

**MINUTES OF SOUTH WAIRARAPA DISTRICT COUNCIL
MARTINBOROUGH COMMUNITY BOARD
HELD AT THE SUPPER ROOM, WAIHINGA CENTRE, TEXAS STREET, MARTINBOROUGH
ON MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026 AT 7:00 PM**

- PRESENT:** Miss Mel Maynard, Cr Aidan Ellims (joined online), Mr James Brodie (Chair), Mrs Nana Boyle (Deputy Chair), Mr Ross Andrew, Cr Chris Archer
- APOLOGIES:** Nil
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Ms Janice Smith (Chief Executive Officer)
Shanin Brider (Community Governance Advisor)
- PUBLIC FORUM:** Viv O’Rielly – Rotary
Jill Greathead – South Wairarapa Whenua Advisory Group (SWWAG)
- CONDUCT OF BUSINESS:** This meeting was held in the Supper Room, Waihinga Centre, Texas Street, Martinborough and via audio-visual conference. This meeting was live-streamed is available to view on our YouTube channel. The meeting was held in public under the above provisions from 7pm to 8.27pm except where expressly noted.

OPEN SECTION

1 KARAKIA TIMATANGA – OPENING

The board opened the meeting with a karakia. Mr Brodie explained the health and safety procedures for the meeting and advised the meeting was recorded and livestreamed.

2 APOLOGIES

Nil

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No interests were disclosed relating to items on the agenda or interests not already recorded on a relevant register.

4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND TRIBUTES

Miss Maynard acknowledged the passing of Mark Haythornthwaite who was a wine maker from Martinborough. Condolences to his wider whanau at this sad time.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Viv O’Rielly spoke to the board on behalf of Rotary regarding the 50th anniversary of the Martinborough Fair in 2027. Mrs O’Rielly sought support from the board both with ideas and financial assistance for commemoration of next year’s event.

The Martinborough Fair in its 49 years has been of huge benefit to the Martinborough community, in both attracting visitors and increased profits to local retailers on the day. It was recorded that one of the towns coffee providers did an average of 1200 coffees on the day of the event this year. Mrs O’Rielly requested the board consider how they would like to support the event and get in touch for planning to get underway.

Jill Greathead spoke to the board, with support from Richard and Rey who are all members representing South Wairarapa Whenua Advisory Group (SWWAG). The group spoke to the board

regarding the 235 hectare solar development known as the Greytown Solar Farm Project. The group advised the board of the current resource consent process the solar farm is involved in, and gave an overview of the effects and considerations of the project, including the BESS (Battery Energy Storage System).

The group will send a formal approach to Council once the decisions have been reached through the Environment Court process.

6 ACTIONS FROM PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Add Martinborough Fair 50th anniversary as a topic of discussion for the boards next informal meeting. Provide a response to Mrs O’Rielly in time for Rotary’s committee meeting.

No actions required regarding the submission from SWWAG, but the board have noted the presentation and will make themselves aware of the outcome.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

Nil

8 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

8.1 MINUTES OF THE MARTINBOROUGH COMMUNITY BOARD MEETING 2 FEBRUARY 2026

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION MCB2026/04

Moved: Mr R Andrew

Seconded: Miss M Maynard

And resolved:

That the minutes of the Martinborough Community Board held on 2 February 2026 are confirmed as a true and correct record with the following amendment:

Adjusting “Matua Nelson” to “Matua Nelson Rangī” in the acknowledgements and tributes section of the minutes.

CARRIED

9 DECISION REPORTS FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND STAFF

9.1 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Miss Bridger spoke to this report where the purpose was to update the board on income and expenditure activities.

There were no changes to the prior financials, other than an amount of money in the operational expenditure budget which is no longer required for AED maps and morning tea. It was recommended this money be moved and the funds will not be uplifted.

Miss Maynard asked about the training funding and utilising it for attendance at the community board conference.

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION MCB2026/05

Moved: Cr C Archer

Seconded: Mrs N Boyle

That the Martinborough Community Board resolve to:

- 1 Receive the Income and Expenditure update
- 2 Move the surplus \$150 ringfenced funding for AED map printing and morning tea back to the main operational expenditure budget.

CARRIED

10 INFORMATION REPORTS FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND STAFF

10.1 INFORMATION REPORT - PAIN FARM

Ms Smith spoke to her report where the purpose was to inform the board of the history to Pain Farm. The report was taken as read and questions were welcome.

