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**MINUTES OF THE ASHTON COAL PROJECT  
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2009  
1:00PM - ASHTON COAL PROJECT SITE OFFICE**

**ATTENDEES:**

Sarah Roberts	(SR)	Singleton Council
Godfrey Adamthwaite	(GA)	Singleton Council (Chairman)
Thelma DeJong	(TD)	Community Representative
John McInerney	(JMc)	Community Representative
Steve Ernst	(SE)	Community Representative
Peter Barton	(PB)	Company Rep (General Manager)
Lisa Richards	(LR)	Company Rep (Environment & Community Relations Mgr)
Adam Spargo	(AS)	Observer (Environmental Co-ordinator)
Cassandra Ferguson		Minute Taker

**1. OPENING OF THE MEETING BY THE CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairman opened the meeting at 1.10pm.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Greg Summerhayes from the Department of Primary Industries and Deidre Olofsson Community Representative.

**3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST BY COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES**

Nil declared.

**4. MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes from the meeting held on 10 June 2009 were accepted as a true and accurate record:

**Moved:** Godfrey Adamthwaite

**Seconded:** Thelma DeJong

**5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Nil.

**6. REPORTS AND OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES**

**6.1 OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONS**

PB provided the meeting with an update of site operations. The Open Cut is now mining the Upper Liddell seam at the maximum point of exposure to Camberwell village. To minimise environmental impacts caused by this exposure, Ashton are taking 30 metre benches instead of the standard 10 metre to allow the area to be mined quicker down to a lower level.

Underground Operations – Mining of Longwall panel number four will be completed in two weeks. Once this is complete the longwall panel move will commence. Development is running on schedule and there is a delay of four weeks prior to commencing mining in Longwall Panel 5 at the end of October.

CHPP – The breaker is being pulled out and replaced with a secondary and tertiary sizer. JMc queried if this will result in further noise from the CHPP, PB replied that it shouldn't.

SEOC – The Environmental Assessment has been completed and has been sent to the Department of Planning for adequacy review (the process by which the DoP ensure each of the Director General requirements have been adequately assessed). Feedback should be received from the DoP in 7-8 weeks, the EA will then go on public exhibition. A curved conveyor purchased from Bengalla is currently being stored over the top of the underground on the Ashton property, and in part will potentially be used for the SEOC.

Cumulative Impact Study (CIS) – Some of the general findings of the independent CIS commissioned by the Department of Planning were presented at the Clean Air Seminar held in Singleton in August. Ashton Coal was informed through newspaper articles that the results of the study were to be presented a few days before the seminar. At the time, the DoP had only received a draft copy of the study results and had no knowledge of the results being presented. The final report is yet to be released by the DoP. Figures quoted by the consultant at the seminar are believed to be incorrect and are based on estimates by the consultant. In response, Ashton Coal had their experienced consultant review the air quality data and have supplied his analysis to the DoP.

## **6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL**

### **BOWMANS CREEK DIVERSION PROPOSAL**

LR provided the meeting with an overview of the proposed diversion of Bowmans Creek. JMc asked if this has been proposed and rejected before. LR replied that it had been proposed within the original EIS and rejected in granting in the development consent. The main issue with the proposal was the straight nature of the proposed diversion and the prediction of saline water migration to the Hunter River. The principle concern was the post mining interaction between the Hunter River and groundwater sources. PB explained that the extensive drilling program had shown very little connection between groundwater alluvium and surface water. He also highlighted that studies have shown that the groundwater never returns to the alluvium, therefore the possibility of salt water reaching the Hunter River is nil. SE asked if the issues associated with cracking Bowmans Creek in the past have increased the Departments concern for the diversion and undermining Bowmans. LR indicated that it has probably contributed.

