

Hills of Gold Wind Farm Project

Frequently Asked Questions

4 AUGUST 2021



**SOMEVA
RENEWABLES**

Project Design and Development

Project Details

How many wind turbines are currently proposed for the project?

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) submitted was for 70 turbines, however during the Response to Submissions assessment process we have committed to removing two turbines, reducing the number to 68.

How many landholders are directly involved in the project?

- 4 landholders with full turbines
- 4 neighbours that receive benefit from turbines
- 4 landholders along the transmission line
- 14 transport consents
- 8 landowners offered biodiversity stewardship sites

How many neighbouring landholders are involved in the project?

- 10 neighbour agreements

What are the next steps in the development approval process?

ENGIE and Someva have been working through the public submissions received in response to our EIS. Further technical assessments have been undertaken with a view to submit the Response to Submissions **by the end of September**.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) will assess the Response to Submissions to provide a recommendation to the Independent Planning Commission.

Will this project be sold again?

At the present time, ENGIE intends to build, own and operate all of its renewable energy assets.

Traffic and Transport

Heavy Vehicle Traffic

What is the preferred oversize, over mass (OSOM) transport route?

Our original EIS stated that 20% of OSOM and construction traffic would impact several streets in the Nundle area, including Gill Street, Innes Street, Jenkins Street, Happy Valley Road, Head of Peel Road and Crawney Road.

This route has been removed from the project. Morrisons Gap Road is the primary route option for all construction and OSOM traffic.

Will OSOM traffic impact Tamworth or Muswellbrook?

There will be no impact to Tamworth from OSOM movements. The original OSOM transport route through Tamworth has now been removed from the Development Application to avoid impacting communities and residents in this area.

We're currently working with Muswellbrook Shire Council on route options for OSOM movements through Muswellbrook to ensure the least disruption to residents. We have a commitment to ensure all OSOM transport movements avoid school bus hours through Muswellbrook.

Local Traffic

What are the likely impacts to traffic through Nundle during construction?

After consulting with the local community, we've made key changes to our traffic management plan, to ensure there will be a **38% reduction** in daily traffic movements through Nundle during the construction period, improving safety and convenience. We understand that residents are concerned about increased traffic in the town during the windfarm construction period, however some of the key changes will look to utilise car-pooling schemes and create a temporary car park in Nundle to reduce the number of vehicles travelling to the project site each day. We will also (subject to TRC approval) install an additional pedestrian crossing in Nundle and employ parking restrictions in the town for project vehicles. We also have a commitment to ensure all OSOM transport movements avoid school bus hours through the town.

Head of Peel Road has also been removed as a project site access route. This will mean there will be less OSOM movements through the residential areas of Nundle.

What are the likely impacts to residents on Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road during construction?

We are undertaking further civil design to the upgrades required on Barry Road and Morrisons Gap Road to provide increased certainty for property owners. Currently, upgrades to Morrisons Gap Road include, widening to 5.5 metres, adding laybys and sealing the complete road. Ongoing surveys are being undertaken for OSOM transport movements and the refinement of swept path.

We have a strong commitment to roads safety, particularly to residents directly affected along access routes. During project construction we will be utilising vehicle escorts, call-up protocols to residents along Morrisons Gap Road, and installing in-vehicle monitoring systems for regular vehicles accessing the project site.

We will also ensure there are no OSOM transport movements during school bus hours.

Project design and Biodiversity impact

Native Vegetation

How will native vegetation (including Koala and Wombat habitat) around the project site be impacted?

As a result of concerns raised in public submissions, we've undertaken further biodiversity studies and subsequently made key changes to our development application. These changes include reducing the total development footprint by 40% and reducing the removal of high-condition native vegetation by 45%. There will also be a 17% reduction in the removal of threatened native species habitat, which will result in a **29% reduction** in the removal of koala habitat.

Removing the Head of Peel Road as an access route has also saved four hectares of native vegetation and prevented nine waterway crossings from being impacted. While another 40 hectares of native vegetation has been saved by realigning transmission lines and reducing the development footprint within the construction corridor.

We also have further commitments to mitigate any impacts through Adaptive Management Plans, which will be reviewed and approved by relevant government departments prior to construction, and construction and operational requirements detailed for specific species.

We also have an increased commitment to manage native species found during construction and operation. This includes detailed impact mitigation options in Adaptive Management Plans

and the enhancement of wildlife corridors through identified Biodiversity Offset Opportunities and proposed Biodiversity Stewardships Sites.

What impact will the development have on native bats and their habitat?

Following further surveys and assessment of bat-roosting habitat, we have an increased understanding of the presence of bats on site. Through additional design work and the removal of wind turbines 19 and 23 we have reduced the number of wind turbines within bat-roosting habitat buffers from nine to two. We have also been undertaking further geomorphological assessment of caves and karsts to confirm their location in relation to the project site. We have also further increased bat habitat mapping, which has resulted in refined identification of roosting habitat.