Mr Brodie noted the board has looked through the cottage and homestead and was impressed with the renovations that had taken place. Mr Brodie also mentioned there could be consideration for local use of the buildings rather than using them for rentals but consideration needed to be made for the income this generated.

The board was advised Council is the trustee so decisions would need to be made by Council. The board was also informed of the costs involved to change the use of the land or to make any adjustment to the trust in terms of creating an independent trust to manage the estate.

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION MCB2026/06

Moved: Cr C Archer

Seconded: Mrs N Boyle

That the Martinborough Community Board resolve to:

- 1 Receive the "Information Report – Pain Farm" report.

CARRIED

10.2 UPDATES FROM COUNCIL

Miss Bridger spoke to this report, where the purpose was to update the board on recent updates from Council.

The board was provided an overview on the new customer services charter and policy, changes in delegation to the naming of public roads, and the upcoming adoption of the Annual Plan where consultation is not required.

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION MCB2026/07

Moved: Mr R Andrew

Seconded: Cr C Archer

That the Martinborough Community Board resolve to:

- 1 Receive the "Updates from Council" report.

CARRIED

11 CHAIRPERSON REPORTS

11.1 CHAIRPERSON UPDATE

Mr Brodie spoke to his report, where the purpose was to advise the board on activities the chair has been involved with since the last formal meeting of the board.

Updates included the submission to Cape Palliser Road. This was passed to Council’s roading manager for consideration. Miss Maynard mentioned that there were two iwi to consider in the submission which was noted.

A public meeting will be held next month led by John Bushnell, to discuss cycle and walking trails as part of the Five Towns Trail Network to provide an update to the community and propose future steps. Mr Brodie will work with the Community Governance Advisor to advertise and plan the meeting, and speak to the editor of the Martinborough Star regarding getting a piece in print.

Mr Brodie and Ms Boyle attended the Ruakokapatuna Emergency Management Meeting.

Visit to the Pain Farm homestead and cottage was an item in the report but discussed in item 9.1

Cr Archer advised the board that many applications were received for membership to the Martinborough Access Reference Group and an announcement of appointed group members would be released shortly. There was a good cross section of applicants. Connor Kershaw would chair the group with Cr membership appointed.

Ms Boyle is working on collating a contact database for the purposes of easy community consultation and engagement reach. It will be a topic of discussion at the next informal meeting.

The board was happy to receive the update on Martinborough’s wastewater proposal.

Drop in sessions were discussed. A timetable will be produced and provided to the Community Governance Advisor, then can be advertised to the community.

COMMITTEE RESOLUTION MCB2026/08

Moved: Cr C Archer

Seconded: Mr R Andrew

That the Martinborough Community Board resolve to:

- 1 Receive the “Chairperson Update” report

CARRIED

8 KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA – CLOSING

The board closed the meeting with a karakia.

The meeting closed at 8.27pm.

Confirmed as a true and correct record.

..... (Mayor/Chair)

..... (Date)

..... (Chief Executive)

..... (Date)



Presentation content to Martinborough Community Board

7pm Monday 16 March 2026

Speaker 1 – Jill Greathead – SWWAG Coordinator

Good evening, elected members and guests

Part 1 – Introduce parties involved

My name is Jill Greathead, I'm the co-ordinator for South Wairarapa Whenua Advisory Group, known as SWWAG.

I will introduce SWWAG and the other parties involved in the Greytown Solar Farm project.

Richard will speak about Battery Energy Storage Systems (known as BESS) and Rae will talk about why we need to create awareness in the South Wairarapa community about the advocacy we are doing.

Firstly, I will introduce the parties of the Court who are involved in our presentation.

- **Section 274 submitters** - members of SWWAG who are independent parties of the Court
- **Consenting Authority** is South Wairarapa District Council (SWDC)
- **Applicant** is Far North Solar Farm Ltd (FNSF)
- **Court** who hears appeals and disputes under the RMA (Environment Court)

We also discuss Transpower who, as the publicly owned operator of New Zealand's transmission grid, manages applications to connect to the grid from developers (also called generators) like Far North Solar Farm Ltd.

Part 2: Who we are

SWWAG was established in November 2022 as an Incorporated Society with a purpose *"To protect the rural landscapes south of Greytown and extending towards Martinborough and Featherston from inappropriate industrial-scale solar development"*.

