Western Plains Wind Farm

Project Update: Answering Community Questions

This update answers a number of key questions that have been asked about the proposed Western Plains Wind Farm, including questions asked during a community meeting held in Stanley in July 2021.

Why Western Plains Wind Farm?

Western Plains was first identified as a potential wind farm site around 15 years ago, due to its strong winds, compatible land use, proximity to the transmission network and distance from the town of Stanley. The project, located on privately owned land used for cattle grazing, has been in development for four years.

The area is in Tasmania's North West Renewable Energy Zone, a zone identified by the Australian Energy Market Operator as optimal for new renewable energy projects, which are urgently needed to meet national energy demand. Due to site's extraordinary wind resource the wind farm is predicted to have a high energy output for its size.

The nearest wind turbine would be over 4km from the majority of residences in the Stanley township. The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner recommends consideration be given to a range of setback distances from wind turbines and suggests a setback distance from a materially populated township may be appropriate to preserve amenity (see Recommendation 5.2.8.5 in the Commissioner's 2019 Annual Report at aeic.gov.au).

Epuron appreciates the importance of preserving amenity for the Stanley township. The setback distance has been carefully considered in the design of the project and a thorough, independent visual impact assessment has been done (see overleaf).

Will the wind farm impact local tourism?

Stanley's main scenic attraction, The Nut, is almost 5km from the nearest wind turbine, and wind turbines would not be visible from most of the town due to the distance and natural escarpment between Stanley and the wind farm.

Operating wind farms can be part of their local tourism industry, such as Tasmania's Woolnorth Wind Farm in the north-west and Musselroe Wind Farm in the north-east. There are no examples in Australia where local tourism has been negatively affected by a wind farm, nor any studies to evidence that wind farms have a negative impact on tourism.

Will the wind farm affect local property values?

There is no evidence that wind farms affect property values, or to show any correlation between wind farms and property values.

Two separate studies into whether wind farms influence property values have been done by the NSW Government and both found there to be no link.

Will the height of the wind turbines change?

The development application is for a planning envelope that specifies the maximum dimensions of the wind turbine, in this case a tip height of 150m (see below).

If the project is approved only a wind turbine with the same maximum dimensions can be installed. Any future owner must abide by the obligations, conditions and commitments attached to the approval.

In the event there is a long delay before construction and wind turbine technology has advanced the owner may seek to use a different wind turbine. If it is not consistent with the approval this would require a modification application which would involve new assessments and public exhibition.

In the case of Western Plains Wind Farm an increase in the wind turbine height serves no purpose. The output of the proposed wind turbine already fills the powerline and the available capacity at Port Latta substation.



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Visibility of wind turbines

Photomontages have been produced to show what the wind farm would look like from various public viewpoints. These are compiled using specialist industry software that produces a digital wireframe of the wind farm in the landscape. Precise distances and the turbine layout and dimensions ensure the resulting images are true to scale and provide an accurate representation.

We encourage people to judge visibility of the wind farm by official photomontages rather than guessed artist's impressions like the example below which has been shared on social media. These can be highly inaccurate and misleading.

A Zone of Visual Influence map has been prepared to show where wind turbines, or parts of them, would be visible. This and a number of photomontages like the example below are available on the project website. These show that wind turbines will not be visible from most parts of the town due to a natural escarpment which obstructs the view. A detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by independent specialists and will be available when the Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (DPEMP) is put on public exhibition.

What are the job opportunities?

The project is expected to generate approximately 130 jobs during a 12 month construction period as well as a few ongoing jobs for operation, routine maintenance and periodic work for specialist maintenance, monitoring and ecology. Operation and maintenance personnel usually live locally.

What are some other community benefits?

A proposed community fund of \$3,000 per installed wind turbine annually would provide \$36,000 per year (indexed) for the life of the project to support local projects and initiatives. More broadly, the project would support the recognised and urgent need for new renewable energy sources to support Tasmania's renewable energy target and Australia's clean energy transition.



Above: A properly scaled digital wireframe (indicated by arrow above left) superimposed on a photograph with an artist's impression (above right) of the proposed wind farm as seen from Anthony Beach. The artist's impression depicts wind turbines approximately three times the size of those proposed, spanning an area twice the size of the site and locates the project on top of houses and much closer to Stanley.

