
Sandy Creek Solar Farm

Frequently Asked Questions

March 2022

Following the initial consultation that Lightsource bp has had with community members, including the online and face to face community engagement sessions, please find below responses to some frequently asked questions that have been raised to date. We hope that this information is helpful, as we continue to progress plans on the Sandy Creek Solar Farm Project.

The first FAQ presented outlines information about project ownership. The remaining FAQs are presented in alphabetical order.

Project Owner

Q: Who is Lightsource bp?

A: Lightsource bp is a global market leader in the funding, development and long-term management of large-scale solar projects and smart energy solutions, who work closely with local businesses to deliver sustainable renewable energy projects.

Lightsource bp entered Australia in December 2017, through a partnership between European solar farm developer Lightsource Renewable Energy and global energy company bp. Lightsource bp has a total of 500 MWp across three projects underway with, the Wellington Solar Farm in the final stages of commissioning, and construction of Woolooga and West Wyalong Solar Farms to be completed in mid-2022.

Q: Who is EMM Consulting Pty Limited?

A: EMM Consulting Pty Limited (EMM Consulting) is a leading Australian planning and environmental consultancy. Lightsource bp has engaged EMM Consulting to prepare the Scoping Report and EIS for the Sandy Creek Solar Farm Project.

Community Benefits

Q: How will the local community benefit from this Project?

A: Local benefit is a key aspect for consideration and action by Lightsource bp, and there is a recognition that all developers in the region need to work together to maximise effort and opportunity, particularly for local procurement and project contracting opportunities.

Lightsource bp will work with local communities, to establish a Community Enhancement Fund to support local initiatives. Lightsource bp is also exploring education partnership opportunities with local TAFE centres.

We are also reaching out to the first nation groups.

Consultation and Engagement

Lightsource bp would like to acknowledge that some families are feeling a level of consultation fatigue. There are several mining, solar and wind proposals across the region; all of which are seeking feedback and input. To those who have provided input into the Sandy Creek Solar Farm proposal, we sincerely thank you for your time.

Q: When will face-to-face engagement take place?

A: Consultation took place in early 2022, during the Scoping Phase of the project, with various stakeholders including elected representatives, industry groups and other developers in the area, traditional owners, landowners, nearby neighbours, and people living and working in the nearby townships of Dunedoo and Gulgong.

Consultation will be ongoing throughout the EIS phase to better understand community concerns and interests about the project. Once the draft EIS is released, the NSW Government will formally seek comment from interested persons and organisations.

If you would like to speak with the project team, you do not need to wait for a formal community information session to be advertised. A meeting can be organised at any time by getting in touch with us.

Q: I received project information via registered post and had to drive a long way to collect it.

A: We will continue to work with you to communicate in a way that works for you. Landowners are encouraged to sign up for project updates via email.

Q: What are the consultation opportunities from here?

A: Once the Scoping Report is submitted and SEARs are issued for the project, we will provide an update to the community formally. We will also come out again when the EIS is drafted and seek comment.

Cumulative Effects

Q: How is Lightsource bp working with other renewable energy developers across the region?

A: We sit on a number of development industry bodies and are speaking with the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) about a coordinated approach to development in the region.

Q: What are the cumulative impacts of multiple solar farms/wind farms/transmission lines and battery storage systems in the region?

A: These impacts will be assessed as part of the EIS.

Q: Why is there such a mix of projects, i.e. wind and solar?

A: A combination of approaches is best – wind can be generated at night and solar cannot. Different solutions are also needed for different landscapes.

Q: Regionally, different developers are offering landholders different agreements. The diversity of deals and offers is causing tension and uncertainty within the community.

A: These impacts, particularly to community cohesion, will be assessed as part of the EIS, as part of the Social Impact Assessment.

Energy use – coal versus renewables

Q: Perhaps the energy used to make and install solar panels is no better than using coal?

A: There are more steps in the processing of coal to generate coal fired energy. Energy from the sun is a more direct transfer, which does not require processing and multi-stage conversion.

Q: What happens when the solar panels have reached end of life?

A: The steel and glass used within the panels will be recycled at end of life.

Health

Q: Are there any adverse effects from solar farms?

A: Solar is a passive form of technology, generating electricity without creating any waste products, noise or pollutants, making it an ideal energy source to decarbonise Australian electricity production.

Q: Do solar farms create a microclimate?

