

Synergy Wind Pty Ltd

Alberton Wind Farm – Communications and Engagement Plan

Updated January 2019



Introduction

Founded in 2004, Synergy Wind Pty Ltd (Synergy Wind) is a project development company whose mission is to identify and develop viable renewable energy sites in Australia.

Funded by private investors who have experienced the renewable energy industry from many perspectives – as hosts of wind turbines and solar panels, as developers of wind farms, as owners and users of biomass plants – Synergy Wind is committed to developing projects that promote the increase of renewable energy usage and create returns for everyone involved.

The Project

The project commenced when Synergy Wind was approached by a landowner with an interest in hosting a wind farm and who introduced Synergy to neighbours that were also interested. From there, the project grew organically through contact by interested landowners to neighbours and meetings with residents and landowners in the area, with the proposed project area defined by the end of 2014.

In early 2015, preliminary environmental and cultural heritage studies were carried out to understand the site and any constraints, and a metmast installed to gather wind data. From 2015 to 2017, extensive assessments, studies and consultation refined the proposal for the Alberton Wind Farm to include:

- 34 turbines with a maximum tip height of 200 metres;
- Turbine hardstands
- Use of existing and new access tracks
- Underground and some overhead power cabling; and
- A temporary works compound and other associated infrastructure

There are 14 landowners (13 hosting and one non-hosting participant) over multiple properties.

Project background and benefits

The proposed Alberton Wind Farm is located 216 kilometres east of Melbourne in South Gippsland in the Shire of Wellington, along the South Gippsland Highway, 6 kilometres south of Yarram.

The district offers many suitable characteristics for a Wind Energy Facility:

- Very good wind resource, with wind speeds between 7.0 to 7.5 m/s at a height of 65 metres that have been confirmed by 14 months on site monitoring and data from nearby weather stations
- State and Local Planning overlays appropriate to the intended use
- Excellent connection to the State electricity grid via a 66kv powerline running through the site
- Excellent connection to transport access from the South Gippsland Highway and access to Port of Anthony and Barry's Beach Marine Terminal allowing transport of turbines over a short distance compared to other major ports some distance away
- Supportive landowners and local Council

Environmental benefits

At a state level the project will increase Victoria's renewable energy capacity and the reliability of Victoria's electricity network. It will provide clean energy for over 45,000 households, realise a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by over 390,000 tonnes annually, and reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources for power generation. Further, the project will:

- Support the Victorian Renewable Energy Target
- Support Gippsland Regional Growth objectives
- Support Wellington Shire Council's strategic objectives as stated in the Municipal Strategic Statement

Community and Economic benefits

The Project will deliver:

- Increased investment and employment opportunities in the region during the construction phase – c. 115 jobs.
 - This includes jobs in construction, civil engineering, electrical engineering areas as well as for businesses such as concrete, sand and gravel suppliers, transportation, warehousing and stevedoring services.
- The nearby Port Anthony and Barry's Beach Marine Terminal are excellent candidates to receive, store and transport parts and components from which is an additional local benefit afforded by the project location.
- Indirect employment during construction is expected to generate jobs for 270 people locally, 870 state jobs and 1360 nationwide jobs.
 - This includes accommodating, entertaining and feeding the project management and construction team during the design, construction and connection phases of the project.
- Increased economic activity in the South Gippsland region.
- Ongoing economic and employment benefits throughout the life of the project including the creation of regional jobs in monitoring and maintenance roles.
- Contribute to the growth of the renewable energy industry in the area.
- Rates paid to the local Council by the wind farm owner and operator over the life of the project will add to the revenue base of the Wellington Shire and enable it to provide more services to residents

A Community Fund of up to \$80,000 per year will be set up to support local community-based initiatives, projects and events.

Landholder benefits

Once operational the Alberton Wind Farm will provide over \$600,000 in annual income across participating landowners – a significant and important boost to the income of these farmers. This will provide them with a secure supplementary income for 20-30 years, through lease arrangements. This income will assist in providing certainty to their farming activities, and in turn, benefit local providers supplying goods and services to the landholders.

Synergy Wind is committed to working with dwelling owners to provide landscape screening on their properties. The Policy and Planning Guidelines - Development of Wind Energy Facilities (October 2018) contains example permit conditions, which are likely to be applied should a permit be issued by the Minister for Planning and include a requirement for the provision of off-site landscaping.

Should a permit be issued for the proposed wind farm development, Synergy Wind is happy to commit to and receive a permit condition that, in consultation with and permission of the residence owner, it must provide off-site landscaping to the owners of non-participating dwellings within 3 km of a turbine where a turbine is visible.