Below: A photomontage of the view from Church St in Stanley shows a few wind turbine tips would be visible from that location (see arrows).



Connecting to the network

A new 33 kV underground powerline is proposed to connect the wind farm to Port Latta substation. It is proposed to be underground for its entire 25km length based on community consultation, discussion with involved landowners, practicality of going both above and underground and to reduce visual impact.

The powerline is part of the proposal and would be installed at the expense of the project. It would be a dedicated line to connect the wind farm to the substation and not part of the shared network.

Connection studies are well advanced and once these have been completed a connection application will be filed with TasNetworks.

Where would the power go?

The electricity generated by the Western Plains Wind Farm would feed into the grid and service local demand.

The wind farm may bid into the energy market to sell the power or have a power purchase agreement (PPA). It may also be contracted to a third party or involve a mix of some or all of these.

Until there is an approved project to take to market it is too early to know.

Who pays for decommissioning?

Wind turbines have an operational life of around 25 years. Options at the end of that period include repowering the site with new infrastructure or decommissioning.

If the owner decided to decommission the wind farm decommissioning would be managed and paid for by the owner in line with the permit and land agreements.

A decommissioning fund would be established in the years prior and decommissioning would likely be completed within 18 months of the wind farm ceasing operation.

Details of projects Epuron has sold

To date Epuron has sold seven approved wind farm projects. Four of these are now in operation and three are due for construction. Details of all Epuron's sold and current projects are available on the company's website: epuron.com.au

Next steps

Epuron is finalising the DPEMP for submission to the EPA and Circular Head Council. Once it has been accepted by the EPA and Council it will be put on public exhibition for all parties to review the assessment reports and full details of the proposal.

During the public exhibition period Epuron will host another local information session to give community members an opportunity to discuss the final proposal and reports with the project team.

Thank you

Epuron has been a leader in the growth of Australia's renewable energy capacity for the past 18 years. We are committed to the Clean Energy Council's Best Practice Charter and know that collaboration with local communities is fundamental for project success.

The planning process for wind farms is lengthy and rigorous, and the EPA requires comprehensive, accurate, technical and evidence-based assessments for the DPEMP.

Thank you to everyone who is engaging with us on this project. We will continue to work with you to understand and try to resolve any concerns and to maximise the benefits of the project for the Stanley community.

If anyone has comments or concerns they are invited to contact the project team or submit a feedback form via the project website (details overleaf).

To receive project updates via email register online at: <u>epuron.com.au/mailing-list-details/</u>



Turbine noise

A thorough and technical noise assessment by acoustic specialists is an important requirement for the DPEMP.

Noise assessment for a wind farm involves applying the noise levels from the candidate wind turbine at all proposed wind turbine locations across the site and predicting the noise associated with the operation of the full wind farm.

This has been completed and the project is predicted to be well within the limits specified by the EPA, which is 40dB(A) or the background level plus 5 dB(A), whichever is greater.

Wind monitoring also shows that the dominant wind directions are Westerly and South-Westerly, across the site and out to Bass Strait.

Leading acoustic specialists Marshall Day Acoustics have undertaken the Noise Assessment. Their report will be available when the DPEMP is on public exhibition.

Noise compliance and monitoring

Planning - Compliance with the EPA's noise limits must be demonstrated at the planning stage using predictive modelling based on the candidate wind turbine.

Post approval - When the actual wind turbine to be installed is selected the noise assessment must be repeated to demonstrate to the EPA again that it is predicted to comply with the limits.

Operation - After installation the wind farm is subject to noise monitoring to ensure it is noise compliant during operation.



Above: map shows the maximum predicted noise levels based on the candidate wind turbine.

Maximum noise level refers to the maximum level of noise that could be heard on occasion.

Right: Figure 1 shows the wind distribution recorded by the onsite wind monitoring mast.

Wind direction is from where the wind originates. The dominant wind directions at the site are Westerly and South Westerly, blowing from W, W-S-W to E, E-N-E.





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