

Yes to Te Uku wind farm

By **Bruce Holloway**

The Environment Court has given the go-ahead for Wel Networks' Te Uku wind farm to proceed.

The consent order allowing the wind farm follows the successful mediation of outstanding appeals — and the fact ardent wind farm opponent Sean Cox has withdrawn from the fray on health grounds.

Mitigation measures agreed by the parties included the forma-

tion of a community liaison group, alleviation of some visual concerns, and the relocation of the controversial turbine 29 near Hidden Valley.

Wel Networks chief executive Julian Elder said feedback from appellants allowed them to more fully understand concerns about the project.

"We are delighted to have resolved these appeals without the need for an Environment Court hearing," Dr Elder said.

But Dr Cox said he was forced

to withdraw his opposition after his health collapsed, and fundamental concerns about the project remain unaddressed.

"If not for my health I would have continued to oppose it," he said. "It is the most complete pile of bollocks I've ever heard. They haven't fixed problems by gaining consent."

Preliminary wind farm planning work will start now, with construction likely from next October. The \$200 million wind farm is to be jointly built and op-

erated by Wel Networks and New Zealand's largest generator of renewable electricity, Meridian Energy.

Wel will own and manage the electrical lines and substation linked to the wind farm, and the high voltage line connecting it to Wel's Te Kowhai point of supply at an estimated cost of around \$40 million.



SEAN COX

The wind park will generate enough electricity to supply the annual needs of around 30,000 average homes.

Meanwhile, the Wai-kato District Council is about to publicly notify Wel Networks' plans for a lines upgrade to service the greater Raglan area and the wind farm. Public submis-

sions are expected to close in mid-January.