capture of roads?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MR DALZELL: And that's something that they're very good at; we're actually working with them to increase our knowledge and experience using those systems as well, so very appreciative of it. In terms of the dilapidation survey process, it's clear what it does up to the limitation that it is a visual. What Council has found in previous projects is that it does not allow, and the developers have done no work in terms of the

pavement strength. And we've had a lot of damage to roads due to the pavement strength and developers not considering that as part of it. So, yes, we find the reliance on just a simple dilapidation survey to be problematic, and we'd be looking at through the TMP.

Because again it seems that the draft consent conditions are putting a lot of emphasis on a TMP that's worked out between the Proponent and the road authorities, the councils. That we'd be looking at mechanisms in the TMP that actually bring in the pavement and also structures. Out in this area, we have a lot of cattle grids and that on roads, and we've been working with proponents around Council's position on them and how they're to be managed throughout the project. So, and so we note them, and there are systems and that in the conditions, but there's a lot of work that has to go into them to make them relevant and to provide a sort of safety and confidence for our community. That's something we've learnt from previous state significant developments, where the whole system – because it's very much the same system – where that system fell down. So, it's very much in Council's concerns and are front of mind for us around how that gets managed.

MR MENZIES: Yes. Thanks, Mark. Michael?

MR MICHAEL WRIGHT: Just following up on that, thank you Neal. Mark, there's a condition requiring the preparation of that TMP and you talked about the fact that a requirement to undertake dilapidation surveys alone may not be sufficient. Is there – are you, I don't know if you've had a chance to look at the conditions as drafted, are you happy with how the TMP conditions are drafted, or do you think it needs to be more specific or detailed in terms of what will be in the TMP?

MR DALZELL: I think at a high level, and thank you, Mr Wright, at a high level it can work, it's just the effort that needs to go into it to fill out those conditions. So, in terms of looking through the conditions, the way the draft conditions for the TMP is written, I'd sort of go through and have a look at the headings, the line items mostly, that's a good heading, that's a good heading that needs to be addressed, that's a good heading that needs to be addressed.

I just know that there'll need to be a lot of work in that, and really want to ensure as a process that Council has the full ability to engage and endorse the document. I'd be concerned if it's a – the developer puts together like a bit of a brief around it or that, pretty well gets it to draft, sends it to Council and says, "Give us your comments." Then we provide comments, and that's the TMP.

MR WRIGHT: Yes.

MR DALZELL: I think that is not how the – it's set up, it seems for me and when we've had discussions in the teams, it is set up to be a discussion between the developer and the road authorities to come up with a consensus of how this is going to work. So, that's what we're looking for.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Suellen?

MS FITZGERALD: Thanks, Neal. Mark, I didn't quite hear that clearly, that last point you made about the way that you'd prefer the TMP condition to read in terms of burden on Council. Were you looking to simply review a draft or did you want that earlier and deeper level of engagement? What's your preference?

MR DALZELL: Yes, no, thank you, Ms Fitzgerald. It's the second one. Earlier and deep engagement is absolutely what we are looking for and would like. We feel as Council, through the team, through Ellie and Harvey, that we have been doing that to date and have shown that we are open for discussions and that. So, we would very much be looking for that for the TMP, noting that it is within the draft conditions, such an important document.

MS FITZGERALD: Sure.

MR DALZELL: It has the opportunity for us to manage the major impact of the development on the community. So, yes, it's a big one.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. And thanks for that. And Mark, are there other – I understand that that's your primary concern, that one. You also mentioned some other issues, waste and so on. Are there other conditions in those drafts that you feel are perhaps – would warrant more engagement with Council, or is it primarily the roads one, the TMP?

MR DALZELL: Thanks, Suellen. I'll pass onto Harvey McKinnon just, to our manager in the planning area. I think Harvey might be able to provide a bit more advice on that one.

MS FITZGERALD: Mm-hm.

MR HARVEY MCKINNON: Yes. Thanks, Mark. So, yes, I'm Harvey McKinnon, Manager of Development Services here at Council. So, yes, I think we've probably had enough engagement throughout the process and in terms of looking at the conditions they're pretty sort standard structure, so most of the developments that we're seeing approved.

Probably my thoughts go to, because we have the, we've got the [four/fair? 00:24:00] projects that are happening, so probably one of the concerns that we've had is looking at the cumulative impact of the projects when they're all happening at the same time. And acknowledging that because they're a state significant development, that Council isn't the regulatory authority for managing compliance. And so, we did meet with the Compliance Team for the state significant developments for our area back around three months ago, which did give us a bit more surety in that space.

Probably my concern is looking at when these developments actually are happening. From a complaints handling perspective, maybe being a bit better – I don't know if it's something that can be put into conditions – but being a bit set up to handle those complaints. And that, from our perspective in a rural community, we do work closely

with the community and I'm sure you can understand that we will end up fielding a lot of those complaints. Having good mechanisms in place, I think, to be able to know where to refer to and how those complaints are then dealt with and the expectation as a result of that, is probably my concern more broadly. Yes.

