

Forestry Tasmania

Phase One Consultation Report
For Proposed
Southwood Resources — Huon Project

5 February 2001

Prepared by Corporate Communications (Tas) Pty Ltd

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1. Introduction

Forestry Tasmania is proposing to establish an investment ready-site in the Southern State Forests, to facilitate the development of an Integrated Timber Processing Centre in the region. The project is titled Southwood Resources — Huon.

Prior to Huon Valley Council development approval being sought for the proposal, Forestry Tasmania determined that extensive community consultation be undertaken to provide information to key stakeholders, to seek input from the community to identify key issues and concerns to assist in facilitating the development of strategies to address any stakeholder issues and concerns that may arise.

Through this program, Forestry Tasmania has successfully achieved its ongoing commitment to consult with stakeholders immediately affected by the proposed development, in the first instance, and to provide information on the proposal to the wider Tasmanian community.

In May 2000, Corporate Communications (Tas) Pty Ltd prepared and submitted a community consultation framework to assist Forestry Tasmania with this consultation.

The consultation program emphasised open and honest communication with all interested parties and affected stakeholders.

The initial stage of consultation was undertaken from 11 September 2000 through to 31 December 2000. This report evaluates this first phase of the consultation. It includes a description of the consultation materials prepared, activities undertaken, a summary and analysis of the comments received, recommendations for the future of the development and further strategies for addressing stakeholder needs.

While the vocal minority opposed to the project did attempt to hijack the consultation and had some initial success in preventing genuinely interested community members from gaining information, presentations to community groups, direct contact with stakeholders and general public communication ensured that the program reached the widest possible audience.

2. Community Consultation Program

Forestry Tasmania recognised that the proposed development project would impact on key stakeholders, in particular local residents.

A comprehensive community consultation program was developed which offered open and honest communication with all interested parties and affected stakeholders. This program is based on the premise that the provision of maximum information encourages greater understanding and appreciation of the project. The program combines public awareness activities with the basic direct communication tools used in community consultation programs.

The program was developed following initial meetings between Corporate Communications and the project team, a site tour and the preparation of a draft issues report (attached as Appendix A to this document).

The community consultation program is divided into key phases:

Phase One: Provision of information to stakeholders and issues identification
Phase Two: Community participation (advisory groups and focus groups)
Phase Three: Planning approval process

This report focuses on the outcomes of Phase One of the community consultation.

In summary, Phase One included the following activities:

- Public information sessions outlining the project concept in regional centres including Judbury (twice), Ranelagh, Huonville, Geeveston and Dover.
- A staffed information stand at the Huon Valley Show
- Addressing nineteen registered community groups throughout the Huon Valley municipality.

Methods of information distribution have included direct mail, newspaper advertisements and street signage, where appropriate.

Opportunities for the community to provide feedback have included provision of comment forms at community meetings, a freepost service, email and a telephone inquiry line.

The complete consultation framework for Phase One is attached as Appendix B to this document.

In addition, Forestry Tasmania will continue to keep residents and other affected stakeholders updated throughout the lodgement of the Development Approval Application and throughout construction (subject to development approval).

3. Consultation Activities Undertaken

The following summary describes the consultation activities undertaken from September 2000 to 1 January 2001.

Information Sessions with local residents

In the Huon district, six resident information sessions were conducted between October and December 2000. These sessions included information for residents to view (display panels, project information) and also provided stakeholders with the opportunity to ask questions of project team members and submit comment forms to the project.

Project opponents made concerted efforts to undermine the effectiveness of the community information sessions. The same 15 to 20 activists attended virtually all the sessions and sought to turn the presentations into public debates on the forestry industry and forest practices. While this activity initially dissuaded some people genuinely seeking information by attending the sessions, information was provided through other mediums and at later community group meetings.

The information sessions were successful in introducing the project to local residents and providing a forum for the distribution of detailed information and the encouragement of public comments and submissions.

Community Group meetings with local residents

Some 19 community group meetings were attended during the three-month consultation period.

This included organised community groups (information provided by Huon Valley Council), local businesses and other business organisations. Presentations usually included a slide presentation, then a question and answer session with project team.

