

Wind farm proposed for Halkirk area

By Brenda Kossowan - Red Deer Advocate - July 07, 2008

Windswept fields near Halkirk have come one step closer to capturing energy from the air.

Calgary-based Greengate Power Corp. met recently with citizens of the County of Paintearth to discuss its plans for building a 300-megawatt wind farm in the Halkirk area.

Greengate CEO Dan Balaban said on Thursday that the Halkirk meeting attracted more than 60 people who could be affected by the project.

"Generally speaking, there was enthusiasm for the project. I think people are quite excited about it," said Balaban.

The company is currently developing seven projects throughout Central and Southern Alberta, including at Halkirk, Red Deer, Ponoka and Chigwell. The Halkirk project is one of four that have advanced the furthest, he said.

Open houses were held last week for those four, which include two projects near Lethbridge and another near Drumheller. Projects planned for the Radar Hills area south of Red Deer, for Chigwell northeast of Lacombe and for Ponoka have not advanced as far.

Of the four top projects, Greengate anticipates construction will start early next year on at least one, assuming permits are all in place.

"There are a number of permits required. Two of the major ones are the municipal permits and the AUC (Alberta Utilities Corp.) permits. Our objective is to have the four projects that we did open houses for fully permitted by the end of this year."

The open houses play a role in the reports that will be included in the permitting process, said Balaban.

But it's too soon to say which of those four will be the first to start building, he said.

His company has secured access to about 20,000 acres of the 25,000 it needs for the Halkirk project.

A compensation formula is been put in place to pay landowners as well as their neighbours for accessing the property. The neighbours will receive less.

Noise will not be an issue, since no homes in the area fall within the 40-decibel zone.

Greengate is getting as little interference as possible from the county, said Division 4 Councillor Jan Koenraad.

"We've got some standards they are going to go by and that's going to happen. We're not going to put any difficult issues before them."

A grain farmer who has already struck agreements with Greengate to erect six turbines on his property, Koenraad said the county and the residents strongly support the project.

"It's clean power and very little impact. For the county, it gives a fair bit of assessment, so basically we will be able to keep the taxes at a reasonable level.

"This is the first big program we have had going on out here for quite a number of years."

Outside the power plant north of Halkirk there is very little heavy industry within the county, said Koenraad.

Balaban said there is no issue with high-voltage power lines because there is already a major line through the region serving power plants at Battle River and Sheerness. The line has all the surplus capacity it will need to carry Greengate's production.

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