

**WELLINGTON REGISTRY**

**ENV-WLG-2024-001**

**TE WHANGANUI-A-TARA ROHE**

**In the Environment Court**

**I Mua I Te Koti Taiao O Aotearoa**

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

And in the matter of the direct referral of an application for resource consents by Meridian Energy Limited in respect of the proposed Mt Munro wind farm under section 87G of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).

**Meridian Energy Limited**

Applicant

And

**Tararua District Council, Masterton District Council, Manawatu-Whanganui Regional Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council (Councils).**

Consent Authorities

And

**S274 Parties**

**Statement of Evidence of Janet Florence McIlraith**

**10 July 2024**

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1. I am Janet Florence McIlraith, Farmer. I am the Deputy Chair and Secretary of the Hastwell/Mt Munro Protection Society Inc. I am a recently retired Registered Nurse.
  2. This statement is given in my capacity as a resident of the Hastwell community with detailed knowledge of our environment gained over 19 years, and as a committee member of the Hastwell/Mt Munro Protection Society Inc.
- My values
3. My partner and I bought the 65ha known as Glen Opel Ltd in 2005. The property was part of the Hastwell Village in 23 titles. We also leased some 3ha from the Masterton District Council {MDC}. We had spent a year looking for a place that would be our mountain {Kaiparoro- the cloud eater} and our river {The river fish for our health}. We looked forward to see Matariki rising as we had not been able to do on the west coast in Northland. We intended to farm until we were no longer able and then move from the house at 12 Smith's Line to the rented house at 2310 Opaki-Kaiparoro Rd, and sell some of the subdivided sections as necessary to contribute to the improvement of the farm and our retirement.
  4. We chose the farm for its rural character, which gave us the peace and quiet of a small friendly rural community in a highly fertile valley surrounded by hills with 360 views to the Mt Muno ridge, to Pukaha, to the sun rising in the east, and the hills to the south. We wanted a small town where we could get rural supplies and Eketahuna was 13km away and a larger centre within 40km in either direction. We wanted 'summer safe' and there was an ample water supply from the Kopuaranga River and its associated streams and the average rainfall spread over the year of some 2000mm at that time. We were delighted to have our national and international icon, Pukaha, on our doorstep and visited often.

#### Our community

5. Our community of rural dwellers with similar values, around some 85 people, was growing as the existing subdivision was populated. We support each other; for example, we worked together to clear the river, to set up a local internet service, provide firewood, share books, stories and food, go shopping with those who do not drive, help with farm activities by sharing knowledge and a hand, and check after earthquakes, storms, and floods. We support each other's wellbeing both physically and mentally and have been drawn further together by Meridian's proposal as the stress of trying to get details from Meridian has continued.

6. The details on the area surrounding the proposed wind farm are readily available to any planner, through Land Information New Zealand [LINZ] Quick Maps, an example of which is attached as Appendix A. The expanded version details the names of each of the many title holders so it is hard to see how Meridian could conclude, using basic planning documents and census data, that the area is either isolated or sparsely populated. A road trip and/or Google maps would also have confirmed the picture of the windfarm extending in to the centre of the existing community.
7. Meridian's repeated description of Eketahuna's incorrect distance from the windfarm would have reduced potential opposition from residents, as would the repeated assertion that "the project offers tremendous benefits to the local community...". These statements were still being made in April 2024.
8. I have struggled to deal with the lack of good faith shown by Meridian, in my view it is a breach of their social licence, particularly as a largely owned by government corporate, as well as a betrayal of their own statements about social responsibility. My health has suffered while I work with my community to support one other.
9. My neighbour who was on the committee for the previous Society opposing the location of the wind farm gave me a letter they wrote to Meridian after the previous application was withdrawn outlining the difficulties they had encountered at that time with suggestions as to how such stress could be avoided in the future. I raised this issue with Meridian but was told they had no record of it. I have attached a copy of the letter as evidence that, among other things, it is not the process that is causing so much stress but Meridian's conduct.
10. I am not able to sell the farm or any of its subdivided sections until the consent is declined or the wind farm completed as I am unable to get a clear valuation. This leaves my future in hiatus. I would not move as planned to the other farm house as it is fully exposed to the proposed wind farm.

