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NUNDLE SPORT & RECREATION CLUB



Hills of Gold Wind Farm Newsletter

SUMMER 2023

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February Community Information Sessions



Would you like to find out more about the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project and how we're addressing the key issues raised during the recent public exhibition? ENGIE will be hosting drop-in Community Information Sessions:

Community Hub
91 Jenkins Street, Nundle
Wednesday 22nd February
Thursday 23rd February
9am - 4pm

Wallabadah Hall
Martyn Street, Wallabadah
Thursday 23rd February
5pm - 8pm

If you would like to meet outside these times, please contact us.

We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the lands on which our sites are located and commit to building a brighter future together.



Project Manager's Message

Welcome to the summer edition of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm newsletter.

A belated Happy New Year to all the stakeholders and communities around the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project – we hope 2023 is off to a good start for you. The project team are certainly looking forward to this year as we near the final stages of the NSW Government's approvals process. We know that it has been a long process over the years, and we thank you for your continued input to the project.

In late 2022, a public exhibition period was held regarding amendments to the project, including changes to the transport route, a new quarry option, and potential location changes to turbines, substation, and the battery. Again, we thank all those who took the time to make a submission – 421 were received in total. Specifically, from Nundle and Hanging Rock residents, 110 supported the amendments and 138 objected. With the latest Census data showing there are 412 residents, this would indicate that 27% are in favour of the project, 33% object to it, and the remaining 40% opting not to express a view either way. A further breakdown of all the submissions is included in this edition of the newsletter.

The team are now finalising the Response to Submissions (RtS), which we plan to submit in late February. Once the RtS is received by the Department of Planning and Environment, we

expect them to take around two to three months to assess before making their recommendation to the NSW Independent Planning Commission (IPC) to either approve or refuse the project. The IPC, as the decision-making body, will undertake further assessment including public hearings, expected to be mid-year, to inform their ultimate decision.

As we near these later stages of the approvals process, there is plenty of work going on behind the scenes to prepare, should the project be approved. We have recently appointed Ausnet as our preferred contractor to carry out early infrastructure planning, including designs for civil and electrical works. They have already commenced work, with these early designs helping to further define the types of local jobs and suppliers that will be required during construction.

Finally, it has been great to see the positive impact of ENGIE's 2022 Sponsorship Program, supporting a variety of local events and initiatives. The Program will run again in 2023 and be launched in April. To any local community groups, we encourage you to have a think about how we could provide financial support this year to help get your ideas off the ground.

Regards,

Meredith Anderson
Senior Development Manager, ENGIE

Local job numbers remain the same

ENGIE is experienced at constructing and operating wind farms in Australia and around the world and know the kinds of skills and abilities required at a project like the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. Despite recent claims, the number of jobs that will be required for construction and operation of the wind farm remain unchanged.

There will be a total of 615 full time jobs during the two-year construction period – 211 direct jobs and 404 indirect jobs created. The direct jobs will include roles such as earthworks operators, labourers, mechanical and electrical engineers / fitters, builders, truck drivers, heavy machinery operators, pipelayers, welders and engineers. Indirect jobs will be through the supply of mechanics and maintenance, cleaners, accommodation, catering, equipment hire, fencers, freight, waste management and administration.

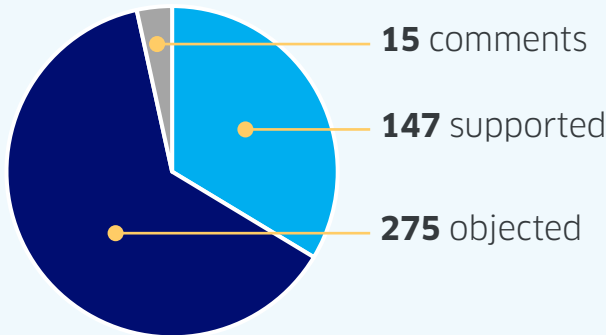
Once operational, there will be 76 full-time positions created, of which 16 will be required to be local and based full time at the site. The 16 locally based jobs required will include rotating crews of technicians to operate and maintain the turbines and substation (mechanical and electrical trades), a site manager, a health and safety role, admin support, security, waste and grounds maintenance. The other 60 jobs include specialist roles such as engineering, environmental monitoring and compliance auditing, finance and administration.

Understanding this requirement for the roles in both the construction and operational phases of the Project, ENGIE has commenced discussions with local employment providers around upskilling programs, while also taking registrations from local individuals and businesses who are interested in future opportunities at the wind farm.

