

Meeting Minutes

Stratford Coal Community Consultative Committee Meeting

Stratford Mine Site
Thursday 8th August 2024

Attendees:

Ms Margaret MacDonald-Hill	CCC Chairperson	Cr Katheryn Smith	MidCoast Council
Thomas Kirkwood	Stratford Coal Pty Ltd	Ryan Fenning	MidCoast Council
John Cullen	Stratford Coal Pty Ltd	Kevin Lowrey	CCC Member
Jarrad Galvin	Stratford Coal Pty Ltd	Norm Bignell	CCC Member
James Hughes	Stratford Coal Pty Ltd	Anthony Berecny	CCC Member
Graham Chase	Stratford Coal Pty Ltd	Philip Greenwood	CCC Member

1. Site Tour

No site tour proposed for the August meeting.

2. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting at 9:01 am.

Apologies: Richard Clarke

3. Declaration of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Ms MacDonald-Hill declared that she is the Independent Chair, appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

The declarations of the Stratford CCC members remain current.

4. Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 2nd May were confirmed.

Moved by Mr Berecny; seconded by Mr Bignell.

5. Business Arising from Previous Meeting

Action	Status
Annual Action Item: <i>MidCoast Council to provide an annual financial report each November on the spending of the Stratford Coal community enhancement contributions made to Council.</i>	Next to be completed in November 2024

The Chair discussed with the Committee reducing the number of meetings. The Committee discussed potential for updates over the remaining calendar year and agreed that there should be quarterly meetings for the remainder of 2024 with frequency to be reviewed in the February meeting.

6. Correspondence

Chair noted no correspondence was received for the period.

7. Company Reports and Overview of Activities

SCPL presented the Company Reports and Overview of Activities:

1. Progress at the Mine: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Cullen presented the Overview of Activities. Mr Cullen described the early closure of the Avon North pit due to geotechnical challenges, the CHPP finishing washing coal in July and current rehandle work in the BRN and Roseville West areas.

Mr Greenwood asked about any closure implications due to pit wall stability. Mr Cullen explained a slip occurred in a low wall at the bottom of the pit and has not impacted the integrity of the high wall. Mr Chase explained the localised nature of the slip. Mr Lowery asked if it was expected further material movements take place at Avon North, Mr Chase explained that minor works around the crest of the pit will be required as part of final landform.

Mr Cullen reflected on the near 30-year operational history of the site as a coal mine commencing in 1995, Mr Berecry added that activities associated with the mine go back years earlier to the early 1980's.

2. Environmental Management and Reporting: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Kirkwood Presented the Overview of Environmental Reporting.

Mr Kirkwood updated the Committee regarding a visit by the Resources Regulator after mining ceased in the Avon North pit, with an inspection of the Avon north Pit and the localised wall stability.

Mr Greenwood asked if the environmental monitoring locations will remain the same during the rehabilitation phase or if they will be removed. Mr Kirkwood stated that while bulk earthworks continue the monitoring locations will likely stay the same as those within the current management plan. Mr Chase added that approved Management Plans set the monitoring locations and that any changes to the management plans need to be approved by various regulators.

Mr Kirkwood updated the Committee on noise monitoring at the site. Mr Berecry asked about the potential noise impacts as the operational machines have moved to a more elevated position. Mr Kirkwood explained that the operational fleet is currently smaller than what was utilised in the coal extraction phase of the operation and described the proactive noise mitigation measures taken by the OCE's during periods of potential elevated noise levels. Cr Smith asked about changes in the hours of operations. Mr Kirkwood explained that the operating hours have not changed.

Mr Kirkwood updated the Committee on water movement on the site. Mr Greenwood asked if Stratford East will be backfilled and with which material. Mr Kirkwood explained that PAF material, will first go into the pit and buried below the predicted final post-mining water table recovery level, with the remainder of the pit being filled with NAF material.

Mr Greenwood requested further information on main pit water quality to be included in the CCC presentations similar to how it had been provided in CCC presentations in previous years.

Mr Kirkwood agreed to providing a Main Pit water quality slide in the next CCC presentation. Mr Greenwood also raised that he had been made aware that there may be public speculation that potentially toxic mine water would be used for the pumped hydro system and having the main pit water quality data would be useful for productive community discussion.

ACTION: SCPL to provide information on the water quality within the Old Main Pit in the next Stratford CCC presentation.

Mr Fenning asked about the high pH at W3 in September previously. Mr Kirkwood explained that several factors impact the results at this location, with the creek being prone to stagnation and the monitoring point downstream of active farmland, and that results from W3A which is upstream of the dairy provides more accurate results.

Mr Kirkwood provided an overview of the works in the Biodiversity Offset Areas, with focus on infill planting, weed control and fencing. Mr Greenwood asked whether repaired or replaced fencing in and around the biodiversity offset areas could be made more wildlife friendly. Mr Kirkwood indicated that more wildlife friendly fencing would be used where the opportunity presents.