## Our River

11. The Kopuaranga River had been a brown trout hatchery and fishery in the past; and a source of food as its name implies; although in 2005 sadly overgrown with poorly managed willows with deep sediment deposits. There were old shells indicating there had been fresh water mussels, a good indicator of a healthy river, in the past.
12. We obtained partial funding from MDC and Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) and cut and cleared the river to make it healthy once more. Our downstream neighbours, the Braddicks, then cleared the part of the river that flows through their farm and within 2 years the weed infestation and the heavily sedimented bottom was improved to the point where brown trout, long fin eels, and kakahi were settling back in, although I have not yet seen the nocturnal kokopu. There is still work to be done to keep the river and its associated amenities healthy, and work continues further down the river. The feeder streams and the Kopuaranga River have been fenced off and riparian planting is ongoing.
13. The rainfall figures at the Raumahanga River, some ..... km south and at a lesser elevation than the proposed windfarm site, are attached as Appendix B. They show annual rainfall of in excess of 2000mm since 1986, and the pattern for the last 5 years shows few gaps of 10 clear days that Meridian calculate would be needed to construct the proposed culverts. This would also impact on the estimated construction period.
14. The higher rainfall would also have a greater effect on the waterways affected by the proposal and calls in to question the robustness of the reports of the effects on the rivers and streams. The adequacy of the water quality survey and proposed monitoring is also questionable.

## Our rural landscape

15. Farming is an outdoor activity. I am outside until the sun goes down unless the weather is really horrible. The windfarm during construction and operation would be visible and audible from most of the farm. The 160m tall and 135m wide turbines even singly would overpower the landscape, in combination they would replace the current landscape. The height of the turbines is generally half the height of the ridge above the ridge. The people at 2310 Opaki-Kaiparoro Rd will have all 20 turbines visible and crowded together; they are about 1.6km from the nearest turbine; there are no possible softening features of trees or contour. The

few trees in the surrounds are already past their lifespan and are progressively coming down for firewood. At 12 Smiths Line, some 1.5km from the nearest turbine some 12 turbines will be towering over the people. A similar situation exists for the other people in Hastwell and the surrounding area.

16. I sold a \* 8 ha section in 2021, for \$323,000 to a couple and their child to have a rural lifestyle with a small dwelling. They wanted to buy another section from my neighbours but have lost interest since the announcement of the windfarm proposal as their views to the north and west will no longer be rural. Six of my neighbours have told me that they would not have bought their properties if they had known about the wind farm proposal. Two other neighbours are opposed to the proposal but were concerned about repercussions on their business relationship with a hosting owner. They did oppose the proposal in 2010.
17. The rural character of our community will be affected by the windfarm. At present there are no buildings taller than single story, scattered at distance from each other, being either housing or having a rural purpose and painted in the customary rural colours to blend with the landscape. The most activity in the area is the traffic to and from the Mauriceville lime works during the week. The usual activity in Hastwell is farming related; stock movement, weed and insect control, largely by vehicle, occasionally by 'plane, or in my case, by hand. In addition, there is occasional work by tractor or digger for fencing, in my case, largely by hand.
18. I was unable to visualise the height of the proposed turbines and the panoramic simulations offered by Meridian appeared to minimise the effect. Research by Corry," A case study on visual impact assessment for wind farm development." 2012, supports the view that these simulations can be deceptive so I sought a representative view of a 160m tall building. I have attached a representation of a 160m tall building as Appendix C. It is apparently the equivalent of a 36-story building. The dynamic nature of the blades is not represented by the simulations, further understating the effects on the landscape, as does the one-dimensional aspect. The simulations provided to me by Meridian did not include the existing 80m monitoring mast so I had nothing to estimate double that height.