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MS FITZGERALD: Thanks, Harvey. We have heard that from I think it was Murrumbidgee the other day. So, that's clearly something that we could look at in relation to the conditions.

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MR MCKINNON: Yes.

MS FITZGERALD: Neal, that's my top-of-mind questions for Council.

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MR MENZIES: Yes. Harvey, it's interesting that the issue of complaints, it came up so clearly from the other councils, and it's so logical, your people are going to come to Council with concerns. So, mechanisms for where it goes to from you really does need to be clear.

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MR MCKINNON: Yes. And we understand, Neal, that in one of the other REZ zones, some of the, I think, proponents or EnergyCo I think set up a – in one of the key towns, a bit of a drop-in hub where people could come in. But I understand that was – it's not really something that's conditioned or required; it was a bit of a, you know, I guess they were doing that to be responsive.

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So, I guess we're not guaranteed that something like that would happen. And I don't know if there is legal mechanism to ensure something like that does happen. So, I suppose that's where we think, oh, we might be okay, but in the case that we're not, where do we go to next.

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MR MENZIES: Yes. Even the drop-in centres only going to ... Because people are only going to connect somethings directly to the renewable energy. Other stuff, you know, will be a problem that they can see but they won't necessarily think that this is a result of energy and it'll still come to Council. Yes, I think that's – it's something we're going to have to learn a little bit more about and think through, because it's clearly – it's a clear issue for councils that we should be able to help with.

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MR MCKINNON: Yes. And as I'm sure you understand, being rural councils, we're not necessarily well resourced in that space as it is.

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MR MENZIES: Yes.

MR MCKINNON: So, yes, I think that's definitely a concern. Thank you.

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MS FITZGERALD: And Neal, particularly in the situation where there's four/five projects all coming in at the same time. So, there's a cumulative impact in terms of compliance and constraints as well.

MR WRIGHT: Can I just ask a question pursuant to that comment from Suellen about four projects all having their, yes, at least part of their footprint in the Edward River

LGA. A question about how Council's dealing with the resource impact of that within Council, because there's assessment work and other work that needs to be done. And the Commission doesn't get involved in the detail of, you know, VPAs, for example, but the extent to which the Council is somehow being compensated or getting access to additional resources to deal with that workload.

MR DALZELL: Yes, Ellie, you go, I think you're the one [cross-talk 00:28:31].

MS DANCKERT: Thank you, Mark. Yes, Mr Wright, I'll answer to that. So, firstly, yes, we do receive some commissioning funding from EnergyCo, which is actually funding my role within Council. So, I'm totally a hundred per cent dedicated working across the South West – or the projects within Edward River Council in the South West REZ.

But in saying that, the workload that we are finding everyday coming onto Council is ever increasing, and yes, we really are stretched to our limits. And a lot of our staff are having to work across areas and topics and subjects that they are not experts in. And we feel that, yes, we're sort of very much having to go it alone, I suppose, and not getting a lot of expertise and support from EnergyCo in that area.

I will say that the councils of the South West REZ work, we all work collaboratively together to try and tackle topics. But I will say, yes, it is a massive drain on resources and I can foresee going forward, well, even now but even more so as the projects get closer to actual construction, there's massive capacity gaps within our council and I just, yes, I don't know how we're going to tackle that. Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: Thanks, Ellie.

MS FITZGERALD: Neal, if I can just follow on with Ellie on that. We've talked about roads and the burden on Council for working on various management plans and so on. Are there other – and we talked about the accommodation – are there other cumulative impacts in other parts of the community that you see being relevant to Deniliquin; services, medical services, I suppose, those sorts of issues, are they of concern to you?

MS DANCKERT: My understanding from discussions with the Proponents is that in terms of medical, that they will have on site their own first aid medical facilities and we understand that if there is a significant incident where someone requires hospitalisation, that they will be transferred to a facility in one more of the larger regional hospitals, as opposed to coming into Deniliquin. Yes, that is my understanding.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. And I suppose that the closeness to Hay means that some of those more minor issues will head in the direction of Hay rather than Deniliquin.

MS DANCKERT: Correct. But we understand that the minor incidents will be treated on site, they'll have their own nurse, first aid facilities. But the likelihood, I guess, for a major incident where someone's – it's life threatening, evacuated out to Albury or

Wagga or somewhere further afield. Predominantly because our hospitals aren't at a level where they're able to treat particularly.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes, thank you. Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: And Suellen and Ellie, I was involved in another IPC panel dealing with the Deniliquin Energy Storage System and we had, we ran a local meeting, we had representations from one community member, a mother who was concerned about, for that project, influx of workers impacting on already-stretched childcare services.

It would appear as though that's not going to play out as much for this particular project, given the accommodation camp, but maybe in terms of those cumulative impacts, picking up on Suellen's point, you know, the stresses that places on local council services generally, obviously, is something that needs to be considered.