As a community group, we represent ~80 properties in the area around the Greytown Transpower Substation who are impacted by the 235-hectare solar development known as the Greytown Solar Farm project.

Part 3: Project timeline

Clarification: *In my oral submission to the Council, I mentioned a few significant events on the project timeline but on listening to the Board discussion after our presentation I became aware that there was some confusion about the RMA process.*

I have attached a more comprehensive project timeline and have attached this as Appendix One of this document.

Current situation

Our last communication with the Court was on 3 March 2026 when we received the Joint Memorandum (Applicant and Council) to explain and summarise key changes made to the conditions following the issue of the Interim Decision.

We are now waiting for the Court's response to the revised "*Condition Set dated 27 February 2026*" and whether they will grant Section 274 Submitters leave of the Court to feedback on this latest Condition Set.

Transpower Engagement under the Official Information Act 1982

While the past two years have primarily focused on meeting Court requirements, we began engaging with Transpower in October 2025.

Over the past six months, we have lodged three Official Information Act (OIA) requests. These were prompted by concerns raised by our team of four electrical engineers regarding potential grid capacity constraints within Wairarapa Transpower infrastructure. Although this issue was not addressed within the resource consent application, it is a critical factor in the overall viability and operation of this infrastructure.

Through these OIA requests, we also sought clarification on whether a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) forms part of the Greytown Solar Farm project.

Part 4: Why we are here today

We can now formally confirm that a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) is proposed as part of the project but will be subject to a separate resource consent process through Council.

Clarification: *We noted in the Board discussion held after our presentation, elected members stated that the BESS resource consent application would be heard in the Environment Court and that any further action by the Martinborough Community Board would take place after that decision.*

The resource consenting process under the RMA for the BESS is that the Applicant lodges the resource consent application to Council as they did for the Greytown Solar Farm solar-only project.

If Council assess the application as "more than minor" then the application is "publicly notified". It is after that public notification period when all submissions have been received by Council that the Applicant can decide to "directly refer to the Environment Court if Council agrees."

The other option is that SWDC makes a decision to approve or not approve the application. This decision can be appealed to the Environment Court or the Court of Appeal.

In today's Transpower generation and energy storage connection pipeline spreadsheet, the Consent column states that the BESS is "*Awaiting application.*"

This indicates that SWDC will receive this application in due course. This raises an important question for the Consenting Authority (SWDC) and the community:

What is a Battery Energy Storage System, and what does it mean in practical terms for a project like this?

To help explain this, I'll hand over to Richard, who will outline what a BESS is, what it does, and the key considerations typically associated with BESS infrastructure.

Speaker 2 – Richard Scofield – Section 274 Submitter

Good evening, elected members and guests.

My name is Richard Schofield. I'm a graduate electrical engineer, but most of my career is with telecommunications.

Part 1: What is a BESS?

Tonight, I've been asked to explain what a BESS is and what it really stands for. As Jill has said, it is a Battery Energy Storage System.

The electricity grid is already full of energy storage systems. Hydro dams are obvious. Thermal heat underground is another one. Coal and gas are considered energy storage.

So, the difference with solar farms is they don't have any storage systems. When the sun goes down, they turn off. And even when it gets cloudy, they almost turn off the amount of electricity generated.

Part 2: What a BESS does

So, it's not a good match for what a grid needs. A grid needs peak power during the morning and in the afternoon.

Enter BESS, the battery energy storage system, which is what the name describes.

It's a huge collection of battery cells connected together to make a big battery, complete with truckloads of electronics to charge and discharge it. They're usually housed in an array of container-sized units so they can be moved onto the property.

During the day they charge, and during the evenings and mornings they discharge into the grid to provide peak use power. That's optimal for the power generator (in our case Far North Solar Farm) because they get more money by putting power into the grid at peak times. So, the power generators want BESS to increase their profits.

It was also why Section 274 submitters to the Environment Court resource consent hearing were a little cynical about the applicant's claim that no BESS was planned. This was repeated a number of times during the hearing and denied.

We now know that a BESS of 200 megawatt hours or thereabouts is planned on a ~22-hectare site. This figure is quoted on a German trade website dated 9 November 2025. Note that German company Aquila Capital was the financier for the Greytown proposal.

On 17 December 2025, Aquila Capital, ended its Joint Venture as investment partner with Far North Solar Farm. Aquila bought six of Far Solar Farm's consented developments leaving Greytown and five other unconsented solar developments in the ownership of Far North Solar Farm Ltd.

