



caring and protecting our natural environment for a sustainable future

Statutory Planning Unit,
c/o Mitchell Shire Council,
113 High Street,
Broadford 3658
mitchell@mitchellshire.vic.gov.au

Richard Telford
BEAM Publicity Officer
PO Box 310,
Broadford, VIC 3658
richard.telford@gmail.com

Planning application reference number P306963/12 - Cherry Tree Wind Farm

30th August 2012

BEAM - Mitchell Environment Group's mission statement is *to protect and care for our natural environment for a sustainable future*. Since 1989 we have voiced and supported environmental issues nationally and globally. For more information about BEAM visit our website: www.beam.org.au

Dear Sir / Madam,

BEAM is supportive of the Cherry Tree Wind Farm proposal. We feel that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the negative impacts, as it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a real need to transition to renewable energy sources, in response to declining resource availability and climate change. The wind farm appears to us to be well sited, is on already cleared land and we see opportunities to get good outcomes for the land and biodiversity of the area.

There are a number of concerns that we have on the impact of the existing flora and fauna. It comes in two parts; the impact of the transport to the construction site (mainly habitat trees and logs along the route) and the impact on wildlife (mainly raptors) upon operation of the Wind Farm.

The *Traffic and Transport Assessment* shows the proposed route. BEAM would like to be part of the discussions of the final route to Homewood Road. Homewood Road itself is fairly straight for the most part and trees along the route should be largely unaffected. There are a number of smaller trees that will be affected, but from our site visit it appeared that no habitat trees would need to be removed. We request that when Infigen engineers assess the road, the 'trees for removal' are clearly marked and that BEAM representatives can inspect the trees in question before they are felled, to ensure that they are not of high habitat value or that felling could be avoided. The offsets for removal of trees should go to protecting and enhancing the Homewood Road reserve.

Along Homewood Road there is a significant amount of fallen timber along the road reserve, which is of high value to ground dwelling creatures. We ask that fallen timber remains undisturbed. The road reserve is currently largely unfenced along one side and is grazed, so there is virtually no understorey. We would like to see the roadside fenced to ensure that the understorey can return.

The most challenging section of Homewood Road for the 60m long trucks to navigate is at the small creek crossing, where there is a right hand turn surrounded by trees. We recommend that the road is re-sited through the nearby clearing and a suitable small bridge be built, this would prevent the need to remove a large number of trees, including some of high ecological value. *See images on next page...*



Looking east along Homewood Road where suggested resiting should occur, just before creek crossing.



Looking west along Homewood Road where suggested resiting should occur, just after creek crossing.

The *Flora, Fauna, Habitat Hectare and Net Gain Assessment* that was presented to council by Infigen did not observe many birds of prey, in fact it was one of the lowest recorded rates at wind farms sites investigated in SE Australia - we suspect that the time of year was the reason for a low number of sightings. The report states (p54) that "The wedge-tailed Eagle is of potential concern, as it has been found to collide with wind turbines elsewhere." The report also stated that "no eagle nest was detected within the study area, but suitable nesting habitat occurred in the surrounding region, particularly in the Tallrook ranges, which are less than 5km from the wind farm site."

On a site visit on the 8th of August to the highest point of the range near the 100m high Meteorological Mast we noticed a community of five wedge-tailed Eagles flying nearby. From what we understand the ridge provides habitat to a large number of rabbits, which is a great food source for the birds of prey, probably the reason they were there. The eagles were not sited within the Rotor Swept Area (RSA) where they could potentially collide, but they were not far away either.

We believe that reduction in food sources nearby will reduce the likelihood of collisions, animal carcasses should be removed from anywhere near the towers to reduce the attraction for birds of prey, and a plan needs to be put forward to keep rabbits away from the site. We suggest the serious consideration of rabbit proofing the existing fencing around the turbine site and removal of rabbits from within the confines.



Infigen development manager Laura Dunphy with BEAM committee member Peter Mitchell and lifetime BEAM member Lesley Dalziel. Photo: Richard Telford.



Photograph taken on the 8th of August 2012 near the Meteorological Mast showing five wedge-tailed Eagles.

We do not object to the visual impact of the towers on this site as it has already been highly modified since settlement. While we acknowledge that some vegetation will need to be removed in order to construct the roads and towers, the impact on the existing vegetation appears minimal. Food sources need to be kept away from the area surrounding the turbines to minimise potential bird fatalities, we would like the site monitored for bird and bat deaths, and to be kept informed. If there are significant fatalities then further steps will need to be taken to address this.

While there are some concerns that we feel need to be addressed, the overall benefits of the project outweigh the negative impacts. By addressing these issues the BEAM committee supports the development of the Cherry Tree Wind Farm in its current proposed form.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Telford', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Telford
BEAM Publicity Officer