

# The Advocate

FREE - SERVING HEPBURN SHIRE AND BALLAN

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Telephone (03) 5348 4515 - (03) 5348 1028. Fax (03) 5348 4730

hepburn.yourguide.com.au

theadvocate@ruralpress.com

## LEONARDS HILL WIND FARM PROPOSAL

# Council votes yes

By Erin Williams

IN A landmark decision, the Hepburn Shire Council has approved what will be Australia's first community owned wind farm.

At last week's council meeting, mayor David

Smith used his casting vote to approve the wind farm's construction at Leonards Hill.

Councillor Janine Booth also voted in favour, while councillors Heather

Mutimer and Bill McClenaghan voted against the Hepburn Renewable Energy Association application.

Cr Tim Hayes did not attend the public meeting.

To be built on private farmland at 2040 Ballan-Daylesford Rd, the wind farm proposal consists of two turbines with a capacity of two megawatts.

HREA said the wind farm

would produce enough energy for over 2000 homes.

The council received 325 submissions in support of the proposal and 18 objections.

While objectors said they

would appeal the council's decision at VCAT, the HREA and Melbourne based renewable energy developer Future Energy were elated with the decision.

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# Dream of community wind farm well on its way to reality

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Mr Hulst said he couldn't put a time frame on the project's completion.

"It depends on a lot of things, it's not like buying candy, these are big, big machines," he said.

The wind farm, to be situated at Leonards Hill about 10kms south of Daylesford, will have a capacity of four Megawatts and produce enough electricity to power more than 2000 homes, nearly half the number of houses in the Hepburn Shire.

The project will be owned by the members of a co-operative and profits will be shared among them.

Inaugural project chairperson Simon Holmes à Court said the board was well equipped to steer the project's initial stages.

"There is a fantastic array of skills on the board. We've set up all our sub-committees and each sub-

committee is working hard to make sure the project is professional and successful for the community."

The two-turbine facility gained approval from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals tribunal in July.

Mr Holmes à Court encouraged people to make contact with the co-operative's board members.

"Board members can be emailed directly from the HREA website.

"We look forward to receiving feedback and ideas from the whole community."

"There's still a lot of work to be done to get over our last major hurdle which is the capital raising.

"We plan to launch the public capital raising early in the new year.

"We're very focussed on getting the maximum number of community members to benefit from this fantastic community project."