Project Timeline



Consultation and engagement objectives

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Build positive relationships with stakeholders and communities
- Build understanding of the project
- Ensure that directly impacted stakeholders and interested community members are appropriately informed, consulted and engaged in a timely and transparent manner.

Synergy Wind is committed to working constructively with stakeholders and local communities, understanding that local support and involvement is critical to the success of the Alberton Wind Farm, while considering regional and state benefits and potential impacts.

We seek to facilitate open and transparent communication to ensure information is available so stakeholders are able to make informed comment and have meaningful input, where appropriate, throughout the various phases of the project.

Communications and engagement approach

This plan will be regularly reviewed and revised to ensure it is appropriate to specific Project stages, and stakeholders' (including community) requirements. Synergy Wind's engagement approach is based on the IAP2's spectrum: Inform, Consult, Involve and Collaborate, as summarised in the following table:

IAP2 Spectrum	Activity/Tools
Inform	Website, advertisements, advertorials, project updates, information days regulatory notices
Consult	One-on-one meetings with stakeholders, community representatives and community groups, community information sessions, surveys, request for feedback
Involve	Site tours, workshops, one-on-one meetings
Collaborate	Community Reference Group

Stakeholder and community interaction

Since 2014 Synergy Wind has undertaken a comprehensive consultation and engagement program with a wide range of identified stakeholders including host landowners, immediate neighbours, local and regional community and economic development groups, community leaders, local members of parliament, local government representatives and local media. A snapshot of that engagement is listed below:

2014/2015

- Project definition phase: local landowners approached Synergy Wind with an interest in hosting a wind farm. At that time, Synergy was introduced to neighbouring landowners and residents and the project grew from there.
- Synergy spoke to and met with as many people as possible – either in person or by phone - in the surrounding area, where personal contact details were made available (more than 140 phone calls with local landholders and neighbours in second half of 2014 alone).
- In June 2014 identified local residents were invited to attend a briefing meeting. At that time Synergy introduced itself, the planning process and the potential project. Everyone who attended was invited to participate in the project, regardless of the size of their property. All attendees were asked to advise if there was anyone not present that they would recommend be contacted. The residents who attended the meeting were also encouraged to talk to their neighbours and provide Synergy's contact details should anyone have questions or wish to meet.
- The proposed project area was published on the Synergy Wind website as soon as host landowners were identified, and other associated information was also published.
- Synergy met and spoke with everyone they were advised to speak to, and anyone else who contacted company representatives during their visits to the area. (Synergy's approach was to be introduced by local stakeholders wherever possible, rather than cold-call door-knocking).

2015/2016

- Synergy Wind "Contact Us" email set up for community members to engage directly with company representatives.
- From mid-2015 to mid-2017, a series of detailed site surveys and assessments, and predictive modelling studies were undertaken for birds and bats, migratory shorebirds, flora and fauna, cultural heritage, aviation and electromagnetic interference, noise, shadow flicker and blade glint, visual impacts, transport, geotechnical and grid capacity analysis. These studies enabled the conceptual plan to be further refined to reduce impacts and the process of formal environmental assessment to commence.
- In December 2015 and January 2016, group meetings were held with landowners and nearby residents to display the detailed studies (environmental, cultural heritage, noise), illustrate potential impacts and discuss the conceptual layout plan. Feedback from these meetings and other interactions were incorporated in a revised layout plan.
- From the meetings in January to June 2016 further meetings were held with landowners to take on board neighbouring residents' input, ensure turbine placement avoided all identified constraints and would work with underlying farming use, optimize the layout and undertake all necessary assessments to be sure it met planning guidelines.
- Synergy Wind website updated as project developments occurred.
- Initial meetings were held in August 2016 with the Department of Environment to begin the EPBC Referral process.
- In November of 2016 a meeting was held in Traralgon with stakeholders from DELWP, Regional Development, VicRoads, Parks Victoria and members of the Planning Department of the Wellington Shire Council to provide a project overview and identify any other planning and environmental requirements that needed to be met.
- In December 2016 a site visit was undertaken with representatives from DELWP and the Wellington Shire Council Planning Department in attendance.
- In December 2016 an EPBC Referral for the project was lodged with the Department of Environment.