LR discussed the new proposal, outlining the construction of two diversions, as opposed to the original plan that had only one diversion. The diversion of Bowmans Creek will allow for longwall mining to be carried out under sections of Bowmans creek. The natural creek will still be present and functional as an aquatic ecosystem. However the water will flow through the diversions for up to a 1 in 5 rainfall event. JMc asked if the diversion will be placed over old workings. LR replied that the diversion will be located on solid ground and no diversion will be undermined. SR queried how long the construction will take. PB responded it is planned that construction will take approximately three months, however no application has been submitted yet as environmental assessment and engineering design planning is still being carried out here on site. Consultation has been initiated with government agencies including DoP, DPI & DWE. PB wanted to take the opportunity to inform the CCC of the major works planned at Ashton. JMc enquired if the diverting of the creek would allow for all of the coal to be extracted and PB responded that yes it would and it extended the life of the underground mine by 6-8 months. LR also highlighted that the diversion of Bowmans Creek will allow for mining to be conducted more efficiently through longwall extraction rather than miniwall panels. TDJ questioned if mining will be conducted under Lemington Road. LR replied that Ashton has Development Consent to mine under Brunkers Lane which at this time is not Lemington Road, though Ashton is aware of plans by another mining operation to divert Lemington Road to the Brunkers Lane orientation.

JMc asked what date construction would be starting. PB responded that the Environmental Assessment process should take approximately two months and will be released to government agencies in October. If the proposal meets government requirements, it is planned that the EA will be on public exhibition by November 09. PB reiterated that the proposal is in its early stages.

PB also addressed the meeting regarding a rumour circulating that Ashton would be installing a sprinkler system along Glennies Creek Road that would be left on 24 hours a day and be noisy for local residents. PB advised the meeting that Ashton are not planning to install a sprinkler system of this kind. LR discussed that research was being conducted into a sprinkler system to set up near current workings for additional dust suppression, however this was in the very early stages of planning.

## **DUST MONITORING**

LR provided an overview of the dust monitoring sites and results for the three month period. LR advise the meeting that we are currently in the middle of the dustiest part of the year. Dust gauge D6 (Church) and D7 (Site 1) displayed dust results over the annual rolling average criteria. D7 recorded one high result , however both gauges have been reporting elevated readings over the last two months.

D14 (located on JMc's property) gauge results show dust impacts associated with the eastern corner of the village. Dust results vary throughout different locations in the village. .SE reported that he has seen an increase in the amount of dust in house.

PB highlighted that normally during summer wind directions are different to those currently being experienced. LR replied that the dominant wind directions have been different than normal and AS commented that a lot more NW winds have been experienced. TDJ commented that you can see large amounts of dust in the afternoon coming from other mining operations to the North West of Ashton.

LR went through Site 1 and identified each spike in the dust results. Operational changes made in response to the dust levels are provided in the Environmental power point presentation.

LR described to the meeting how the Ashton Coal Contribution was calculated (Site 1 results – Upwind/background Site 4 or Site 7). LR highlighted that results from Site 4 are showing significantly higher results than Site 7 there is a greater contribution from other sources in this direction. This is having an impact on the Ashton Contribution calculation as it uses the lower of either site 4 or 7 to calculate the contribution.

PB advised the meeting that it was very important to take note of the operational changes that have been made in response to dust levels and to note how many water carts are operating. JMc queried if the criteria outlined that at all times 2 water carts were to be operational with 1 on standby. LR to check. AS replied that the small water cart is utilised for the access roads and the larger carts were used in-pit. LR also informed the meeting that if a digger has been shutdown all of the water carts will be in operation.

#### **BLASTING**

A total of 173 blasts were conducted during the 3 month period. 1 blast exceeded 120dBA. PB indicated the cause of the exceedence was due to a blow out of one of the drill holes towards the toe. The shot had been sleeping for some time. The shot was designed with a 30 metre high face and a 5 metre burden to prevent any blow out from the face. Possibly there was a deviation of one of the drill holes which caused a breakout. As a result of the investigation down hole monitoring and radar surveys are now conducted on each hole. The results of the radar survey are overlain with the hole survey and where the 5m burden is not achieved the area is not filled with explosives. PB highlighted that all shots have been within 1mm/s of model predictions.

