Community

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Newsletter #2

Wattle Creek Energy Hub

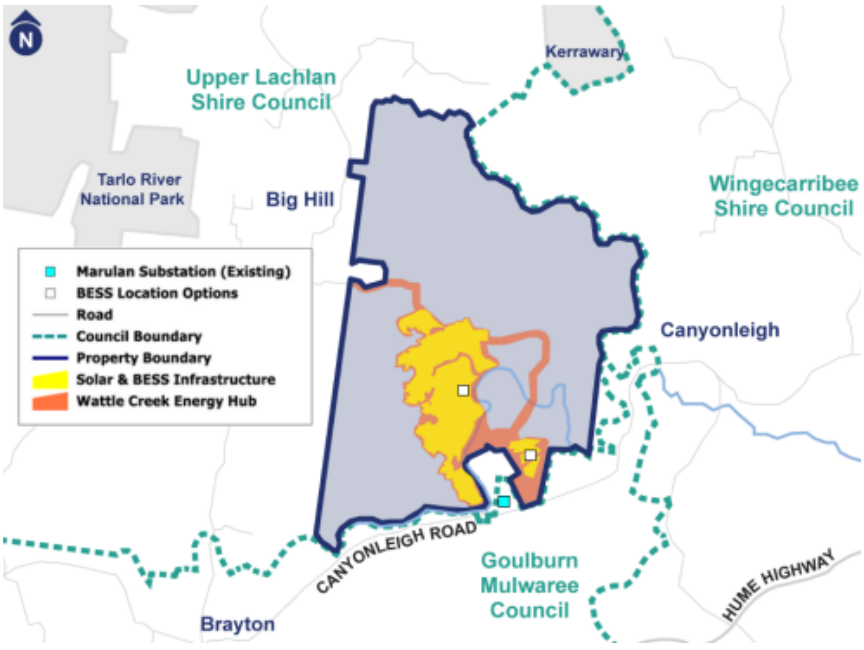
OCTOBER 2023

Wattle Creek Energy Hub - Development Update

The Wattle Creek Energy Hub is a hybrid renewable energy facility proposed to be developed on the 'Arthursleigh' property. Arthursleigh is located east of Big Hill and approximately 8km west of Canyonleigh in the NSW Southern Tablelands region, situated in the Upper Lachlan Shire. The Energy Hub is proposed to include a solar farm and a Battery Energy Storage Facility (BESS).

Early community and stakeholder engagement has assisted in identifying and understanding stakeholder views early in the planning and assessment process, including the project's perceived benefits, issues, and impacts. The drop-in session had a high turnout of people and provided an opportunity to meet with the project team, learn about the project first-hand, and provide feedback.

The Wattle Creek Energy Hub initially included a wind component. Spark Renewables is not proceeding with the wind farm component and is instead focused on developing the solar and BESS components only.



SPARK RENEWABLES

The project is being developed by Spark Renewables, a leading developer and long-term owner and operator of renewable energy assets.

KEY FACTS

1 PROJECT STATUS
Initial community and stakeholder engagement, with the Scoping Report studies completed.

2 CAPACITY
Solar generation of up to 265 megawatts. Battery storage of up to 800 megawatts with a 2-hour duration

3 ANNUAL POWER
Equivalent to ~55,000 houses powered annually*. Will offset ~290,000 tonnes of CO2 annually

4 GRID CONNECTION
The project would connect to the National Electricity Market via a connection the existing Marulan substation.

5 COMMUNITY BENEFITS
Establishment of a community benefit sharing program to support the local community.

*Based on household consumption of 7,229 kWh/year (AER 2020)

**National Greenhouse Accounts Factors (DCCEEW, 2021)

Since our last update, substantial progress has been made on baseline environmental surveys, preliminary infrastructure design, and Scoping Report studies.

All Scoping Report studies, including ecology, landscape & visual, noise, and desk-based cultural heritage studies, have been completed.

Separate scoping reports have been prepared for each of the technology elements and have now been submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment. The solar and BESS scoping reports are available to download from the project website: https://sparkrenewables.com/wattle-creek-energy-hub/

Why this site?

The proposed site is strategically located to take advantage of the existing electricity transmission network, with a proposed connection to the Marulan Substation.

About the site

The University of Sydney owns the farm after being bequeathed in 1979. In addition to operating commercially, the farm is also used for a range of research activities. These include agricultural science, pasture agronomy and unmanned aerial and ground-based drone applications.

If the project proceeds, agricultural land use will continue, with sheep grazing within the solar farm area. The project will also support university research and education through a new on-site test-bed facility, a research fund, and other initiatives.