We are committed to the ongoing assessment of impacts to bats to determine the trigger to adaptive operational management strategies.

We also have a commitment to manage native species found during construction and operation. This includes detailed impact mitigation options in Adaptive Management Plans and the enhancement of wildlife corridors through identified Biodiversity Offset Opportunities and proposed Biodiversity Stewardships Sites.

Water

How will the Peel catchment and Tamworth's water supply be impacted?

We assessed the project's impact on Peel Valley Catchment in our original Soils and Water Assessment, as part of our EIS. However, we are now currently undertaking further investigations. The details of our latest study of impacts on the Peel Valley Catchment will be available in an updated Soils and Water Assessment Report in our Response to Submissions, however it is important to note Water NSW's response to the EIS raised no concerns about impact on the catchment.

What water supply will be used during construction of the wind farm?

It is estimated that around 55ML of water will be required during the two-year construction phase of the wind farm. This water will be used to facilitate the construction of access tracks, concrete foundations, dust suppression and cleaning of the wind turbine components before erection.

There currently are four viable options available to source that water, including:

- Council water supply, with agreement from Council
- Extraction from a nearby existing landowner bore, with agreement from landowner
- Extraction from a new groundwater bore (once approval is sought)
- Extraction from a surface water source (Peel River)

Community and Heritage

Community Enhancement Fund

How will the community be compensated?

In response to feedback received by impacted councils, we are committed to allocating \$3,000 per wind turbine per year during operations to the Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) for Tamworth Regional Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council (funding shared between councils based on which Local Government Area wind turbines are located). As well as an additional commitment of a one-off sponsorship fund of \$150,000 to support community initiatives during construction which will be administered by the Project.

The Project will also be making additional commitments, including pedestrian crossings within Nundle (subject to council approval), traffic reduction schemes, implementation of voluntary speed limits and the provision of an Information Hub within Nundle for Project updates.

How can the community be involved in the decision making of the Community Enhancement Fund?

A CEF Committee will be formulated that will have local Council representation, voluntary community members and an independent Chair. The way the funds will be disseminated within the community will be established once the committee has been formulated.

Local Heritage

What impact will the proposed upgrade of Devil's Elbow have on surrounding heritage sites?

Following community input, we are currently working to ensure our proposed upgrade to Devil's Elbow will have minimal impact on nearby heritage sites, like the Black Snake Mine. We understand that the mining heritage of the town is important to residents. We have recently undertaken geo-physical investigations to gain a greater understanding on the potential mine

shafts in the area, and are engaging a Balance of Plant contractor to undertake a 50% concept design. These investigations and civil design works will assist us to avoid heritage values in the area.

Local Economy, Business and Tourism

What are the economic benefits of the project?

This project will bring a number of economic benefits to the region. During the construction phase there will be more than 215 direct jobs and about 430 indirect jobs. Once operational, the wind farm will provide 25 permanent jobs and 50 indirect jobs, as well as opportunities to develop new skills in the region within the growing renewable energy industry.

The construction and operation of the wind farm will require a range of skills including engineering, trades (electrical, mechanical, construction), transport, building material providers, equipment operators, consultants and administrative staff. And contractors will be encouraged to use local employees. Through the upgrade of local roads and waterway crossings, during the construction and operational the life of the project, there will be investment and financial contributions of \$104 million, through wages and profit to local communities and services.

Will the wind farm reduce the value of the land in Nundle?

Wind farms do not negatively impact property prices. Over the past decade, multiple major studies by respected and independent organisations in countries across the world have failed to find any correlation between wind turbines and declining property values. In fact, some of these studies found positive impacts.

The value of properties goes up and down for a wide range of reasons. Supply and demand, proximity to amenities and infrastructure, housing affordability and the desirability of the location can all have an impact. If someone is having trouble selling their property and it is near a wind turbine, there could be many other reasons to explain why this is the case.

How will ENGIE support local businesses in Nundle?

During the construction phase of the project, it is envisaged that a number of local businesses will experience an increase in sales as the onsite workforce purchase everyday items such as food, drinks, petrol and other groceries.

Once the transition to operation occurs, the onsite workforce of up to 35 people may provide a modest boost to ongoing sales of these grocery items.

Local community benefits can include:

- Boost to the local and regional economy and local businesses
- Jobs during construction and operation
- Training, skills development and education programs
- Community Enhancement Fund

Will Nundle tourism be impacted by the project?

The Nundle region is already a popular tourist destination, reliant on the area's rich gold mining history and natural beauty. We believe the HOGWF will boost local tourism and bring additional visitors to the area by appealing to different markets. There are several examples of wind farm tourism in Australia and around the world, with many wind farms listed as tourist destinations in their own right.

There are many benefits to businesses located near windfarms, including using turbines in advertising and imagery. There are also several wind farms that host bus tours for visitors and school groups, which is something that will be considered for the HOGWF.

Our aim is to ensure that the HOGWF can co-exist with and complement the existing heritage and natural elements of the Nundle region.