SE raised a query regarding excessive blast fume. GA also commented on the issue that a Singleton Councilor, Alison Howlett had received a complaint regarding nitrate fumes causing skin and eye irritations.

LR advised the meeting that in relation to the above blast, as it had been sleeping for some time all residents of Camberwell who could have potentially be impacted by the blast fumes had been contacted prior to the blast to inform them of the potential impact but that the shot had to be fired due to safety requirement as it had been sleeping the maximum time allowed. LR advised that complaints had then been received by Ashton regarding fume and dust from the blast. There however was no significant fume within the shot though due to the hole blow out the shot was loud and dusty. SE said that the sound of the blast had affected his family at their property and disturbed the animals. LR advised that the government agencies DoP, DECC, DPI had been notified by Ashton of the exceedence immediately after the event and a full incident report was supplied to them.

JMc brought up that he had not received a blast notification phone call for a blast that was rescheduled from 9.30 to 2.30. Residents had only been notified for the first blasting time and not the rescheduled shot time. PB acknowledged this and said that the blast notification procedure had not been followed as the person who normally makes the calls was out of the office and it had not been confirmed prior to the shot that the second blast calls had been made. PB discussed the electronic shot system and how the blast time had to be rescheduled due to technical difficulties. LR advised that the

error had been picked up on site and the correct implementation of the procedure was being reinforced.

#### **WATER MONITORING**

LR provided an overview of the surface and ground water monitoring results for the three month period.

#### **NOISE MONITORING**

Statutory noise monitoring was undertaken on the 6<sup>th</sup> August and there were no exceedances of the Ashton criteria.

#### **REHABILITATION**

The rehabilitation program is progressing on schedule. JMc commented that he was impressed with the results of the rehabilitation program.

### **7.3 SECTION 94 SIGNAGE**

AS provided the meeting with an update on the Section 94 Contributions. He has been in contact with Kim from the parks department of Singleton Shire Council, who is in contact with the RTA regarding the approval of location for each of the signs. The location of the North bound sign near the Glennies Creek bridge has been informally approved, by RTA however the South bound sign proposed to be located on the corner of McInerney Road has not. Further survey work has been completed and this information has been sent to the RTA. AS is currently awaiting feed back from SSC on the approval for this location from the RTA. After discussions with Kim from SSC, AS discussed that the funding for the signage may not cover the earthworks to be completed prior to the signage installation. He is waiting to hear back from SSC regarding final quotes for the works. SR is to get an update on the signage from the parks department of the council on where this is up to.

### **8. GENERAL BUSINESS**

JMc asked PB how long the CHPP life is. PB replied that it will be at least another 14 years, aligning with the underground life of mine. JMc reported that he has been hearing an increase in loader noise or something similar from the Ashton CHPP intermittently throughout the day and he enquired if Ashton are researching any noise attenuating machinery. PB advised JMc that he had noticed this himself and had been working in conjunction with the CHPP Manager, to work out where the increased noise levels were coming from. JMc advise PB that he can clearly hear loader noises coming from Ashton after 10pm. He commented that noise levels had increased over the last 2 to 3 months JMc thought this may be due to the decrease of the environmental bund no longer providing a sound barrier between the mine operations and the village. LR asked JMc to make notes of the times and dates of the increased noise and LR will conduct a review of the sound files for that day. PB asked TDJ if she had noticed increased noise levels

at her house and TDJ replied that she thought it may have been Glendell as she had spoken to one of the environmental staff there and was advised that machinery operators have a break at 3.30am and then restart their motors at the same time once their break has finished.

**9. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 8 December at 1.00 PM

**10. SITE INSPECTION OF THE OPERATIONS**

**MEETING CLOSED AT 3.00PM**

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
Follow up with the Parks department of the Singleton Council on the status of the Section 94 signage outstanding issues	SR
Confirm the consent requirement for number of water carts operating.	LR
Provide LR with date and times of increased loader noise levels. LR to conduct analysis of sound files.	JMc/LR