



Proudly supporting your community



# Hills of Gold Wind Farm Newsletter

WINTER 2022

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

It's been a busy few months for the team who have continued to visit the region and update the community and other stakeholders on the project. Thank you to all who attended our Community Information Sessions in Nundle, Hanging Rock and Timor in June. These drop-in events are a great way for our team to continue to gather input and feedback, whilst also providing an update on the project.

In June, we awarded \$20,000 in funding to seven local groups as part of our 2022 Community Sponsorship Program. We were thrilled to support all applications submitted by a range of groups across the region. The Community Sponsorship Program is just one of the ways we are working with the community to deliver projects and events that bring people together and enhance what's great about the region. You can read more about the program on page 3 or at: [www.hillsofgoldenergy.com/benefitsandsponsorship](http://www.hillsofgoldenergy.com/benefitsandsponsorship).

Following feedback from Tamworth Regional Council to avoid the Devil's Elbow Bypass Upgrade, an additional alternate transport route is being considered, which proposes the use of Crawney Road for some Over Size, Over Mass (OSOM) and construction vehicles.

The changes are being proposed in an Amended Project Report and will be lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and on public exhibition by the end of 2022. More information can be found on page 2.

We're excited to launch our new 'Community Hub' this month, based at the old Nundle Post Office building, on the corner of Jenkins and Oakenville Streets. The Hub will provide an ongoing location for the team to meet with members of the community when we're in town and will include a range of displays and information about the project.

Members of the team will be at our Community Hub on **Wednesday 31 August** and **Thursday 1 September, 10am – 6pm**.

If you can't make it or would prefer to meet outside these times, please reach out to us.

Regards,

**Meredith Anderson**  
Development Manager, ENGIE



*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.*



## Timeline

- ✓ **October 15, 2018**  
Lodge Preliminary Environmental Assessment
- ✓ **November 22, 2018**  
SEARs issued
- ✓ **November 20, 2020**  
Lodgement of DA and EIS
- ✓ **Dec 2020 – Jan 2021**  
Public exhibition and collection of submissions
- ✓ **August 2021**  
Update on Response to Submissions
- ✓ **January 10, 2022**  
Response to Submissions lodged to DPE
- **Q1 2023**  
DPE recommendation
- **Q2 2023**  
IPC determination

# Project Update

Given the strong reservations by Tamworth Regional Council about the Devil's Elbow Bypass, the Project is reassessing access routes for construction vehicles and Over Size, Over Mass (OSOM) vehicles to further reduce impacts.

An alternate route is being considered that proposes some of the OSOM and construction traffic uses Crawney Road.

Extensive assessments on this proposed route are currently being carried out by industry experts, including traffic, biodiversity and cultural heritage archeologists and Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

If the route is deemed suitable, the Devil's Elbow Bypass would be removed from the Project, with minor improvements to the existing road at Devil's Elbow proposed for smaller oversize vehicles, and general construction access.

The Devil's Elbow / Barry Road / Morrison's Gap Road route could also be used as a return route for OSOM vehicles after they have delivered components to site and the truck dollies have folded up to reduce the size of the vehicles.

The addition of an alternate route will create the benefit of splitting traffic volumes across local roads and providing further road upgrades including the proposal to seal parts of Crawney Road and add safety features to the existing Devil's Elbow hairpin on Barry Road.

The changes are being proposed in an Amended Project Report and will be lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) in Q3 2022. ENGIE will continue to engage with community members on this route and seek feedback.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm is currently under assessment by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). There have been requests for additional information from DPE throughout its assessment, which is commonplace through this process.

Once the assessment is complete, the DPE will provide its recommendation, along with an assessment report on the project. Given the work currently being undertaken on a new OSOM transport route, we are now expecting the DPE's recommendation early 2023.

## Exclusive energy offer for local residents

Our retail arm, Simply Energy, will offer all residents and local businesses within 20km of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm, a special energy plan guaranteed to be ten percent better than our best publicly available offer in market, with discounted electricity usage and supply charges.

The special energy offer will be available once the wind farm is constructed and starts operating.





## Funding boost for the local community

As part of ENGIE's Hills of Gold Wind Farm Community Sponsorship Program, \$20,000 in funding has been distributed across seven community groups and organisations in the Nundle and Hanging Rock area.