A: Studies from overseas suggest that this will not be a flow on effect of the project. There will be shading directly underneath the solar panels, which provides an increase in soil moisture.

Heritage

Q: How will local heritage be protected? It is known that Henry Lawson wrote about the area.

A: Investigation into both Indigenous and European heritage will be undertaken as part of the EIS.

Livelihoods

Q: What opportunities are there for local job seekers, contractors, service providers and businesses to get involved in the Project?

A: Lightsource bp has achieved a 35% local employment ratio at its Wellington site and hopes to do better at Sandy Creek. Lightsource bp also sits on various industry bodies where local employment opportunities are discussed.

During construction there will be a mix of skilled and unskilled labour requirements from the local area.

It's assumed that there will be approximately 10 full time positions required for operations that will come from the region.

Operations

Q: How will energy be transferred from the solar farm into the NSW energy grid?

A: Electricity transmission from the project site into the NSW power grid is yet to be determined. This will involve working with other organisations such as Transgrid and EnergyCo.

Q: How long will the solar panels be there for?

A: Solar panels are designed for a 35-year life. Panels do not go to landfill. The steel and glass used within the panels will be recycled at end of life.

Q: What happens at the end of the project?

A. All solar farm infrastructure will be removed, and land/roads rehabilitated, as required.

Social Amenity

Q: How will Lightsource bp manage the change in vista and sun reflection from the panels?

A: Visual impact studies will be conducted as part of the environmental impact assessment process. Lightsource bp will consider mitigations such as, installing vegetation screening and panels, at a distance from the site boundary.

Solar Panel Maintenance and Water Use

Q: What is the potential for erosion of solar panels from water run-off?

A: Gaps will exist between the solar panels to allow for water run-off. Panels will also be installed on elevated poles to allow for water flow underneath. Spaces between the panels allow for easy repair /replacement of panels over time.

Q: Do the solar panels need to be cleaned regularly?

A: No, the solar panels do not need to be washed regularly; natural rainwater will suffice.

Water used during construction for watering down road surfaces will be trucked in. The project will not be using water from local waterways.

Surroundings

Q: Has Lightsource bp considered the risk of bushfires for this project?

A: Bushfire risk will be assessed as part of the EIS. Buffers will exist along the site boundary and throughout the site to mitigate risk of fire. Weeds will be managed, and grass height kept down by sheep grazing under the panels.

Q: Am I still able to shoot foxes/wild dogs in the area?

A: Yes. Lightsource bp will ensure all fences are well maintained. Regular, weekly security fence checks will be conducted.

Q: Will the site land be purchased or leased by Lightsource bp?

A: The site land will be leased. Lightsource bp will not be purchasing land for this project.

Transport and Traffic – construction

Q: How will local transport issues be managed during construction?

A: Transport will be a key issue to address as part of the EIS. EMM will be conducting a comprehensive transport and traffic and transport assessment, which will also look at any necessary road improvements.

Traffic disruptions will also be considered from a cumulative aspect, including the impacts of other projects in the region and the planned transmission line.

Q: What are the expected truck movements on local roads and how will local road conditions be maintained?

A: During construction there will be increased traffic movements.

One transport route will be selected for truck use during construction. The route is likely to be via one of two options currently under consideration, which is contingent on the selected site access point and the location of network infrastructure currently subject to assessment and design by EnergyCo. A secondary light vehicle access route will also be provided and is still under consideration.

The selected routes will be considered and confirmed during the EIS.

Outside of the construction phase, truck movements will be minimal. Light vehicles will be used to monitor the site for security and identification of any maintenance issues on a weekly basis.

Q: How will contractors and staff navigate the challenges of livestock on major and minor roads?

A: All staff and contractors will receive training and guidance on stock crossings and how to best navigate these situations.

Q: How will piling be undertaken when putting the panels in place during construction?

A: Piling will be performed by a mechanical ram. In certain circumstances concrete bases can be used, which sit roughly 3m below the surface.

Weed Management

Q: Will this project contribute to weed spread in the region?

A: Weeds will be controlled on site and will not contribute to weed spread in the region.

Workforce and Security

Q: Some people have concerns of vandalism and trespassing from a non-local workforce.

A: A Lightsource bp site manager will be contactable and located close to site. Lightsource bp (and their contractors) will not enter any nearby properties without permission and prior agreement.