19. Meridian offered a comparison with their recently completed wind farm at Te Haroto. I am familiar with this area as my partner grew up around the Marae and I have recently visited Te Haroto. There is no valid comparison. Unlike our area, it is, in fact, isolated and sparsely populated and the turbines are 145m not 160m

#### Lighting

20. The moving shadows of the blades across my farm will affect our amenity values, as will the static day and night lights half way up the turbines and the flashing 20-60 a second lights on the nacelle. In addition, When the wind is from the south the rising sun will shine off the nacelle covers as I have seen in the Manawatu wind farms. The blade rotation will be apparent 24/7 to the people here.
21. As around my farm lights, the lights will inevitably attract insects, many of which will fall to the ground around the site. The insects fly in seasons and some years there are very large numbers in the flights; porina infestations can be very large, battering themselves against the lights and lying dead on the ground in the morning for the birds to feast on. This will create a new environment for both night and day feeders The inevitable predators will be attracted to these creatures in this new environment with foreseeable losses. A strict monitoring; not counting carcasses; as many will be taken away by the predators; needs to be installed for the life of the wind farm as well as a structured program for predators. Cameras focussed down on the site could be more accurate than carcass counts. I regularly see rats, mice, cats, opossums, hedgehogs, hawks, and ferrets crossing or dead on the roads around the area.
22. My views, and those of at least 2 of my neighbours, of Matariki rising will be lost, as will our Dark Sky to the north and the west.

#### Construction

23. Meridian has used Masterton rainfall figures in their engineering reports, which has the effect of under estimating the rainfall affecting the site works by around 1000mm annually. The effect, among other things, would increase the proposed construction period of 32 months.

24. The possible 32month period of construction outlined by Meridian does not take in to account the 3-month winter laydown between May and September, so the actual period of construction, with its attendant adverse effects on the people and the landscape, could be significantly longer, particularly given that the higher rainfall figures would need to be accounted for in the construction period.

#### Traffic

25. There are a number of renewable energy projects being pursued in the area that will affect gravel supplies and traffic where I drive to shop, visit family, and obtain health care. Solar at Mangamaire, wind at Pahiatua, Puketoi, and Castle Hill and repowering of an existing Manawatu wind farm. The cumulative effects on roading use have not been considered. I will need to avoid SH2 and therefore will shop in Masterton rather than Eketahuna or Pahiatua.
26. The Eketahuna economy is fragile at best and there could be detrimental effects on the largely elderly Eketahuna community. My daughter and granddaughter live in Pahiatua and we visit twice a week. This substantially increased traffic and wear and tear on SH2 will affect my daily life.
27. There is one pedestrian crossing at the south end of Eketahuna, approached around a bend, this serves both east and west Eketahuna and the elderly and the school children are vulnerable to drivers who do not reduce speed as they approach the crossing. I have seen several near misses. A speed bump might save lives and injury.
28. The use of Old Coach Rd as access will have lengthy effects on the families living there and particularly on one elderly member who I and others visit, [who walks his cat twice a day down the road and does not drive so is helped for health appointments, social activities and shopping] who will have hundreds of vehicles past his entrance 12 hours a day, six days a week, less than 50m from his original settlers Bush Cottage. The distance to the other homes in the altered road would create a similar intrusion. Apparently, this is tolerable for the planners; for the length of the construction period of who knows, but up to 32 months.
29. Access through Old Coach Rd South, or by rail would minimise the intrusion.
30. The popular posted cycle trail from Masterton around SH2 and back down Opaki-Kaipararoro Rd will be impacted by the increased SH2 traffic. The regular weekend cycle group outings



and races in the warmer weather and the lighter use during the week may as a regular user who stops for a chat tells me "have to chase his tail back through Mauriceville."

## Noise

31. The noise from the current 80m survey mast is intrusive at times. The noise is clearly audible as a ringing whistle when the wind is in some directions both on the farm and waking me at night, setting the dogs off. When there are light winds and it is still in the valley particularly from the prevailing north west the voices of people working on the ridge can be clearly heard. This suggests that the computer monitoring used by Meridian may not be very accurate.
32. Meridian indicates that the whooshing noise from the windfarm that I listened to at the Manawatu wind farms will be audible more often than not and considers that if it is below a 40dcb that will be ok; they said it would be like living by the ocean, but this is not a rural noise, it is not a rural background noise; my usual background noise is birdsong. This combined with the other intrusions will have effects not on my dwelling but on my daily life on the land. This could be avoided by picking up existing consents that do not have a big impact on people who have chosen a rural life or developing a similar site.