Council Briefings

Members of Forestry Tasmania's Southwood Resources - Huon Project team briefed the Mayor of Huon Valley, Ald. Greg Norris on two occasions and conducted a briefing for the full Council.

Ongoing consultation

Forestry Tasmania will continue to provide information to and seek comment from all affected stakeholders. Consultation will be maintained throughout and following the planning and construction period.

4. Systems Established and Consultation Materials Prepared

To provide information to key stakeholders, Corporate Communications, in conjunction with Forestry Tasmania, established the following consultation systems and prepared the following consultation materials, which were used extensively during Phase One of the consultation.

Copies of these materials are attached to this document in Appendix C.

Project Database

A database was established to record community/stakeholder comments regarding the project. The database included details such as name, address, contact telephone numbers and comment. The Community Consultation Coordinator categorised comments both by issue (eg environmental, economic, consultation and so on) and if it was supportive, in opposition or neutral towards the project. Analysis of the comments received is included in Section 6 of this report.

Community Inquiry Line

A community inquiry line was established (Telephone: 6224 4557) which provided community members/stakeholders direct access to the Community Consultation Coordinator to provide comment, request further information or ask project questions.

Reply Paid Post

A free post service was also established through a Hobart GPO Box number. This enabled stakeholders to return comment forms, free of charge.

Direct Mail/Posters/Envelopes

Several direct mail letters were prepared and distributed to local residents during Phase One. These letters contained invitations to local residents to attend project information sessions and/or provided information updates.

- An invitation to residents dated 3 November 2000 to attend an information session at Dover Multi-purpose Health Centre on 14 November 2000 was distributed to 500 residents in Dover. Posters were designed and erected in Dover shop windows advertising the above information session.
- An invitation to 580 Geeveston residents dated 15 November 2000 to attend an information session on 28 November 2000 at the Forest & Heritage Centre. Posters were also designed and erected in Geeveston shop windows advertising the above information session.
- In December 2000, a letter was distributed to 3,800 residents in the Huon Municipality to enclose the Wood Centre brochure and provide an update on the project.

- 5000 To the Householder project information envelopes were also prepared and distributed.

Advertising and Editorial

Advertisements were prepared and placed in the *Huon News* on 27 September and 4 October 2000 to advertise information sessions to communities in Judbury, Ranelagh and Huonville. Additional media coverage of upcoming meetings was also included in news items in *Huon News* prior to the information sessions. Editorial material was also provided to all Tasmanian media.

An advertisement was also placed in the Cygnet Classifieds advertising the information sessions at both Dover and Geeveston.

Project Brochures/Display Panels

Feedback from community groups was used to further develop project display and information materials. For example, the question and answer section in the Wood Centre brochure included questions asked at community group meetings. Approximately 3,000 brochures entitled *The Facts* were produced for distribution at consultation meetings.

Comment form

Comment forms were prepared and distributed at all information sessions, with an invitation to return the forms by freepost. Approximately 5,000 forms were distributed, of which 220 comment forms (approximately 4%) were returned by concerned stakeholders. For the purposes of this report, 110 comment forms were received from the Huon Municipality.

Examples of the above items are included in Appendix C of this report.

5. Feedback Received

A database was established to record all comments received during the first phase of consultation. During the consultation 131 comments were registered with the project from, or relating to, the Huon Municipality. Of these comments, 64 supported the project, 54 opposed the project and 13 were neutral. Feedback received included:

Comment Forms

A total of 110 comment forms were received from interested stakeholders in the Huon Municipality for the period 11 September 2000 to the end of December 2000. The majority of these forms were received from local residents.

Emails

Thirteen emails were received regarding the ITPS, 10 emails opposed the project, two were supportive and one was neutral.

Letters

Four letters were received from the Huon Municipality, two were negative and two were supportive.

Telephone/Meeting contact

A further 137 respondents contacted the project via the telephone inquiry line or by registering on the mailing list at community group meetings. Many of these callers submitted written comments, or were seeking information on the project. Approximately an equal number of expressions of support and expressions of opposition to the project were received by telephone.