2017

- In January 2017, the EPBC Referral was made available for public comment as required by the Department of Environment.
- At the end of March 2017, a decision was received from the Department of Environment that the project was considered a controlled action. Consultation with DELWP Planning & Environment then occurred to identify how to proceed.
- In June 2017 the project was presented at the LaTrobe Valley New Energy Roundtable to local businesses, government and industry.
- Synergy Wind issued a formal media release to local media announcing the proposed project.
- An ABC morning radio interview regarding the project was given in August 2017.
- Briefings were held with:
 - Wellington Shire Council
 - Committee for Gippsland
 - DELWP Gippsland
- All available reports and assessments were made available for reading and review on the Synergy Wind website.
- Residents within a three-kilometer radius of the project area were invited to attend a week-long information/exhibition event at the Yarram Hub (August 2017). Invitation was by direct mail (undertaken by Wellington and South Gippsland Shire Councils) and advertised in the local papers.
- Attendees were invited to provide feedback and/or submit request for further information. Where appropriate, feedback was incorporated into the Planning Application.
- Synergy Wind responded to requests for further information either directly with the community member (where contact details were provided), or on the Synergy Wind website.
- Individuals who provided contact details were provided with updates, and further information was made available on the Synergy Wind website for those who elected not to provide contact details.
- A period of planning and assessment then followed, during which review and feedback from state and commonwealth bodies was sought (as per EES and EPBC referral processes).

2018

- In January 2018 Synergy Wind issued a media release to local papers to update the local community on progress, including the environmental referrals and potential planning process.
- Informal meetings with local Councillors and tourism representatives (February).
- Phone calls with local officers of local Councils, Latrobe Valley Authority.
- Meetings with Member for Gippsland East (two).
- Set up and advertisement of dedicated community contact line.
- In August immediately following approval from the Department of Land, Environment, Water and Planning, the planning application submission was advertised for public comment in local and national papers. Notification was also mailed to residents within a 5km radius, published on the Synergy Wind website and also Council and DELWP websites.

- Synergy Wind advertised (over two weeks in August) and hosted (in September) a community open day at the Yarram Hub, and a site tour to Bald Hills Wind Farm for community members wanting to find out more about the planning submission and wind farm operations in general.
- Meetings with Wellington Shire Council and South Gippsland Shire Council Officers
- Briefing to Wellington Shire Council and South Gippsland Shire Council
- In September 2018 Synergy Wind distributed a project update (directly to those community members who had registered their contact details). This update was also published on the Synergy Wind website.
- In December 2018 Synergy Wind provided a further project update which was run as a full page advertorial in local papers and published on the Synergy Wind website.
- December 2018, Synergy Wind appointed a local Community Information Officer, Bruce Beatson.
- Three individual and one group meeting with host landowners.
- Meetings, phone calls and informal discussions with 35 local community members.

2019

- Week one, January 2019, commencement of fortnightly advertisement in local papers promoting Synergy Wind community contact points (website, community contact line, and Community Information Officer direct contact details).
- January: 22 separate meetings/phone calls with local community members.

The following activities are scheduled for the first quarter of 2019:

- Early March: One-on-one noise and shadow flicker information sessions for interested local community (to be advertised in local papers and promoted on Synergy Wind website).
- Announcement of and expression of interest sought for Alberton Wind Farm Community Reference Group.
- Further one-on-one meetings and engagement with local community.

Stakeholder mapping

The following table sets out key stakeholder groups Synergy Wind will to engage and inform about the Alberton Wind Farm. This list will be used to guide the creation appropriate engagement materials, feedback mechanisms and channels for information sharing, where required.

Audience	Key groups	
Community	Host and other participating Landowners	
	Residents and landowners within 5kms of a turbine	
	Indigenous groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal Victoria - Gunai Kurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
	Business and community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Port Albert Community Planning Group - Yarram Landcare - Yarram Tourism and Business Association: - Yarram Agricultural Society - Committee for Gippsland
Government and Departments	Local Government	Wellington Shire Council (Councillors and Officers) South Gippsland Shire Council (Councillors and Officers)
	Victorian Government	Ministers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minister for Environment, Energy and Climate Change - Minister for Planning - Minister for Regional Development Local MPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member for Gippsland South - Member for Gippsland East - Members for Eastern Victoria
	Victorian Departments and Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Metro And Regional) - Latrobe Valley Authority - Victorian Renewable Energy Advocate (VREA) - National Wind Farm Commissioner - Regional Development Victoria (RDV) - West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority - AusNet - Parks Victoria - VicRoads
	Federal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minister for the Environment & Energy - Shadow Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Local MP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member for Gippsland (and Minister for Infrastructure & Transport)
	Federal Department and agencies	Department of Environment & Energy Civil Aviation Safety Authority
Investors		Potential investors in the wind farm
Media	Local Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yarram Standard - Foster Mirror - Port Albert Tattler (community newsletter) - South Gippsland Sentinel Times - Weekly Times - Gippsland FM104.7 - ABC Gippsland
	State and National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Age - Herald Sun - The Australian - Australian Financial Review - TV news & current affairs channels 7, 9, 10, ABC - ABC Radio - Commercial News Radio