## Consultation

33. Meridian staff have been to visit me twice. Once in 2011 about their first windfarm proposal and once in December 2022 for this current proposal. In neither case did they drive identified vehicles nor provide business cards or explain their role.
34. In 2011 I was told by Meridian staff that all my neighbours agreed with the proposal, it would bring business to Eketahuna; providing employment, a tourist attraction, and a large community fund. On this basis, and as my partner was unwell so I did not check with my neighbours, I agreed that I would not oppose the windfarm. I subsequently learned that only one other of my neighbours did not oppose the windfarm.

35. In November 2022 a neighbour told me that Meridian was once more considering a windfarm at Mt Munro. I was alarmed by the reported intrusive nature of the interaction and asked that they did not come on to my farm but correspond by email, have public meetings, and provide identification and areas of responsibility.
36. . My neighbours have told me they have had dismissive advice from Meridian staff. When I approached Meridian about not intruding in my safe place without appointment or identification, I was told to ring the police if I did not feel safe and that Meridian staff are expected to proffer identification as a matter of normal conduct, which they did not do and continue not to do.
37. I attended the February 2023 Meridian meeting. I do not know who I spoke to as the staff present, while concerned to get me and my family to fill out a form, had no identification of themselves or their role. I was told that there would be no local jobs as Meridian uses big contractors, that staff would be transported by bus from Palmerston North or Masterton, that there could be a small community fund for Eketahuna, that the wind farm would be 8km away from Eketahuna, and the site could be a tourist attraction, that there would be large volumes of heavy traffic coming equally from north and south, and staff would not be getting food at Eketahuna businesses as it was too far away from the site. There was no consultation-just telling us what was already planned. Up to 20 wind turbines that might be 160m tall and 135m wide and somewhere on the ridges, but there was no design detail available until after consent had been given.
38. I attended a meeting with Meridian staff at MP Keiran McAnulty's office to discuss issues around Meridian's conduct. Among other things, it was agreed that Meridian would hold a 2 week pop up shop in Eketahuna, and newsletters would be sent to keep local people informed about the wind farm proposal. At pop up there were still no name tags, cards, or identification of role! And one newsletter followed that concentrated on the Te Harato windfarm.
39. I attended another meeting with Meridian staff at Keiran McAnulty MP office. I was told 3 times that people who were opposed to windfarms became reconciled, and that Meridian "could not see what the problem was". They repeated the information on the Wind Energy

Association website [some are for and some against and you'll get over it] and were not interested in the nuanced findings of the research conducted post wind farm installation in the Manawatu set out in Baines, Anstey et al or the views of the Societies members.

40. I have had ongoing difficulty obtaining enough information to make a considered valid submission. My submission had to be lodged while there were still matters outstanding and I did not have information clarified until the S87F reports, but I am restricted to what I could raise in my submissions. My Statement of Evidence had to be lodged before the results of the expert conferencing were available. I, and other members have found that the many uncertainties evident from 2022 and still unresolved are difficult to deal with, and should have been unnecessary if Meridian had been less cavalier in advancing their proposal. I sought advice from the Rural Support Trust and they were very helpful.

41. The information provided by Meridian was, at times, misleading, for example;

Eketahuna centre is less than 8km or 5km, as variously described by Meridian, away from the nearest wind turbine,

that more than 95% of my neighbours agree that the windfarm should go ahead; at least 3 members were told this on their only individual meeting with Meridian staff,

that there will be lots of jobs for local people,

the pub and its restaurant will do a flourishing business.

the rainfall figures used to calculate the construction were around 1000mm less than shown in public records held by the GWRC,

that trees will screen the sight of a 160m turbine on top of a 300m+ ridge. Marshall Petain famously said 'the best time to plant a tree is now' but they take at least the life of the wind turbine to reach their height.