Letters to the Editor

During the consultation period some 14 letters to the editor of *The Mercury* were published from the Huon Municipality. Furthermore, 20 letters to the editor of the Huon News were also published. These were composed by 24 authors; this demonstrates that one author may have been responsible for multiple letters (eg W. Wright published five letters in the period).

Of these letters, nine were supportive, 24 were opposed and one was neutral.

6. Issues Identified by Respondents

The following section outlines the issues raised by respondents during the consultation. These issues were all identified by Corporate Communications (Tas) Pty Ltd in its draft issues report, prior to commencement of the consultation.

The following issues were identified through the comment forms, emails and written submissions received.

The table below summarises the issues raised. All issues received were divided into 10 categories and the number of Supportive, Opposed and Neutral comments received from the Huon Municipality relating to each issue is also included. A full explanation, and example from each issue category is outlined below.

Issue	Supportive	Opposed	Neutral	TOTAL
Community Impacts	2	14	2	18
Consultation	2	11	2	15
Contact	0	0	2	2
Economic	1	2	3	6
Environment	0	22	2	24
Infrastructure	4	0	0	4
Opposition	0	4	0	4
Route Options	7	1	1	9
Support	48	0	0	48
Transport	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	64	54	13	131

The above table illustrates that the majority of issues raised by opponents to the project were environment and community impact issues. However, the highest number of comments received in one category was messages of support for the project.

Based on submissions and input received, wide level discussions with stakeholders conducted by the community consultation consultants and the project team and anecdotal community comments, it is considered that the project enjoys considerable public support in the Huon Municipality.

It is an accepted fact in community consultation that those opposed to a proposal will loudly, actively and repeatedly express that opposition. People in support of a proposition and those who are satisfied with the decision-making processes are less likely to state a view or become involved. Despite this truism, based on the participation in, and feedback to, this consultation process in the Huon Municipality, supporters of the Southwood Resources - Huon Wood Centre Project outnumber opponents to the development by a significant margin.

The following defines each issue category and includes examples of the types of comments received, however it is not necessarily indicative of the number or strength of comments received.

1. COMMUNITY IMPACTS

The category community impact relates to perceived impacts upon community lifestyle, impacts of noise, visual amenity, etc. This is a key issue raised by opponents to the project and requires further analysis by project team to determine suitable solutions/recommendations.

An example of the types of comments received regarding community impacts is as follows:

I m concerned about community division. Also concerned about logs trucks on the roads in the area, worried about devaluation of my property, possible overpopulation of the area, and the damage to native species of flora and fauna valley wide.

2. CONSULTATION

Several comments regarding the community consultation process were received from opponents to the project. Respondents felt aggrieved that public meetings were not held to allow opponents to voice their concerns in a public forum. Some respondents also criticised the consultation materials.

I think that there was not a forum for residents to ask questions and the pictorial presentation was unrealistic. I think that the full story is not being shown to residents.

3. CONTACT

Two respondents asked to be registered on the mailing list for receipt of information.

4. ECONOMIC

Issues raised in this category focused on the costs associated with the project, potential investors and where the profits will go. This issue attracted a range of supportive, opposed and neutral comments.

This project raises a couple of questions regarding employment, structure of dam, what wood will be used to fuel the plant, and how much tax payers money will the project cost - ie infrastructure costs.

5. ENVIRONMENT

The majority of opponents to the project raised issues relating the environment. Concerns included possible pollution from the power station, water pollution from site run-off, and opposition to existing forestry practices and the impacts to flora and fauna.

If these are our forests and this is our community I would like to see us take charge of our own resources and realise their true worth. Should be looking for high quality timber products rather than woodchipping and burning it off for power. Solar and wind power is totally self-sustainable and renewable on a daily basis. Worried about the smoke pumping machine.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE

Three respondents, who support the project, raised some concerns over the infrastructure associated with the project, such as roads and the port.

I believe that if all promises by Forestry are kept, it will be a 'reasonable' project - but I would like the port to be near Geeveston as it would be less disruptive to surrounding communities, cause less trouble, shorter, cheaper and there will be less protest.

7. OPPOSITON

Some respondents expressed outright opposition to the project without outlining specific reasons.