Issues Analysis

Issue category	Key concerns	Management/Mitigation	Stakeholders
Flora and fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on birds - Impact on wedge-tailed eagles - Impact on groundwater - Native vegetation removal 	<p>Extensive environmental studies are required prior to being issued a permit to ensure site suitability and minimal environmental impact.</p> <p>Education on facts regarding impact to birds/wedge-tailed eagles</p>	Local residents surrounding wind farm
Roads and traffic management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased traffic - Impact on roads - Community safety - Logistics of bringing in large components 	<p>Traffic management plan/s will be required to be developed in consultation with relevant authorities, and regularly reviewed and updated to ensure impact is well managed.</p> <p>Traffic Management Liaison Group will be established to ensure key stakeholders have a seat at the table and regularly review outcomes, make changes where necessary.</p> <p>Roads condition reports and rectification to be agreed with local Councils in advance of works.</p>	Local residents VicRoads Wellington Shire Council South Gippsland Shire Council
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction noise - Noise from turbines - Infrasound - Regulation/monitoring of noise levels 	<p>Provide one-on-one noise information sessions to concerned local residents</p> <p>Offer background noise monitoring prior to construction</p> <p>Offer further trips to similar wind farms to provide first hand experience.</p> <p>Provide regular noise monitoring reports</p>	Local residents Local Councils DELWP EPA
Shadow flicker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shadow flicker/blade glint from rotating blades - Potential health impacts 	<p>Provide one-on-one shadow flicker information and assessments to concerned residents.</p> <p>Confirm shadow flicker limits will be achieved at individual, non-hosting residences.</p>	Local residents Local Councils DELWP EPA

		Provide information on mitigation and other measures that will ensure shadow flicker requirements will be met.	
Turbine height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bulk/visual impact - Change in local landscape 	Identify and offer opportunities for screening or other measures to residents within two kilometres	Local residents Wellington Shire Council
Impact on firefighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative impact on fire fighting access and ability - Turbines will not enable aerial firefighting to be used 	<p>Wind farm planning and permit conditions require compliance with CFA Emergency Management Guidelines for Wind Energy Facilities</p> <p>CFA has not identified concerns in relation to the AWF and their ability manage firefighting</p> <p>Education about wind energy facilities and effective fire fighting methods</p>	Local residents Local CFA (?)
Impact on groundwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turbine construction and footings will negatively impact groundwater 	Wind farm planning and permit conditions will ensure groundwater will not be impacted. Environmental monitoring will confirm compliance.	Immediate neighbours
Decline in property values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value of properties within the vicinity of the wind farm will be significantly reduced 	Evidence, including local and international studies suggests there is no negative impact to property values	Local residents
Health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infrasound - Sleep deprivation - Migraines - Low frequency vibrations - Psychological effect 	Information and fact sheets from accredited bodies including AM etc.	Local residents
Distribution of financial benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only host landholders derive any financial benefit from the wind farm 	<p>Potential for non-hosting landholders within 2 kms may receive some financial incentives??</p> <p>Community Support Fund (\$80,000 per year)</p>	Neighbours
Decommissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of facility after decommissioning 	Transparent rehabilitation plans will be provided and shared with local community and stakeholders	Local community Host landholders Wellington Shire Council DELWP