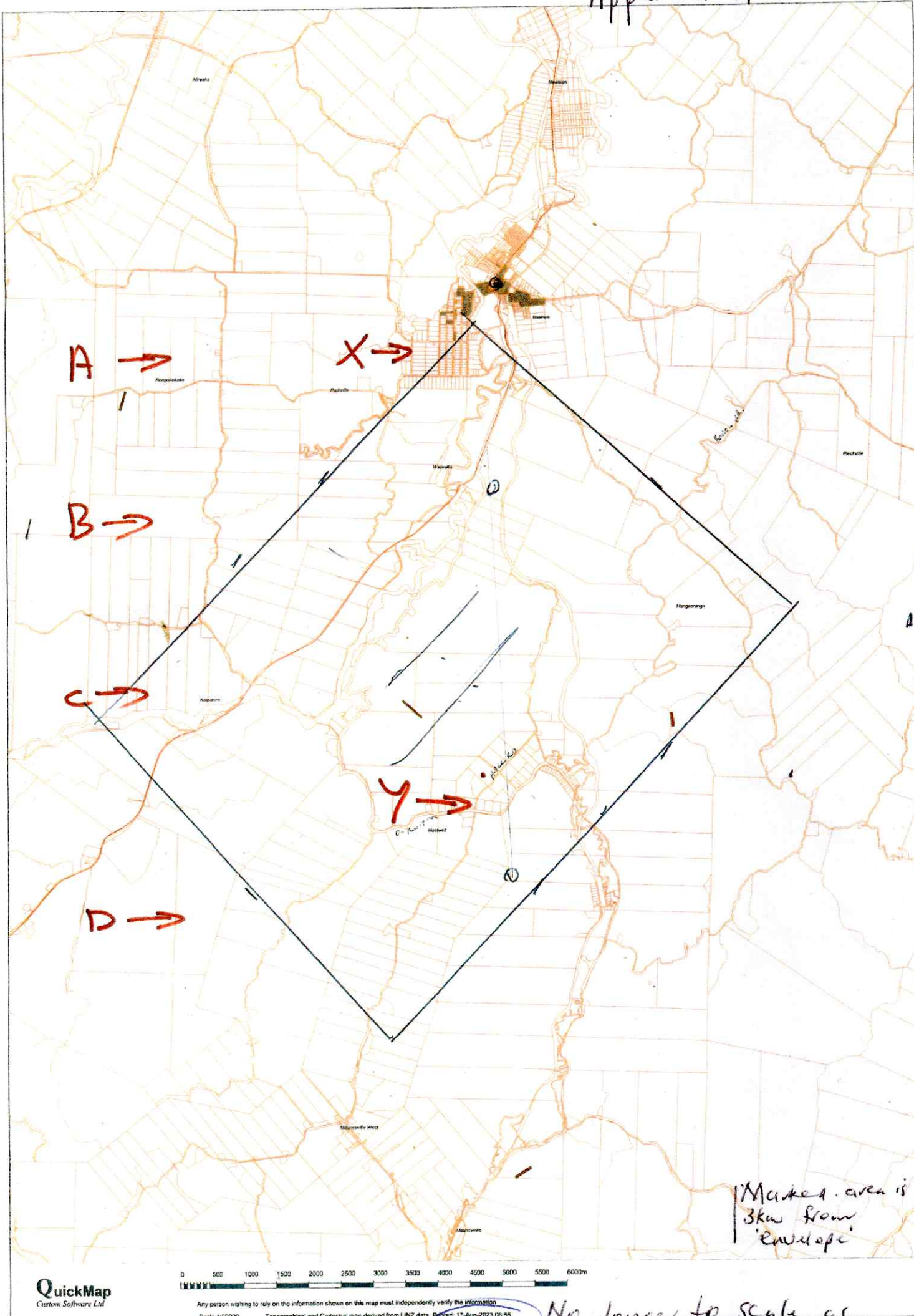
that this is an isolated sparsely populated area with intervening rounded landforms. Not to the Hastwell Village, which Meridian does not acknowledge exists as a community.

## Conclusion

**Right energy Wrong place.**

The effect of the location of the windfarm at Mt Munro to my community, my family and me is not balanced by the benefits to renewable energy and Meridian's profit when there are alternative sites available at Puketoi and Castle Hill, that have already been consented. There is a "world class" wind resource in the Whangaheue ranges which has excellent roading, proximity to the network, and few people in proximity.

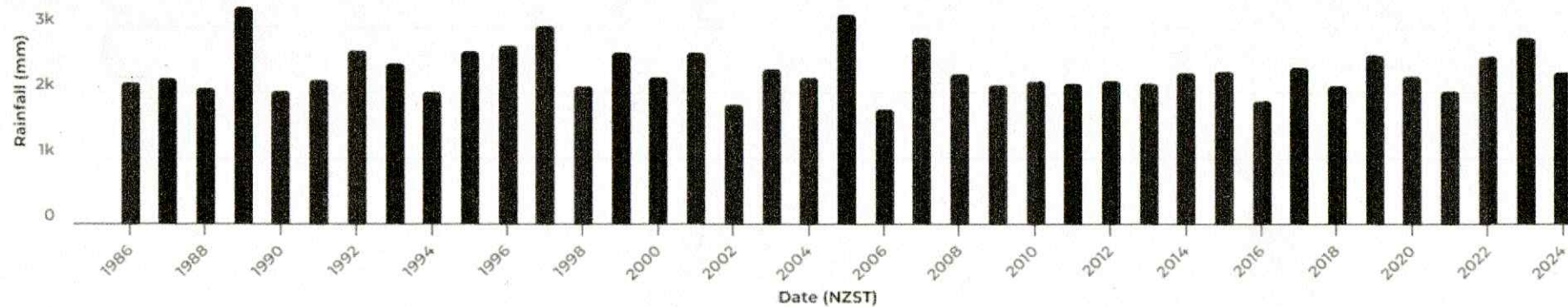
Meridian has purchased consents in the past and is currently working with Genesis on a joint project in, I think, Taranaki. They are completing Harapaki now and are involved with the repowering of at least one other site. Meridian's desire to have a place in the pipeline and use the consent process to obtain investment comes at a high cost for our community.



## Yearly Rainfall Mt Bruce 1986 to 2024

<https://graphs.gw.govt.nz/envmon?view=graph&collection=Rainfall&site=Ruamahanga+River+at+Mt+Bruce&measurement=Rainfall&interval=Yearly>

Ruamahanga River at Mt Bruce



Appendix B

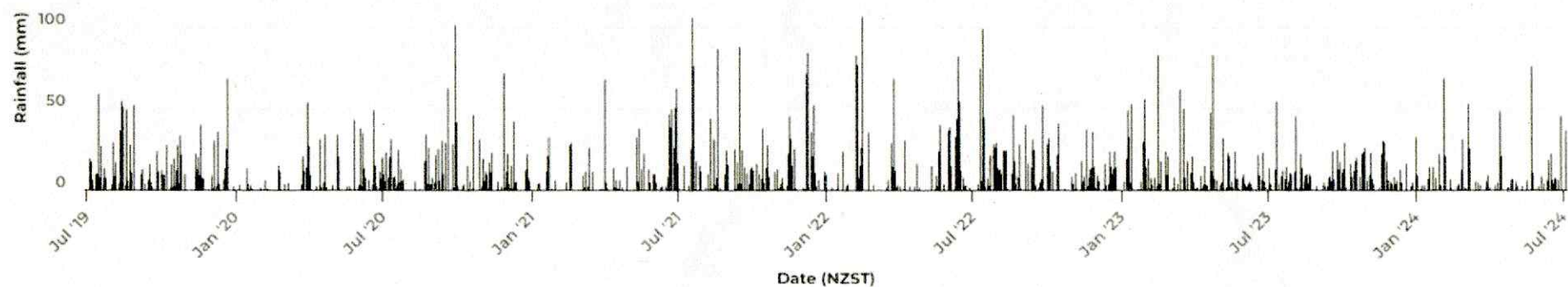


Appendix B

# Daily Rainfall Mt Bruce 2019 to 2024

<https://graphs.gw.govt.nz/envmon?view=graph&collection=Rainfall&site=Ruamahanga+River+at+Mt+Bruce&measurement=Rainfall&interval=Daily>

## Ruamahanga River at Mt Bruce

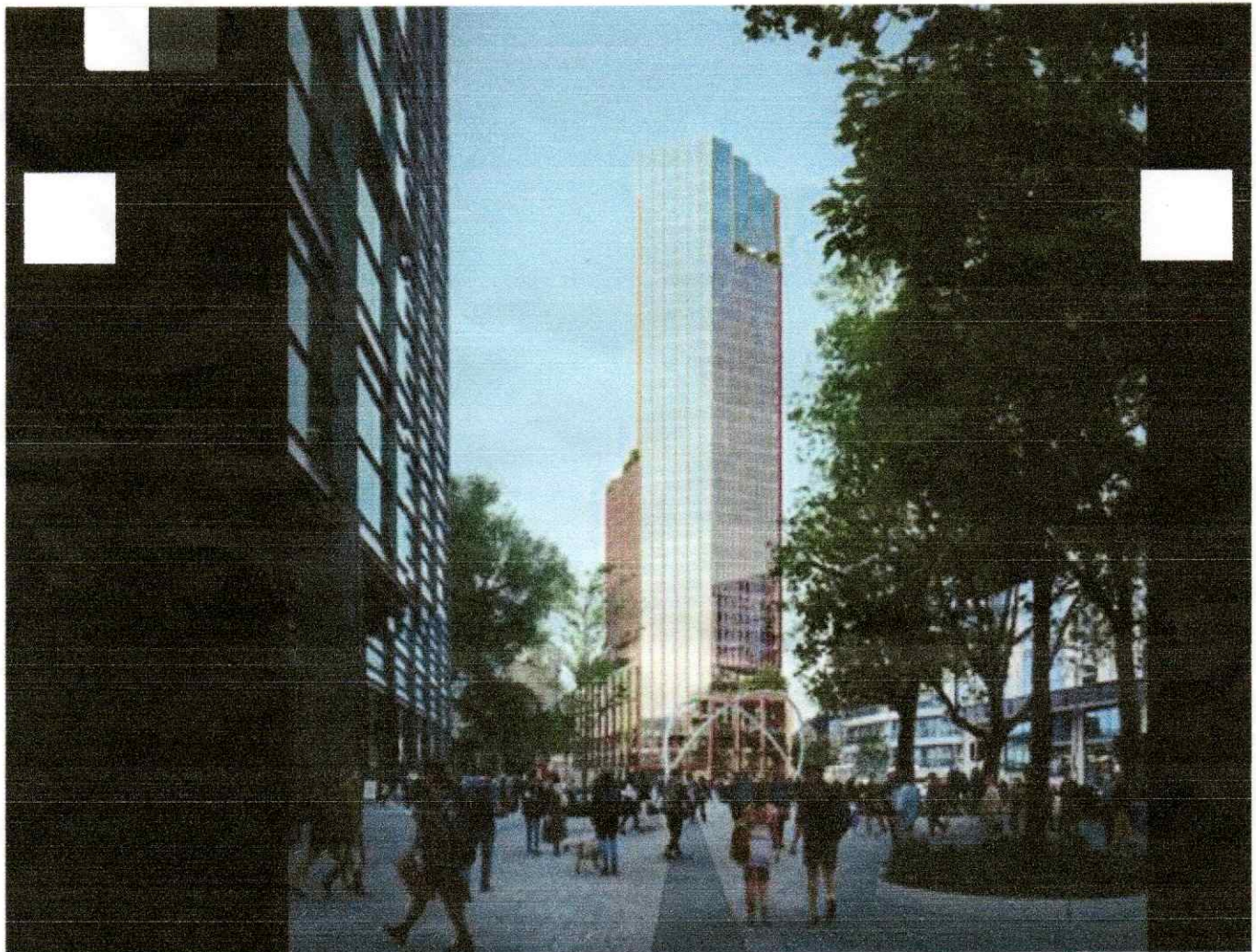


Appendix C

## KPF's plans for 160m Shoreditch tower given public airing

By Tom Lowe | 21 December 2022

Scheme aims to revive Old Street's flagging "Silicon Roundabout" tech cluster



1/4

SHOW CAPTION

KPF's proposals for a 36-storey tower on Islington's Old Street roundabout on the City fringe have been given a public airing.

Due to be submitted for planning early in the new year, the 160m tall office block at 99 City Road is being envisaged as a regeneration scheme aiming to jumpstart the area's flagging tech cluster, known as "Silicon Roundabout".

Designed for Endurance Land, the building would contain nearly 500,000sq ft of office space, 5,500sq ft of community space and 6,000sq ft of public realm. A consultation on the plans is