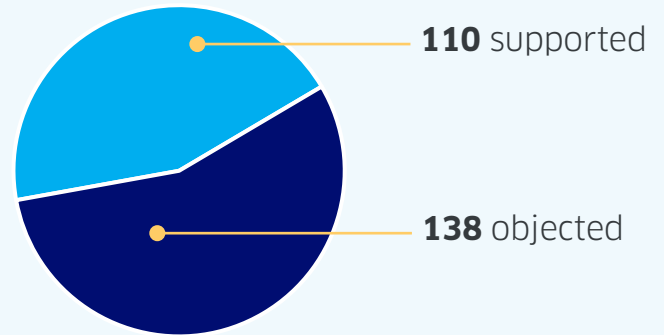
Summary of the public submissions

Throughout the 28-day public exhibition period held in late 2022, a total of 437 submissions were received during the Public Exhibition period (this excludes double up submissions). From these submissions, 275 objected to the Project, 147 supported the Project, and 15 submitted comments on the Project. The total submissions from Nundle and Hanging Rock (only) was 248 of which 138 objected and 110 supported the Project.

Total Submissions












Nundle and Hanging Rock Submissions




Key areas raised in the submissions by:

Supporters:

-  **Project justification:** 40%
-  **Social and economic:** 29.6%
-  **Traffic and transport:** 12.5%
-  **Environment:** 11.2%
-  **Biodiversity:** 4.4%
-  **Visual and landscape:** 1.9%
-  **Water and soils:** 0.3%
-  **Sound and vibration:** 0.3%
-  **Hazards:** 0

Objectors:

-  **Biodiversity:** 18.5%
-  **Traffic and transport:** 17%
-  **Visual and landscape:** 13.5%
-  **Social and economic:** 12.4%
-  **Environment:** 10.6%
-  **Water and soils:** 8.3%
-  **Hazards:** 7.8%
-  **Project justification:** 8%
-  **Sound and vibration:** 4%

Please note: The above shows the percentage of the overall objecting / supporting submissions related to the matter (ie: 18.5% of objectors included 'biodiversity' as an area of concern). Some submissions included more than one area of concern.

Amendments to the Project

Based on the issues raised in submissions and the outcomes of further consultation with key stakeholders, ENGIE has made further changes to the project to reduce concerns raised by agencies, community organisations and the public.

While significant changes to the project were not necessary since public exhibition of the Project Amendment, there have been refinements and greater details provided in response to key issues raised in the submissions, including traffic movements through Nundle, biodiversity, hydrology and visual impacts. Specific refinements and design have been made to address sections of road upgrades that Transport for NSW required to provide their concurrent approval.

Traffic through Nundle

The community have concerns over the number of trees that need to be removed as a result of the transport of wind turbine components.

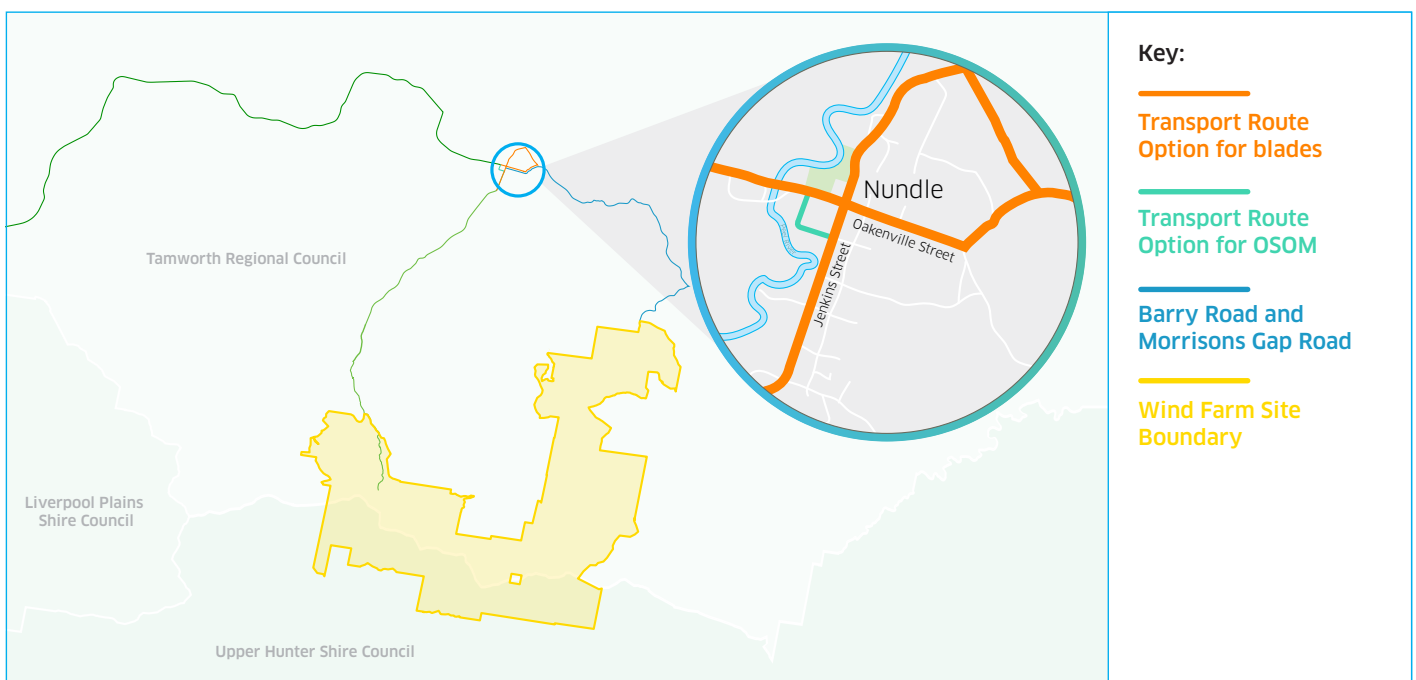
The project requires delivery of a number of different types of wind turbine components. Blades are the longest, while tower sections and the generator (known as the nacelle) are shorter, but wider and heavier.