3. Mine Closure Planning: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Chase provided an update on mine closure planning progress, with a focus on finalising studies in 2024. Rehandle of material will continue in BRN, Roseville West and then Stratford East while the studies continue.

Mr Chase described the status of the CHPP. Cr Smith asked if the CHPP was for sale or just an EOI, which Mr Chase confirmed it was on sale.

Mr Chase provided an update on the Council Fill Point, which will be decommissioned with the dewatering of the Return Water Dam for rehabilitation. Mr Kirkwood added that this was discussed with Council during a site visit in June.

Mr Chase advised the Committee that the rail loop will be decommissioned. The Committee discussed the rail loop decommissioning and rehabilitation. Mr Lowrey enquired as to the rehabilitation of the rail culvert and batters. Mr Chase explained that while the final design is yet to be prepared, the excavated portion of the rail loop will likely be either backfilled or partially backfilled and re-battered.

Mr Berecny asked Mr Chase about Yancoal's intentions for land sales. Mr Chase stated that until closure obligations are fulfilled, land relinquishment is unlikely to occur due to obligations associated with the properties and surrounding properties which will still be required as buffers during bulk earthworks.

The Committee discussed the potential land use conflicts with land slated to be rehabilitated for grazing, potentially being used for a solar farm. Further discussion took place on how the public may perceive the proposed energy project as a means for Yancoal to avoid rehabilitation obligations. Mr Chase provided information on the obligations through the Stratford Consent and Mining Lease conditions which require the site to be rehabilitated to the satisfaction of the regulators. Further discussions occurred on the potential for relinquishment of the exploration leases. Mr Kirkwood advised that rehabilitation of any exploration works was required to be approved prior to relinquishment. Mr Kirkwood noted that over 250 exploration holes had recently been signed off by the regulator.

4. Community Complaints: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Kirkwood provided the overview of Community Complaints. Mr Bignell commented that the operations have become more audible in the Fairbairns Road area and noted that the current noise monitoring locations may potentially not be adequate for the road. Mr Kirkwood stated that the current monitoring locations had been deemed suitable to represent the noise received at Fairbairns Road. Mr Lowery echoed Mr Bignell's concern of elevated noise and raised the issue that at times the lighting towers can be intrusive. Mr Kirkwood noted the comments and committed to passing on the details to the Stratford Coal operational team.

Cr Smith asked about further potential noise mitigation practices considering the noise conditions. Mr Kirkwood explained the process the operational team use to minimise potential noise impacts and highlighted the real time noise management system, the real time noise forecast system and operational management techniques used on site. Mr Fenning asked about real time response to complaints. Mr Kirkwood highlighted importance of receiving complaints in real time so the on-shift crew can review the details of the complaints in real time and implement changes as required.

5. Community Programs: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Kirkwood provided the overview of Community Programs and highlighted the changes in the CSP guidelines which includes focusing on programs which assist in the socio-economic transition for the community.

6. Stratford Renewable Energy Hub Update: (refer to CCC presentation available on website for further detail)

Mr Galvin provided an update on the SREH project. Mr Galvin explained that the EIS submission was waiting for the issuing of revised SEAR's, which had been issued the previous day. Mr Galvin stated the approvals team was aiming to submit the EIS within the next few weeks.

Mr Galvin explained that when the EIS is submitted, there will be an awareness campaign to help ensure the community will be informed of their opportunity to provide comment. A planned letterbox drop, social media campaign and community information sessions are also proposed for Gloucester and Stratford. The Chair requested that the Committee to be notified when the EIS is submitted and is put on exhibition.

The Chair read a letter from Mr Clarke who was supportive of the pumped hydro but expressed concerns on the use of agricultural land for a solar farm.

Mr Greenwood raised that during the information sessions the team responsible for the SREH should be at the front and centre of discussions, with Stratford Coal representatives playing a less prominent role, to clearly differentiate the projects. Cr Smith highlighted the good feedback from the Gloucester information session and the performance of those in attendances, with the community view of a transparent use of social media.

8. General Business

Cr Smith stated it will be her final CCC meeting as she will not stand for Council during the next election cycle. The Chair and Committee thanked CR Smith for her contribution to the CCC.

Mr Lowrey asked about a potential site tour as rehabilitation progresses, with the CCC agreeing on a site tour at the next meeting.

9. Proposed Meeting Schedule

2024 proposed meeting dates:

- 14th November 2024

2025 proposed meeting date:

- 6th February 2025 with a review of frequency thereafter

Meeting closed at: 10:24 am.

Summary of Action Items from this meeting

1. **Annual Action Item:** *MidCoast Council to provide an annual financial report each November on the spending of the Stratford Coal community enhancement contributions made to Council.*
2. **New Action Item 1:** *SCPL to provide information on the water quality within the Old Main Pit in the next Stratford CCC presentation.*
3. **New Action Item 2:** *Yancoal to advise Committee when SREH is submitted and placed on exhibition.*