Part 3: Technologies

BESS are reliant on all sorts of possible battery chemistries.

The most obvious is lithium-ion phosphate, "LFP" (LiFePO₄), the most commonly used in BESS to date and also in new Battery Electric Vehicles.

They represent a fire danger in that if the battery cells catch fire, then the FENZ response is to "let it burn" - stand back and contain.

Another is "vanadium flow", which uses aqueous solutions of vanadium. They can't catch on fire, but if these solutions get into the ground water, it is contaminated forever. The South Wairarapa shares a single common groundwater system shared by Carterton and Masterton called the Wairarapa aquifer.

Then there's sodium-based where the lithium is swapped for sodium. This is safer but lower energy density. These are not in commercial production yet.

Part 4: Key Considerations

When consenting BESS, we would like the Council to take consideration of:

- Fire safety systems which are dependent on the battery technology used
- Hazardous materials management which is also dependent on the battery technology used
- Cooling fan noise
- The visual presence which requires screen planting
- Monitoring and emergency planning in case of toxic gases and ground spills

I'll now hand over to Rae, who will outline why we are concerned about the addition of a BESS in Greytown Solar Farm project and why understanding this is important for our community.

Speaker 3 – Rae Hughes – Section 274 Submitter

Good evening. I'm also an electrical engineer, but my career has been in heavy current power boards / line companies.

Clarification: *Please note that power boards were the original definition of the companies that I worked for in the beginning of my career. These are now called collectively "Lines companies (or Electricity Distribution Businesses - EDBs) in New Zealand" due to political restructuring of the electricity industry.*

Part 1: Concern about the introduction of BESS to our local whenua

We are concerned about the introduction of BESS into the Greytown Solar Farm project, especially the impact it will have on our rural economic powerhouses. This is of particular concern around Martinborough which has an impressive large wine sector well known around the world.

A good BESS requires extensive and expensive construction to mitigate the environmental and fire risk associated with this infrastructure.

The threat of contamination from BESS are enhanced in the Wairarapa due to sitting on loosely aggregated gravels that lead down to the Wairarapa aquifer.

Part 2: Adverse environmental effects

We are not nimbying, we are talking about known environmental issues.

Clarification: Please note that the most common battery used in BESS at this time is lithium-ion batteries similar to what is used in EVs and other products e.g. chain saws, weed eaters, lawn mowers etc.

The BESS issues have been experienced overseas in Europe, the Americas and probably in the secretive Eastern Bloc.

- Chemical releases such as Richard has alluded to.
- There's no effective control, recycling, or disposal of the batteries.
- Noise from the cooling fans is not rural in nature, but industrial, similar to working in Gracefield at the scrap recyclers.
- A huge amount of water required for cooling and this will impact on all other water users of the aquifer.

Part 3: Concern about the economic impact on the Wine Industry in Martinborough

The Wairarapa aquifer is 830 km² stretching from North of Masterton to Cape Palliser. Even though the solar development is south of Greytown, it's going to contaminate the groundwater under Martinborough which will impact the economics of the wine industry.

Clarification: Even in the absence of contamination, the optics of the BESS and the continuity of the recently mapped aquifers are what customers see.

Part 4: Emergency Response

The risk of, and actual, fires at BESS's have been well documented internationally. The main fire risks are toxic smoke and the spread of fire.

Clarification: Please note that, as these BESSs generally use the same lithium-ion batteries as EVs, fire databases typically include fires in EVs – both individually and on shipping.

One of the largest risks is the emergency response challenge. The BESS fire incidents internationally have demonstrated that these require specialised procedures, training and coordination with fire and emergency services.

Here in the Wairarapa, most of our fire-fighters are volunteers – they won't get that training.

There's also a lot of specialised fire-fighting equipment, which I doubt we can get. This is a serious concern to us.

Part 4 – Adverse environmental effects internationally

The environmental impacts are not just relevant here in the South Wairarapa but throughout New Zealand and across the whole world.

The risk of contamination through contamination is only one aspect. The other is the environmental impact of the mining for the rare minerals used in these BESSs, regardless of type.

Most of these minerals, including lithium, come from major mines in Africa, parts of Europe, and the continental Americas. These are causing environmental damage in these regions as well as raising concerns about unethical labour practices.

Appreciation of your time and attention

SWWAG thanks Councillors and Community Board members for their questions during our public participation presentations, and for the Board's discussion that followed.