What is proposed?

Solar

Photovoltaic (PV) panels mounted on single axis trackers that slowly rotate and follow the sun from east to west each day.

Battery

Battery Energy Storage System located within or adjacent to the solar farm, enabling electricity to be stored and then exported as needed.

Studies

- Noise
- Social impact assessment
- Visual amenity
- Biodiversity
- Aboriginal heritage
- European heritage
- Traffic and access
- Contamination
- Flooding and hydrology
- Soils
- Bushfire
- Waste
- Land Use
- Cumulative Impacts

Indicative Development Timeline

What are the Community Benefits?

The local community will benefit from a range of opportunities connected with the proposal if it progresses, including a community fund. Spark Renewables is looking to collaborate with local stakeholders to co-design a program that meets the unique needs of the wider community and delivers long-lasting social, economic and environmental benefits for decades to come.

The project is already delivering jobs. Following a successful engineering internship program commencing in late 2022, Spark Renewables is delighted to have engaged a University of Sydney graduate as a permanent full-time Development Engineer. We have also engaged two other exceptional University of Sydney students as interns, who work with us part-time while completing their degrees.

What approvals are required?

The proposal would be considered a State Significant Development and would require development consent under the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act).

Two Development Applications are proposed to be submitted, one for each component of the proposed project (solar and BESS). These would be accompanied by detailed Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), which would include comprehensive assessments to identify the potential impacts of the Project and outline how to best manage them.

CHAT WITH US

As the benefit scheme is developed, we are keen to hear any ideas from community members.

If you wish to have a chat or organise a time to meet, please contact us via email at info@wattlecreekenergyhub.com or call 1300 271 419.

A detailed Social Impact Assessment (SIA) would also be prepared for each component of the project as part of the EISs. The SIAs would include a comprehensive community engagement program and would be prepared by following the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's (DPE) Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (2021).

The Project may also require approval under the federal Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

What is a scoping report?

A Scoping Report is the first step in the development application process and provides an outline of the proposed project. The report identifies important issues that will require further technical studies, assessment, and consultation. It also acts as a formal request to the DPE to issue the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs).

Who is developing the EISs and SIAs?

Spark Renewables has commissioned Umwelt Environmental and Social Consultants to undertake a series of preliminary environmental and technical assessments. They have also prepared the two Scoping Reports. Umwelt will be consulting with the community alongside Spark Renewables to inform the preparation of the EISs and SIAs.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The NSW Government has a legislated planning process in eight stages to ensure that a project is suitable for the community, economy, and environment, and therefore whether it should be granted a development approval.

Community Consultation

The proposed Wattle Creek Energy Hub project is in the early stages of development and will undergo rigorous planning and assessment.

As part of this, we will continue to undertake extensive community consultation and encourage all stakeholders and community members to participate.

This will occur prior to formal Development Applications being submitted to planning authorities.

PLANNING PROCESS

we are here

Proposal annoucement
Project announced to industry, government and community

Scoping report
Community consultation and preliminary technical studies undertaken

SEARs issued
Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements

EIS and SIA preparation
Community engagement and technical studies to inform the EIS and SIA

EIS submission
Public exhibition for agency and community comment

Response to submissions
Addressing comments and issues raised about the EIS in a Response to Submissions report

Assessing the proposal
Assessment and recommendation by the Department of Planning and Environment

Determination of the proposal
The Minister for Planning or the Independent Planning Commission decides the proposal

Supporting local communities

At Spark Renewables, we care about the land we build on and are committed to supporting the surrounding local communities. We have a track record of delivering diverse benefits, including providing training and employment opportunities and prioritising local procurement of goods and services.

Committed to reconcilation

Spark Renewables is putting in place a Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan and is committed to creating lasting, positive change for Aboriginal communities. We acknowledge that setting a benchmark as part of First Nations participation plans for each of our projects will be an important step to achieving economic empowerment of First Nations people.

Construction & operations

Traditional Owners: Focus on engaging First Nations people and businesses to support the project construction and operation.
Local sourcing: Committed to engaging with local workers and suppliers of goods and services wherever possible, and will set targets to measure our achievements.

Spark Renewables is a member of the Clean Energy Council (CEC) and is a signatory to the CEC's Best Practice Energy Charter for Renewable Energy Developments.

SPARK RENEWABLES

CLEAN ENERGY COUNCIL MEMBER

Call us at **1300 271 419**

Find us on Facebook
facebook.com/wattlecreekenergyhub

Email
info@wattlecreekenergyhub.com