MS DANCKERT: Yes, definitely. I believe, well, given our sort of current situation economically with our rice mill, Sunrice, has just put off 68 employees, I think there will be, unfortunately sadly, a number of families who will be leaving our community as a result of that. So, in terms of the cumulative impacts of the longer term, more maintenance workers involved with these renewable projects coming and moving into our community, I don't feel that there will be such a huge cumulative impact.

But in saying that, also one of the positives that has come out of this, another project, the Yanco Delta Project, Origin Energy has pledged a significant amount of money to the construction of a new childcare centre in our town. So, that's a nice benefit, yes, yes, so swings and roundabouts, I guess, with all of this. Yes. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Yes, there certainly are, Ellie. We do tend spend a lot of time talking about the problems, which is appropriate because that's sort of where conditioning might help. But it's good also to reflect occasionally on the good things that come about because of this.

I'm out of questions. Let me just check with Suellen, you're good? Michael?

MR WRIGHT: I'm good as well, thanks Neal.

MR MENZIES: Jane obviously has a question for us.

MS JANE ANDERSON: Thanks, Neal. And for the purpose of the transcript, Jane Anderson from the office of the IPC. Council mentioned you have some comments on conditions, and I just wanted to remind you that you may put in a submission with the Panel until the 8th of September. So, if you have any written comments on conditions, we would welcome that.

But Neal, there were just a couple of matters on our agenda that was circulated that I just wondered if Council would like to comment on. Two in particular – biodiversity impacts and any comments on the Plains-wanderer habitat. And also, just in terms of hazards and risk, comments on biodiversity – sorry, bushfire and emergency site access.

MR DALZELL: Thanks, Jane. I think I might take the second one and then Harvey can pick up on the first one. So, yes, I understand that through the process, hazards and risk of fire and access has been discussed a lot with the developers and different agencies. So, Council is part of the Local Emergency Management Committee, we chair that committee and part of my role here at Council is the local emergency management.

So, we've spoken to staff from the RFS, who have been the main combat agency in terms of dealing with bushfire response and given that they've provided feedback back to developers, they are engaged and very much talking to our fire brigade, and the teams that actually are in the field, around some of the mitigation things they have on site, that are different to rural facilities and things like that, and have generally got a positive response, it's been acknowledge and are being managed and that the road network access will be built internally.

Because it's being built for the transportation of a large blade and power units. It's also suitable for supporting emergency response. So, the Council, we are very happy that it's been noted in the submission, and has been addressed through the conditions and then through the developer meeting those conditions with that. The Federal Government wants it to be sort of swept under the carpet and say it's all good, it's absolutely an issue there, it's a service that we need to continue to address. So, we're pretty right in that area, in terms of the discussions and what will be in place.

So with that, I'll hand it over to Harvey regarding biodiversity.

MR MCKINNON: Yes, thanks Jane. I don't think we had any particular comment in terms of – what I would say in terms of the Plains-wanderer. So, the Local Land Services have run the Paddocks to Plains-wanderer Program and I do believe that Bullawah, the property itself, is actually part of that program. So, I suppose without stepping any toes there, I note that there is a recommendation in the Assessment Report to look at doing a Plains-wanderer Management Strategy. So, potentially whether there's option there around conditioning that particularly, maybe to work in with that Paddocks to Plains-wanderer Program which I understand has been very successful with a number of stations around our area. Yes, that would definitely be great.

MS FITZGERALD: Was that the Land Care Service that's involved in that one, Harvey?

MR MCKINNON: Yes, so the Local Land Service (LLS), so they are actually run, and it's a state-funded project specifically for the critically endangered Plains-wanderer, and it looks at maintaining habitats. So, I understand there's funding available for a number of large stations to keep that habitat at a level that encourages Plains-wanderers in the area. So, yes, look, certainly something that would be great, because they are a bit of a unique species to our area.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Jane, happy? Good. Geoff?

MR GEOFF KWOK: Thanks, Neal, nothing else from me.

5 **MR MENZIES:** Very good. Well, it just leaves me to say thank you very much for
giving us your time. We will be in your region on Monday to be able to do a site visit
and put in context all of the things that we've learned. We always find that valuable,
it's a really, you know ... You can look at Google Earth but even for the Hay Plain, it
10 doesn't quite tell you enough to put things in context. So, we'll do a site visit on
Monday and then the public hearing on Tuesday. So, we're really looking forward to
being in your area.

So, thank you very much, team, it's a been a really useful discussion. And let me just
re-stress Jane's point that we would welcome a further submission from you, advice on
15 alteration of conditions in particular, and the suggestion from me that it's probably
worth waiting until after the public hearing in case anything comes up there that you
would like to respond to. So, we will see you all next week, or at least we'll be in your
area next week. We can wave as you drive past.

20 **MR DALZELL:** Thanks Council, thanks Chair, thanks, Commissioners for the
opportunity, and the engagement regarding the project.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

25 **MR DALZELL:** Thank you very much.

MS DANCKERT: Thank you.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED