

27 June 2024

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Tēnā koutou parties

**ENV-WLG-2024-001- Meridian Energy Limited (Meridian) – Mt Munro Wind Farm – Information supplied post-mediation**

This letter contains the information that Meridian agreed it would provide during court-assisted mediation, held in Palmerston North on 18 and 19 June 2024. This letter is limited to the information that the parties to mediation agreed would be provided by 27 June 2024, to assist the s 274 parties in the preparation of evidence.

**Landscape and visual effects**

*Cut location*

1. Mr Hunt sought clarification as to the location of the proposed 25.5m cut on the project site. This is identified in the figure attached as **Appendix A** to this letter.

*Concrete Batching Plant*

2. Meridian agreed to confirm whether or not the Concrete Batching Plant (**CBP**) would be visible to residents to the south east of the project site, and if so, to what extent. The CBP will be located over 800 metres from the nearest dwelling and over this distance is likely to represent a minimal temporary component of views obtained from beyond the Site. Mr Girvan's assessment is that the CBP will result in low visual effects which are assessed as being acceptable from landscape and visual amenity perspectives.<sup>1</sup> This includes effects on views from dwellings to the south east of the site.
3. Given that the final locations of the turbines within the envelopes will be confirmed during detailed design, Meridian is unable to confirm the precise location of the CBP at this stage, with the risk being that a specified location might conflict with a desired turbine site. However, Meridian has proffered a condition requiring the CPB to be located within either the Turbine Envelope Zone or Turbine Exclusion Zone, and it is therefore likely that it will be located along the ridgeline, where it is closest to the turbine platforms.<sup>2</sup>
4. There are multiple potential locations along the ridge where the CPB might be located, several of which are shown in the figure attached as **Appendix B** to this letter. An operational requirement is that the CBP is shielded from the wind, meaning it will need to be located in a sheltered area which is located low along the ridgeline or is recessed behind the top of the ridge. As a result, the CPB will be partially shielded from views from outside the Site.
5. Mr Girvan's assessment has assumed the CBP would avoid the Construction Laydown Area in closer proximity to dwellings along Old Coach Road and would be located internally within the Site along the main ridges, or saddles on the access roads. To assist him to further assess potential effects, Mr Girvan was provided a likely location of the CBP in the vicinity of turbine 7 which is located over 1.2 kilometres from the nearest offsite dwelling<sup>3</sup>. At this location any temporary adverse landscape effects resulting from the concrete batching plant where visible have been assessed as limited and well absorbed within the surrounding working rural context within which it may

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Rhys Girvan at [228]

<sup>2</sup> CB4

<sup>3</sup> s.92 Further Information Request – Landscape, 7 September 2023.

appear. Regardless of where the CBP is located within the Turbine Envelope Zone or Turbine Exclusion Zone, the visual effects on dwellings outside the Site will remain low.

6. Despite the low, temporary visual effects of the CPB, a condition which sets parameters for the identification of suitable locations within the Turbine Envelope Zone or Turbine Exclusion Zone (for instance, that it is recessed), is something which could be further discussed by the landscape experts at conferencing.
7. Meridian agreed to confirm why maximum height parameters for the concrete batching plant structures were not set in Meridian's proffered condition CB1. The dimensions of the structures in the concrete batching plant area were noted as 'indicative' in the AEE<sup>4</sup> and were not specified in the conditions proffered by Meridian in the AEE. As noted in the evidence of Mr Anderson, the details of the plant are not yet known, but are not anticipated to create adverse bulk and location effects on any neighbours.<sup>5</sup>
8. However, based on concrete batching plants used at other Meridian wind farm projects, we anticipate that the height of the plant equipment will be at most 7 m and Meridian is willing to agree that restriction in proffered conditions.

#### *Planting in gullies*

9. Meridian agreed to investigate opportunities for onsite planting in gullies, and whether such planting might soften the visual effects of the wind farm. The advice received from Mr Girvan is that this would have a negligible effect in mitigating the visual and landscape character effects of the wind farm. Meridian is unwilling to propose further constraints on the landowners' farming operations where there would be no practical difference in effects. However, we note that there are several areas of naturally regenerating scrub in gullies on the site which Meridian understands will continue to be left to naturally re-establish.

#### *Buffer planting at substation*

10. Meridian agreed to confirm the proposed conditions as to buffer planting for terminal substation and expected timeframe for effective screening and monitoring. Meridian confirms the condition as proffered, and has had confirmation from Mr Girvan that the height of trees at the date of planting or construction is less important than selecting and maintaining healthy plant specimens suited to this environment which will thrive. This planting is in addition to the existing shelterbelt along the south-east boundary, and is intended to provide additional buffering of the fleeting or transient views of the terminal substation from northbound traffic along SH2.<sup>6</sup> Mr Girvan considers that the time taken for the plants to mature is not a material factor when considering the existing level of containment provided to this site, and that this is a relatively small installation sited in a discrete location.<sup>7</sup>
11. Regarding the monitoring period, Meridian is willing to agree that this is extended from 18 months to two years, so that two seasons of growth can be taken into account.

#### **Aviation Warning Lights**

12. Meridian confirms that the medium intensity aviation warning lights on the top of the nacelle will be 'ground shielded'. However, it is important to note that being shielded below the horizontal plane means that the intensity of the light below the horizontal is progressively reduced, as shown in the figure in Appendix A of the Lighting Report which is also included in **Appendix C** to this letter.<sup>8</sup> It does not mean that the light will not be visible at all from the ground. Further, the low intensity aviation lights at half height would have a 120 degree beam (60 degree below their horizontal and 60 degree above), but are very low intensity, with only a 32 candela beam. Further information on this can be found in the Lighting Assessment Report, and in the evidence of Glen Wright and Rhys Girvan.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 2.4.7 of the Assessment of Effects on the Environment

<sup>5</sup> Evidence of Thomas Anderson, at page 95

<sup>6</sup> Evidence of Rhys Girvan at [191(g)]

<sup>7</sup> Evidence of Rhys Girvan at [204]

<sup>8</sup>

### Concrete Batching Plant and Mobile Aggregate Crusher

13. Meridian agreed to investigate the parameters of the operation of the Concrete Batching Plant (CBP) and mobile aggregate crusher, including the likely location and extent of the operations on the ridgeline the scale of machinery, and the visibility of the plant to the southeast. We refer to the response in the landscape section above, noting that the same general principles apply to the location of the CBP and mobile aggregate crusher.

### Operational Noise

14. Meridian agreed to provide further information as to the level of noise associated with turbine foundation pours at its other sites, and whether foundation pouring has been required outside standard construction hours.
15. We confirm that concrete pouring has on occasion been required throughout the night at previous wind farms (depending on foundation type and operational requirements). However, with only 20 wind turbines being proposed for Mt Munro, the overall number of occurrences of pouring, and so the associated night time operations related to this, will be relatively limited. Further, as noted in the evidence of Mr Halstead, given the location of the CBP within the Site (i.e. that there will be a 'setback' between the CPB and dwellings external to the Site), the noise from this activity will be reasonable and will not give rise to nuisance effects, even when this occurs as necessary at night.<sup>9</sup>

### Meteorological Mast

16. Meridian agreed to consider and advise on the ongoing need/potential for early removal of the existing meteorological mast.
17. The data from the mast is required during construction, to provide real time wind speed data which will be used to determine whether turbine components can safely be lifted at heights. Further, recent and ongoing wind data is required by the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to determine detailed design and procurement requirements. However, as per Meridian's previous offer, we are happy to undertake noise measurements at receptors to inform a noise assessment and will continue to undertake the annual maintenance on the mast, including checking guy wires.

### Freshwater Ecology

18. Meridian agreed to confirm water sampling locations in relation to the project.
19. The selection of water sampling locations is described in Section 3.4 and 3.6.3 of the Ecological Assessment, which was attached as Appendix C of the Assessment of Effects on the Environment. These excerpts from the Ecological Assessment, together with maps of the water sampling locations, are attached as **Appendix D** to this letter. We note that the water sampling locations are also identified in paragraphs 57-67 and the maps attached in Appendix C of the Evidence of Dr Keesing.
20. For completeness, we note that the first s92 response included a memorandum from Dr Keesing explaining the stream classification work (i.e. whether waterways are perennial, intermittent or ephemeral), which was also a subject discussed during mediation.

### Air Quality

21. Meridian agreed to confirm whether there had been any instances of nuisance caused by uncontrolled dust at its previous wind farm projects.
22. The Environmental Compliance Manager for Meridian's Harapaki wind farm (which is Meridian's most recent wind farm and is currently under construction) has confirmed that the potential for dust generation has primarily been from trucks on the internal access roads. This has been controlled by applying either water or 'DustX' (a compound which is added to make suppression more effective in areas where there are sensitive receivers), and no nuisance effects were reported.

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<sup>9</sup> Evidence of Mr Miklin Halstead, [53] and [54].

23. Particular care was taken by the Construction Team at Harapaki where any 'dust-sensitive' areas were identified near exposed areas. For example, a neighbouring property had stock grazing immediately beside a wind farm access road, separated by a standard wire fence. The Construction Team applied dust suppression on the access road near this fence line and was able to effectively control dust at this location.

Ngā Mihi | Kind regards,

**Ellie Taffs**

Senior Legal Counsel - RMA

Meridian Energy Limited



**Enclosed:**

- Appendix A: Figure identifying the location of the 25.5 m cut
- Appendix B: Potential locations for the Concrete Batching Plant
- Appendix C: Aviation warning light intensity distribution diagram
- Appendix D: Excerpts from the Ecological Report on water sampling locations.