# Alberton Wind Farm – Project Update, September 2018

Over the past few weeks Synergy Wind has held a community information day in Yarram, hosted a site tour of the Bald Hills Wind Farm for interested local community members and received a number of enquiries about the project.

We thought it would be helpful to share some of the questions that we have received and our responses to those questions:

***Why can't the wind farm be located in a more remote part of the area, further from residents?***

There are a number of considerations for locating a wind farm including:

- **Access to good wind resources:** flat, open land near the coast generally has the best wind resource and the least turbulence making the wind farm more effective and efficient.
- **Proximity to the power grid:** connection is important. Electricity needs to be generated close to where it is used as losses are experienced during transmission. The further away you build from the grid and electricity users, the more electricity you lose as you try to deliver it. Also, the further away the connection the greater the cost, which gets passed on to the end consumer by way of the electricity cost once the project is producing.
- **Population density:** in Australia, people live mainly in coastal areas. The planning requirement for permission from residence owners within 1km of a proposed turbine means that projects are only viable in rural areas, where landowners are spread out more than they are in urban areas.
- **Planning overlays:** wind farms are considered to be an industrial use of a space and cannot be built in a residential area. Areas zoned for farming / rural use and industrial use are best because wind farms can operate with very little impact on the existing use of the land and the use of the land as a resource is more immediately understood in such areas.

  The Alberton Wind Farm is located on land zoned for farming / rural use and land that has a State Resources overlay for brown coal. While that overlay is there, the land can never be developed for urban, residential living.

  The Wellington Planning scheme states that land zoned farming or for rural use is intended to remain so, that planning decisions should favour maintaining large landholdings for rural use, and that renewable energy uses consistent with rural use should be encouraged.

While some interruption to operations will occur during construction, once the wind farm is up and running, farming activities can continue unimpeded.

**Environmental impacts:** Many studies and assessments have been undertaken to ensure that environmental impacts have been minimised. All of the reports can be found at http://www.synergy-wind.com/projects/alberton-wind-farm/planning-application-documentation/

The proposed location of the Alberton Wind Farm is on cleared farming land that has very little remnant native vegetation. Additionally, offsets will be put in place for the removal of any native vegetation.

The project area is outside of the RAMSAR and Nooramunga reserve by some distance.

- **Displacement of carbon**: building wind farms in or near the Latrobe Valley where existing infrastructure for electricity transmission exists makes sense when the existing coal fired power stations are being phased out over a period of time.

***Why can't the project be moved offshore?***

Synergy Wind is focussed on identifying land based renewable energy projects. The Alberton Wind Farm has always been intended as on shore wind farm – all of the feasibility, planning and assessment process has been undertaken on that basis.

Currently there are no off shore wind farms operating or under construction in Australia. The proposed Star of the South project off the coast of South Gippsland is currently at feasibility stage, and some years away from being realised.

Many wind farms, on and off-shore, will be required to meet Australia's energy usage needs while meeting carbon emission targets.

***Who owns Synergy Wind?***

Synergy Wind is owned and funded by private investors (Australian and German) who have experience in the renewable energy industry from many perspectives, including as hosts of wind turbines and solar panels, as developers and owners of wind farms, and as owners and users of biomass plants.

Synergy Wind is committed to developing projects that promote increased renewable energy usage and create returns for everyone involved, including local communities.

***How many employees does Synergy Wind have?***

Currently Synergy has one direct employee (Australian), and contracts a team of local (Victorian) people who provide specialist input on environmental, planning, development and engineering matters.

Subject to planning approval, the project will provide a range of additional opportunities for local jobs and the local economy including increased investment and employment in the region during construction, and opportunities for local supplier contracts, including transport, delivery, materials, and other services (Synergy is already seeking expressions of interest from local suppliers). Indirect employment during

construction is expected to generate jobs for 270 people locally, 870 jobs within Victoria and 1360 jobs nationally.

Once operating the project will employ 10-12 permanent staff.

***What experience does Synergy Wind have in constructing wind farms?***

Synergy Wind's directors and investors have experience in the renewable energy industry from many perspectives, including as hosts of wind turbines and solar panels, as developers and owners of wind farms, and as owners and users of biomass plants.

The usual process for constructing a wind farm is to put the approved project out to tender on an EPC/turnkey basis with turbine manufacturers and expert construction contractors. The Alberton Wind Farm will be constructed using the same process with requirements for inclusion of local businesses and service providers that have shown interest in participating in the project during the tender process.

Similarly, the operation and maintenance of wind farms is usually subcontracted out to expert contractors. Again, this will be the case with the Alberton Wind Farm.

**Will the project negatively impact the value of my property?**

There haven't been broad scale studies into the impact of wind farms on surrounding property values in Australia to date. Some smaller studies have been undertaken. The findings of these do vary depending on the location, density and use of a particular area. Following are a range of articles looking at this topic:

NSW Government Review of the Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values
Wind Farms and Property Values
Wind Farms Change Property Values
Why do wind farms drag down house prices in some places but not others?

***Will there be any noise from the wind farm?***

Wind turbines are a relatively quiet form of energy. There will be some sound from the wind farm but experience with other wind farms indicates that this will largely masked by the noise of the wind itself. Compliance with wind energy facility noise guidelines as set out in the planning regulations is compulsory.

There are a number of articles and papers that have been published on this subject. The following links are a starting point for those wanting to find out more:

EPA – Wind Farms, Sound and Health
Waubra Foundation – Wind Farms and Noise
Brain can 'hear' wind farm noise
The real science on wind farms, noise, infrasound and health

***Will there be opportunities for local employment or suppliers?***

There will certainly be opportunities for local employment or suppliers. The project has and will have requirements for the inclusion of local businesses and service providers that have shown interest in participating in the project. Synergy Wind continues to seek expressions of interest from local businesses and service providers and its website includes an employment section where people can register their interest and lodge a capability statement: http://www.synergy-wind.com/employment/

***What are the next steps for the project?***

Interested community members have the opportunity to submit comments on the planning permit application to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The Department has advised that it will not make a decision on the permit application before 1 October 2018.

Should the permit be granted, Synergy Wind expects that the timeframe to construct and commission the project would be around two and half years.