ENGIE has considered different transport route options for these components. Changes made to the project have avoided significant road upgrades at the Devil's Elbow and Morrisons Gap Road. Most components can be delivered with minor upgrades along the routes shown and the response to submissions report intended to be submitted in February 2023 provides greater detail to minor road works required at the corner of Oakenville Street and Herron Street, and Innes Street and Jenkins Street. These works are required to facilitate safe movement of oversized equipment, while allowing existing traffic to continue to pass by.

Two options have been considered for the transport of blades. The 'Nundle By-Pass' option would take blades across private land behind the Peel Inn and onto Jenkins Street off Innes Street. This route would address concerns raised during the 2020 public exhibition as blades would not be taken through the Oakenville / Jenkins intersection. However, while an updated design has been completed which aims to avoid impact to mature growth trees in the road corridor, this route option does require some tree removal in the road corridor. Designs show two trees on Oakenville Street would need to be removed, seven on Innes Street, and one on Jenkins Street.

An alternate route for blades only has been proposed that would cross the Jenkins / Oakenville intersection and loop around Happy Valley Road and back onto Jenkins Street (noting all other oversize, overmass vehicles would still use the route behind the Peel Inn). While this requires the blades to travel through Nundle, it is limited to 192 movements over the course of nine months, or an average of five per week. While some pruning to trees will be required, this alternate route reduces the need to remove established or new growth trees within the road corridor on Oakenville, Innes and Jenkins Street.

ENGIE intends to continue consulting the landowners on the transport route to determine the final design intended for blades.



Native Vegetation

The wind farm is proposed on existing agricultural land currently used mainly for cattle farming. The layout of the wind farm has avoided areas of native vegetation wherever possible, with most of the footprint (55%) on exotic pasture, and only 12% being on high condition native vegetation. The latest changes to the project in 2022, including the relocation of 20 turbines and removal of one turbine, required changes to the onsite road designs which has reduced impacts to high condition native vegetation by 16%. Overall, the changes to the project resulted in a total of 16.16 hectares of native vegetation (varying in condition from low to high) no longer impacted by the Project. The project is currently going through more detailed designs, and we are targeting further reduction of impact to all conditions of native vegetation.

The extent of impact to the mapped native vegetation (190.54 ha) represents 2.7% of the approximate 7091 ha contained within the assessment area (the area within the wind farm boundary), and overall, the Hills of Gold Wind Farm compares favourably to other projects of this scale and broad community benefits.

Birds and Bats

Minimising operational impacts to birds and bats remains a key priority for the Project. Significant work has been undertaken, including redesigning the project layout to maximise space between the turbines, to allow for movement of species between the turbines while minimising the risk of collision with turbines and turbine blades.

The former conclusion of a 'potential significant impact' to Large-eared Pied Bat has been updated to 'unlikely' based on a lack of optimal breeding habitat and removal and relocation of high-risk turbines. It should be noted that the Biodiversity and Conservation of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (BCS) in their January submission agreed that there is unlikely to be any serious and irreversible impact to bat species.