We don't want the development here in any way, shape, or form. It is a disgrace of a proposal on all grounds.

8. ROUTE OPTIONS

Mixed responses were received regarding the route options for the project. Many respondents suggested alternative routes or outlined reasons why particular routes should not be chosen.

I support the project subject to the following: woodchips should be transported via Forestry Roads not via Margate to Electrona and Wood products to be shipped out of Hobart should be transported via North Huon Rd avoiding Glen Huon and Huonville.

9. SUPPORT

A high number of responses were received which supported the project. Comments ranged from Go for it to more detailed messages of support:

I am supportive of the project. I think it will be good for employment and business in the community. Good on you for having a go and trying to create employment for Tasmania!

10. TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Only one comment was received regarding the number and types of trucks to pass through the Huon area. This issue appears to be a minor concern in the Huon Municipality.

I have four main concerns: 1. Excessive noise of trucks (especially engine brake noise) 2. Possible structural damage to their home by trucks, as it is built on 1m soil, rest clay plan 3. Closeness of trucks to homes after widening of road and 4. Devaluation of property due to above.

NB: The comments reproduced above are not verbatim.

7. Recommendations

After reviewing and analysing the comments raised by stakeholders in the consultation period between 11 September 2000 and 31 December 2000, Corporate Communications (Tas) Pty Ltd makes the following recommendations:

1. Ongoing Contact With Stakeholders

To counteract the assumption that the project is a *fait accompli*, Forestry Tasmania should continue to consult with stakeholders in the Huon Municipality throughout the remainder of the planning phase of the project. Ongoing brochures and direct mail letters, in particular to respondents on the mailing list should continue to be distributed at regular intervals. Ongoing updates in *Huon News* will also prove useful to the project.

Ongoing contact and communication will also reinforce and strengthen the solid base of support already established in the region.

2. Display and Access to Information

Forestry Tasmania should again undertake public information displays once the DA has been lodged with local Council. Similarly the EMP should also be available for public viewing as many concerns centre on the environmental impacts of the project.

3. Margate/Electrona Consultation Report

This document is intended to be viewed in conjunction with the Final Consultation Report for the proposal to develop a small-scale wharf development at Electrona. The Southwood Resources — Huon project intends to export wood fibre via Electrona. It is anticipated that the Electrona report will be finalised by late January 2001. To date many opponents to the project have registered concerns with the community consultation coordinator regarding the proposed route via Sandfly Road and the environmental implications for North West Bay. Some respondents have also expressed concerns regarding the consultation process currently in place. There appears to be confusion over Hobart Ports Corporation, Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources and the Forestry Tasmania's roles in the consultation process.

It is important that communication is stepped up regarding these transport associated issues and that a clearer consultation program be implemented to alleviate respondents' concerns.

8. Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of the consultation, it is evident that a vocal minority is dominating the media and project input channels for the proposed Southwood Resources — Huon project. Nevertheless it is considered that the proposal enjoys considerable community support.

It must be accepted that people who oppose or who feel strongly aggrieved by the development proposal will strongly and actively express that opposition, while those who are supportive and satisfied with the planning and approval process are less likely to express their views.

As can be seen from the comments received, the redevelopment is supported by a significant number of respondents from the Huon area. Therefore, the project must continue to encourage and seek support from the region to ensure that the vocal minority do not dictate the project's outcomes.

By undertaking such a comprehensive consultation program in the pre-planning application phase of the project, Forestry Tasmania has demonstrated its willingness to listen to stakeholder concerns. Forestry Tasmania must ensure that the level of support for the project will continue to increase as the project continues to undertake extensive and ongoing consultation with all key stakeholders to ensure that the best development is achieved for all the community.

Based on submissions and input received, wide level discussions with stakeholders conducted by the community consultation consultants and the project team and anecdotal community comments, the Southwood Resources - Huon Wood Centre Project currently enjoys considerable public support in the Huon Municipality, with supporters of the proposal outnumbering opponents to the development by a significant margin.

APPENDIX A: DRAFT ISSUES REPORT

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

APPENDIX C: CONSULTATION MATERIALS