Engagement Program

Phase	Date	Stakeholder/s	Activities undertaken/planned	Outcomes achieved/sought
PHASE 1: PROJECT DEFINITION, FEASIBILITY & PRELIMINARY STUDIES	2008 – 2014	Potential host landowners and neighbours.	Group and one-on-one meetings with identified local landowners and residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established program of ongoing engagement, key contact points and positive relationships with local landowners and neighbouring properties. - To secure leasing arrangements with landowners. - Identify planning and other legislative requirements.
		Local Government	Meetings with key Government agencies.	
		Victorian Government		
PHASE 2: DETAILED STUDIES & PROPOSED LAYOUT	Early 2015 – mid 2017	Host Landowners, Neighbours Residents with turbines within 3kms	<p>Group and one-on-one meetings with identified local landowners and residents.</p> <p>Information and draft Plan displayed at Yarram District Hub 21-25 August, with Synergy/Beveridge Williams attending 25 August for community drop-in-day</p>	<p>Continue ongoing engagement with landowners and residents, to:</p> <p>Discuss preliminary Project plans, and detailed studies and findings that identify opportunities and constraints (environmental, cultural heritage, noise & different turbine models)</p> <p>Establish the most suitable Project layout, taking into account landowner and resident feedback.</p>
		Local Government	Brief Councillors, CEO and key officers	<p>Establish relationships with community representatives and decision makers to provide them with relevant and sufficient information such that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Can effectively communicate with their constituents (where appropriate), o Provide constructive input / feedback to improve the plan where required or overcome hurdles and keep the project on-track, o Understand and champion the benefits of the project benefits in short and longer term.
		Victorian Government	<p>Brief key departments and agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DELWP - Aboriginal Victoria - RDV - Parks Victoria - VicRoads - Latrobe Valley Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform key decision makers across the Victorian Government to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Awareness of timelines, understanding of detailed studies and how impacts will be avoided or mitigated, understanding of the rationale behind the layout design o Their input and feedback to ensure compliance with DELWP Planning for Wind Energy Guidelines and other regulatory/legislative requirements.
		Federal Government	<p>Brief key departments and authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Environment & Energy - CASA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement as required by EPBC Act and other Federal regulations.

Phase	Date	Stakeholder/s	Activities undertaken/planned	Outcomes achieved/sought
PHASE 3A: ASSESSMENT & APPROVALS	August 2017 - ongoing	Host Landowners Residents with turbines within 3kms Community & business groups	Opportunity for public comment through Planning Permit process (statutory). Media releases at milestones (lodgement of planning approval/ public exhibition, planning approval and finalisation of post-approval planning such as management plans etc).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure required detail of information is available and clear to enable informed consideration and comment. - Raise awareness of Community Fund and other project benefits, and project impacts and future management.
		Federal Government (local MP) Victorian Government (local MPs) Local Government	Project update distributed to local federal MP and Wellington Shire Councillors. South Gippsland Shire briefed on the project. Wellington Shire updated and an offer for a Council briefing is made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To local MPs and Councillors informed about Project, and have point of connection with Synergy
		Aboriginal RAP	Continue engagement and working with the local RAP group to develop and undertake surveying with the voluntary Aboriginal heritage management plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RAP are satisfied with the level of investigation undertaken.
		Victorian Government Federal Government (Environment) Local Community	Liaison with Government as required through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Effects Statement (EES) Referral • Planning Permit. Establish Community Reference Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State and Federal Governments to move to Phase 4 - Involve local community in key project matters and ensure two way communication and information flow
PHASE 3B: POST-APPROVALS – WORK REQUIRED BY CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL	<i>Following approvals</i>	Landholders Local Community	<i>(There are a number of actions that will be required post-planning approvals such as preparation of management plans etc and before actual construction occurs – the Consultation Plan will be updated at the time to reflect the planning requirements and conditions including landholder engagement plans, transport management plans, community information and engagement plans</i>	
PHASE 4: CONSTRUCTION & OPERATION		Host Landowners Immediate neighbours	<p><i>Note the following is indicated and will be further refined post approvals:</i></p> <p>Meet regularly with host landowners to organise and update on construction.</p> <p>Provide immediate neighbours with regular updates and advise them of communication channel to raise any issues if they arise with construction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued constructive and transparent communication between Synergy and host landowners and immediate neighbours. - Communication channels for any issues with construction are known and used, and issues responded to in timely manner
		All stakeholders including local community and business groups	Formally establish Community Support Fund Regular project updates, opportunities for community development and Community Fund announcements. Update groups on employment/contracting opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local community is aware of relevant project matters, Community Fund is widely known and grant applications are going to worthy projects.

Phase	Date	Stakeholder/s	Activities undertaken/planned	Outcomes achieved/sought
		Victorian Government	Provide regular progress updates to Government, and invite them to participate in milestones.	- Government is briefed on the community, economic and environmental benefits of the wind farm and has the opportunity to participate in key milestones where appropriate.
		Local Government	Provide regular updates, invite Council to participate in milestones, ensure open communication channels	- Council is briefed on the economic and environmental impacts of the wind farm and benefits to the local community, any issues arising out of project activities is appropriately managed/mitigated.
		Federal Government	Provide regular progress updates to Government, and invite them to participate in milestones.	- Government is briefed on the economic and environmental impacts of the wind farm and benefits to the local community.
PHASE 5: DECOMMISSIONING	<i>Following 20 – 30 year operation</i>		<i>TBC</i>	