Changes made to the project, reducing impacts to 'low risk'

The following changes were made to the project providing benefits in reducing impact to birds and bats:

Removal of Turbine 41 created the greatest potential for reducing barrier effects of the turbines located near Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve

Movement of other turbines was based on increasing separation distances with Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and native vegetation identified as potential habitat such that turbines were spaced 400m apart to meet the conditions for reduced collision risk

This reduced eight turbines from Moderate to Low Collision Risk

The turbines will be shut off in conditions where higher bat activity is likely which has resulted in all turbines being considered low risk



reduced impact to
LOW RISK

Infrastructure planning begins



Pictured (left to right): ENGIE Managing Director Renewables, Australia and SE Asia, Mr Thierry Kalfon and AusNet Chief Development Officer, Mr Jon D'Sylva.

ENGIE Australia & New Zealand have appointed a preferred partner to undertake infrastructure planning for the proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm.

AusNet Services, together with their partner Consolidated Power Projects Australia Pty Ltd (CPP), will begin early works immediately. AusNet have 1,500 employees in Australia who service over 1.5 million electricity customers and own and operate three regulated networks: electricity distribution, gas distribution and the state-wide electricity transmission network.

"This is a significant step for the Hills of Gold Wind Farm," ENGIE Managing Director Renewables, Australia and SE Asia, Mr Thierry Kalfon said.

"Early planning of the infrastructure works will optimise the project design and give a clearer picture of the local employment and services that will be required to safely deliver the project. As always, we are committed to engaging with the local community on what construction and operation of the wind farm will look like."

AusNet and CPP's scope will include connecting the 420 MW Hills of Gold Wind Farm to the National Electricity Market, constructing a new switching station, 330kV overhead transmission line, 33kV/330kV collector substation and various internal civil and electrical works.

"As part of these early works, AusNet and CPP will be progressing designs of the civil and electrical works required, such as transmission lines, collector stations, transformers, crane pads and hard stands for use in construction, foundations for the turbines and designs of access routes across the sites" Mr Kalfon said.

"AusNet was chosen as the preferred partner after demonstrating a high commitment to engaging with local communities, being able to meet ENGIE's high standards around a local and Indigenous employment plan, a strong safety performance and the strength and expertise within the partnership with CPP."

"We're pleased to be recognised by ENGIE as being able to deliver on their high standards," AusNet's Chief Development Officer, Mr Jon D'Sylva said.

"As an industry leader at the forefront of the energy transition, we look forward to applying our transmission expertise and grid connections experience to this significant NSW project."

Once constructed, and with the backing of ENGIE's local and global expertise in renewable energy, the Hills of Gold Wind Farm would supply up to 1,000 gigawatt hours per annum, the equivalent energy to power 182,000 average Australian homes.



ENGIE proud to support Triples Bowls Day event

Through its 2022 Community Sponsorship Program, ENGIE provided funding towards the Nundle Sport and Recreation Club, Triples Bowls Day event held last November.

Senior Manager, Community Engagement, Jacqui Niemand said ENGIE is proud to support the event, which brought together ten teams from across the region.

“Our sponsorship for this event further highlights ENGIE’s commitment to supporting the local community, and we are proud to help provide more opportunities for people to come together and have some fun,” Mrs Niemand said.

Nundle Sport and Recreation Club Secretary and Treasurer, Cheryl Sipple said that the club was grateful to receive the funding and see the event go ahead.

“I want to thank ENGIE and the Hills of Gold Wind Farm for the support to run the bowls day. It’s hard to get funding and without it, we probably wouldn’t have been able to run the event,” said Mrs Sipple.

“We’re always looking for new bowling members to join and we use these events to showcase our greens run by volunteers.”

“It was a very successful day with more teams participating than last year, and people coming along from different clubs across the region to socialise, catch up with old mates and maybe even win some prizes,” Mrs Sipple said.

ENGIE recognises the important role that clubs plays in the local community and congratulated the event organisers.

“We’re proud to support the bowls day event because it brings members of the community together and provides a great family-friendly atmosphere.”

Congratulations to all the competitors and all those involved with another very successful Triples Bowls Day,” Mrs Niemand said.

Pictured above: Winners - Kootingal (L to R), Wayne Minton, Michael Sipple, Noel Russ. Pictured right: second place - Walcha (L to R) Barry Kliendiest, Eric O’Keeffe, Noel Goodwin.





Upcoming Events and Important Dates

Community Information Sessions

February 22 and 23

Timeline



What's next for the project?

Response to Submission Report

February 2023

DPE Assessment Report

Q1 / Q2 2023

Independent Planning Commission

mid 2023

Get in Touch

Do you want to get in touch with the team?
ENGIE's Asset Development Team can be contacted on:

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email **hillsofgold.au@engie.com**



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