The establishment of a Foodbank and new tourism project for Hanging Rock, swimming club programs for young people, a new dishwasher for the sports club and support for the Nundle Twilight Christmas Market are among the inspiring and important projects to benefit from the Community Sponsorship Program.

As part of the program, Liverpool Range Rural Fire Service (RFS), will receive funding to equip a mobile catering unit which will allow 14 brigades to utilise the trailer for a range of events.

Captain Craig Murphy said he is appreciative of the Program and is looking forward to delivering meals to the hard working and dedicated volunteers.

"This sponsorship means we can take the trailer out into the community when and where we need it, like during fires and other emergencies, training sessions and special events," says Mr Murphy.

"Developments like this wind farm are just what our town needs and deserves. Not only is it good for the farmers, business owners and volunteer groups like us – these benefits will be felt across the whole community, now and into the future."

Hanging Rock will welcome a new Community Foodbank, thanks to funding provided by the sponsorship program. Tommy Taylor from the Pot of Gold Community group said the funding will go towards assisting people in need.

"We've been working really hard to setup a local Foodbank, offering low-cost food and groceries, and emergency packages to those who need it the most."

"We are planning to open the doors in October and this funding will go a long way towards improving the lives of disadvantaged people and families in our community," Mr Taylor said.

Other groups to receive sponsorship include:

- ▶ **Nundle Swimming Club** for its Learn to Swim and squad training program
- ▶ **All Saints Anglican Church** for Quiz Worx regional primary school tour
- ▶ **Nundle Sport and Recreation Club** Bowls Day sponsorship and a new dishwasher
- ▶ **Hanging Rock Community Hall Committee** for a new tourism project and community events
- ▶ **Nundle Christmas Market** committee for a twilight event in November 2022.

It's great to see so many local groups partnering with ENGIE to help make a positive difference to the community through their projects, activities and local events. Our support programs will continue to run during the life of the wind farm project, and we're very excited to help build a better, stronger future for the community.

Congratulations to each of the recipients on their successful applications and for their contribution to their communities, which we at ENGIE are very proud to support.

Read more at: [www.hillsofgoldenergy.com/benefitsandsponsorship](http://www.hillsofgoldenergy.com/benefitsandsponsorship)

# The Hills of Gold Wind Farm project's role in delivering lower power prices

Given the current energy market challenges, and the resulting higher costs to electricity and gas prices, the generation of energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar and pumped hydro, has never been more important.

The proposed Hills of Gold Wind Farm will play a key role in supporting a greater mix of low-emission renewable energy sources, to generate cheaper and cleaner energy for NSW households and businesses. Some of the ways the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project will do this include:

- ▶ Allowing more electricity to be generated locally and without the use of fossil fuels, providing cheaper and cleaner electricity for up to 162,000 average NSW households.
- ▶ Leveraging existing transmission infrastructure, to connect into the 330kV TransGrid Liddell to Tamworth overhead transmission line.
- ▶ Our retail arm, Simply Energy, will offer all residents and local businesses within 20km of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm, a special energy plan guaranteed to be 10% better than our best publicly available offer in market, with discounted electricity usage and supply charges. The special energy offer will be available once the wind farm is constructed and starts operating.

## Energy transition

Electricity generation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, with the National Electricity Market (NEM) dominated by coal-fired power stations. The NEM is one of the largest interconnected electricity systems in the world and connects the electricity grids of the six eastern and southern states and territories to deliver around 80% of all electricity consumption in Australia.

To facilitate a strategic transition from coal-fired power generation to renewable energy, NSW Government developed the Electricity Strategy and Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

The state government's Roadmap aims to deliver 12GW of new renewable energy capacity and 2GW long-duration energy storage by 2030, with the expected retirement of four NSW coal power stations to be replaced with Renewable Energy Zones (REZs).

For more information, visit: [www.energy.nsw.gov.au/government-and-regulation/electricity-strategy](http://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/government-and-regulation/electricity-strategy).

## Cultural Heritage Surveys

Aboriginal heritage is an important factor in the development of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm. To ensure the proposed project infrastructure is aligned with the conservation and protection of sites of significance to Indigenous people, ENGIE has organised Aboriginal Cultural Heritage representatives to visit and assess the project area.