This engagement has enabled us to develop more informed approaches to working with rural councils across New Zealand that are currently considering solar and BESS resource consent applications.

Based on our experience in Martinborough last week, we are preparing a Frequently Asked Questions document, which we intend to provide in advance of future public participation engagements.

We are also mindful that, as a \$280M project (as advised during the 2024 court hearing), this represents a significant undertaking for a small rural Council to oversee, should the project proceed.

Please note that our written material is more detailed than our oral submissions, reflecting the time constraints placed on presentations.

We look forward to continuing constructive engagement with Council

Jill Greathead

SWWAG Co-coordinator

South Wairarapa Whenua Advisory Group Inc (SWWAG) Administration Team

Email: swwagcontact@gmail.com

Mobile: 0274 884 376

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/peter-isaac-b62791392/>

Facebook: [South Wairarapa Whenua Advisory Group \(SWWAG\) Facebook Page](#)

Appendix One – Project Timeline in relation to Court Proceedings

December 2022

21 December 2022 - The Applicant submitted the [Assessment of Environmental Effects \(Greytown Solar Farm Resource\) for the Consent Application](#) to the Council for a solar development only (No BESS).

April 2023

18 April 2023 - The South Wairarapa District planner submitted the [Section 95 Report](#) (or Notification report) under the RMA. This report outlines the decision to process the application as publicly notified, limited notified or non-notified. This report concluded the adverse or potential effects on the environment will be or likely to be no more than minor so public notification was required.

June 2023

9 June 2023 – the Applicant [requested](#) for the application relating to resource consent to be determined by the Environment Court (not by the Council)

September 2023

11 September 2023 -On request for a direct referral from the Applicant under Section 87E of the RMA, the Council granted the [Applicant's Request](#) for the application to be determined by the Environment Court rather than SWDC.

October 2023

9 October 2023 – Council prepared the [Section 87F Report](#) which is required when applications are directly referred to the Environment Court. It provides a summary of submissions, analyses relevant planning issues, and suggests conditions if the consent is granted. This mandatory report assists the Court in evaluating the application.

February 2024

14 February 2024 - The Evidence in Chief from the Applicant was filed in the Court.

April 2024

5 April 2024 – Section 274 Submitters written submissions were filed in the Court.

July-December 2024

1-4 July & 13-15 November & 22 November & 9 December 2024 – the first 7 days of the hearings were held in the Copthorne Hotel in Masterton, the 22 November at the Wellington District Court and there an online session on 9 December 2024.

To comprehend the complexity of this case, the “Full & Final Electronic Evidence Bundle (dated 12 March 2025 - ENV-2022-WLG-000014)” is over 2,600 pages and the Court Transcript is over 1,000 pages with 9 days in court.

February 2025

28 February 2025 – Hazelton Law (legal counsel for the Consenting Authority, South Wairarapa District Council, filed *Closing (legal) submissions*.

March 2025

10 March 2025 – S274 Submitters filed “*Comments on the Set of Conditions dated 17 February 2025*”.

12 March 2025 – Tomkins Wake (legal counsel for the Applicant Far North Solar Farm) filed Closing (legal) submissions with Supplementary Statement of Evidence (Planning).

October 2025

28 October 2025 - An Interim Decision was filed by the Environment Court on the 28 October 2025 which directed the Council (SWDC) and the Applicant to refine the conditions where improvements were required.

November 2025

18 November 2025 – Application for Costs on behalf of the Council are filed in the Court

December 2025

17 December 2025 – The Joint Venture between Aquila/FNSF ends with Aquila taking 6 solar farms in a deal over \$100M with a combined land area of xxx hectares. This leaves FNSF with Greytown, Waipara Valley, etc

February 2026

18 February 2026 – S274 Submitters filed a Request to the Court to provide feedback on the expected revised condition set 27 February 2026

23 February 2026 – The Court sent a Court Minute stating that it would make that decision on the request for leave once it has seen the content of the condition set.

*27 February 2026 – A Joint Memorandum and revised set of agreed consent conditions were filed on behalf of Far North Solar Farm (the **Applicant**) and South Wairarapa District Council (**Council**).*

March 2026

*3 March 2026 – A Joint Memorandum was filed on behalf of Far North Solar Farm (the **Applicant**) and South Wairarapa District Council (**Council**) to explain and summarise key changes made to conditions following the issue of the Interim Decision.*