Aboriginal site officers from Nungaroo and Gomeroi, and a Senior Archaeologist from Kelleher Nightingale Consulting (KNC) recently visited the proposed wind farm project site, to assess any potential impact to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Officers conducted an extensive survey, including the western access track considered for oversized and over mass (OSOM) vehicles, which involved searching for artefacts, sacred trees and places of significance. An amendment report will be provided in our updated submission to DPE later this year.



View to south, central route intersection of three alternate routes.



View to south-west, central route at crossing of Wombramurra Creek just off Crawney Road.



View to north-west, alternate route to west of saddle and route intersection. This would run to Ryan's Oaky Creek.



View to west. Alternate route to west of new cattleyards to Wombramurra Creek.



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# Community Hub and Information Sessions

ENGIE is excited to launch our new 'Community Hub', to be based at the old Nundle Post Office building on the corner of Jenkins Street and Oakenville Street.

Members of the team will be at our Community Hub for two drop-in Information Sessions:

**Wednesday August 31, 10am – 6pm**

**Thursday September 1, 10am – 6pm**

If you can't make it or would prefer to meet outside these times, please reach out to the team on:

phone: **1800 845 067**

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

# Decommissioning

Are you wondering what will happen to the turbines and other infrastructure at the end of the project?

Decommissioning is always the responsibility of the wind farm owner so ENGIE will be required to remove all turbines and other fittings as part of the Government's approval conditions and landowner agreements.

As part of standard approval conditions, a decommissioning plan will be required to be submitted to the Department for approval before construction of the wind farm can commence.

A large proportion of wind farm components can be recycled for other uses and the Clean Energy Council currently has a working group to manage re-use of materials at the wind farm end of life.

More information on this working group can be found at: [www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/decommissioning](http://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/decommissioning).

Alternatively, if a business case arises near the end of life to 'repower' and extend the project, a new government approval process would be initiated.

Nearer to the end of project life the community will be consulted about the process of decommissioning, its steps and potential impacts.



I'm a **BIG FAN**



As a local business owner and resident, I'm passionate about our town and its people.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm will provide our community with the boost we need to bring this town to life, creating new jobs and strengthening our economy for years to come.

And, it could provide over \$200,000 every year for about thirty years, directly to local events and projects. Where else will our community groups get money like that?

**"I'm a big fan of the Hills of Gold Wind Farm."**

Megan Carberry, Local business owner – Hills of Gold Motel, Nundle

# Local Voices

If you've been listening to the local radio station or flicking through the Northern Daily Leader recently, you may have recognised Nundle resident and business owner, Megan Carberry. Megan is just one of the many local voices who are showing their support for the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project.

**Share your story** - We encourage everyone to send us their own stories about why this project is important to them. We'll share your positive contributions as part of our engagement activities, to help support the many local voices who want this project to go ahead.

Scan the QR code to complete a short survey and tell us what excites you the most about the project or visit: **forms.office.com/r/xGyHDQ6NPF**



# Mythbusting

ENGIE is helping to address some of the key concerns people have with regard to biodiversity, environmental and other impacts. To help you tell fact from fiction, we've put together a series of Mythbusters.

## **MYTH: "This is not the right place for a wind farm."**

**FACT:** Over 10 years of wind monitoring shows the ridge line is one of the windiest locations in NSW. While the ridge looks steep from the valley, it's wide and flat on top with only short, narrow sections to upgrade. Our Aussie construction experts have built projects across Australia and agree this is a great place to build a wind farm.

## **MYTH: "The site is an unsuitable location as it is not in a government defined REZ."**

**FACT:** The Renewable Energy Zones were defined by Government to identify future renewable energy hub locations, to inform where future infrastructure and transmission lines need to be built. The Government still believe about 70% of renewable energy projects will be outside of these zones as there are plenty of other suitable locations. Hills of Gold Wind Farm can connect into the existing 330kV TransGrid Liddell to Tamworth overhead transmission line whereas the REZ transmission lines are still many years away.

## **MYTH: "The wind farm will impact on firefighting abilities."**

**FACT:** Planned improvements to access roads can increase the response time and ability of firefighting vehicles to reach the frontline and could act as an effective firebreak. In consultation with the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), a Bushfire Management Plan will be developed and all staff will be trained to RFS volunteer level. In addition, three new fire trailers will be purchased and positioned on site, and additional water storage facilities of 50,000 litres provided with the ability to connect a fire hose, assisting the RFS in the event of a fire. In the event of a fire, turbines will be switched off to enable aerial firefighting to occur. We have also been working with National Parks and Wildlife Services regarding aerial firefighting adjacent to Ben Halls Gap Nature Reserve and have committed to assisting their firefighting efforts if required.

## **MYTH: "Only a few host landowners will benefit."**

**FACT:** ENGIE is committed to supporting the local community by widely sharing the benefits of this project. Based on the current project layout, the Community Enhancement Fund (administered by an independent committee), will deliver up to \$210,000 per year to local community initiatives, events and activities. There will also be a \$150,000 construction fund for community scholarships, training and initiatives.

ENGIE will also offer an exclusive energy deal through our retail arm, Simply Energy with discounted electricity to local residents (see page 2), and there's a neighbour benefit sharing program for those living closest to the project.

**MYTH: “The majority of locals oppose the project.”**

**FACT:** Following the public exhibition period, there were 140 opposing and 122 supporting submissions from the Hanging Rock and Nundle communities. Given there are around 500 residents in this area, this shows the majority haven't put in a submission and should be considered neutral. There is a strong show of grass roots support with many residents putting up signs outside their homes.

**MYTH: “Tourism will suffer as a result of this project.”**

**FACT:** An independent study by the University of Newcastle found that tourists are not deterred by the presence of wind turbines and in fact, are often drawn to them. Based on other wind farms, such as the Glen Innes Wind Farm, the Hills of Gold project could help expand the tourism market and bring new opportunities. Potential future activities could include adventure-tourism such as mountain biking and ridgeline marathons or trails, as well as tours of the wind farm, taking in the incredible views from the site.

**MYTH: “There cannot be 16 permanent local wind farm jobs.”**

**FACT:** ENGIE is experienced at operating wind farms in Australia and around the world, and know the kind of skills and abilities required to operate and maintain wind farms. 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. In addition to the 16 permanent local jobs, other specialist roles such as engineering, environmental monitoring and compliance auditing will also be required on an as needs basis.

**MYTH: “More traffic will make the roads slower and unsafe.”**

**FACT:** Better roads are safer roads and ENGIE has committed to improving local roads and bridges that require frequent use by the project by widening, re-sealing and installing additional safety signage. Construction traffic will be able to be managed through mobile and other traffic controls to ensure there are no significant delays. Layby areas will also be constructed to ensure any Over Size, Over Mass vehicles enable passing of general traffic, and large turbine component deliveries will be under constant traffic escort.

**Need more information?**

For more Mythbusters and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), visit:  
**[www.hillsofgoldenergy.com](http://www.hillsofgoldenergy.com)**.

Alternatively, you can email us at **[hillsofgold.au@engie.com](mailto:hillsofgold.au@engie.com)** or call **1800 845 067**.



## Upcoming Events and Important Dates

**Community Information Sessions**  
August 31 and September 1

# Introducing Leigh Newbery

**ENGIE's General Manager  
Asset Development and Delivery**



We are pleased to introduce our new General Manager, Leigh Newbery who joined our team in July. Leigh has a long history in developing and delivering renewable energy projects across Australia, including wind, solar, batteries and pumped hydro. He holds a Master of Engineering and has extensive experience in the energy sector, working in engineering and design, wind turbine manufacturing, construction and operations management, and leading development initiatives.

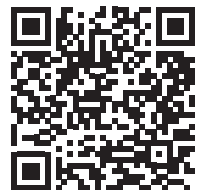
A country man at heart, Leigh grew up on the Murray River, near the NSW border in Northern Victoria, and now lives in Melbourne with his wife, three children, two cats and a turtle.

Leigh is currently a member of the Clean Energy Council's working group on decommissioning and re-use of wind farm materials. He is looking forward to visiting Nundle to learn more about the Hills of Gold Wind Farm project.

## Get in Touch

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

phone: 1800 845 067  
email [hillssofgold.au@engie.com](mailto:hillssofgold.au@engie.com)



[www.engie.com.au/hillssofgold](http://www.engie.com.au/hillssofgold)