

Sandy Creek Solar Farm

Frequently Asked Questions

FEBRUARY 2023



Project owner

Q: Who is Lightsource bp?

Lightsource bp is a global market leader in the development, funding, construction and long-term management of large-scale solar projects and smart energy solutions. It is a 50:50 joint venture with global energy company bp.

Lightsource bp is the largest solar developer and owner in Australia with five projects totalling 1GWp of generating capacity in operation and under construction.

Lightsource bp prioritises close engagement with the communities it operates in and works closely with local businesses and individuals to deliver sustainable renewable energy projects in a manner that reduces impacts and increases local benefits.

Q: Who is EMM Consulting?

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



Consultation and engagement

Lightsource bp would like to acknowledge that some community members may be feeling a level of consultation fatigue. There are currently several mining, solar and wind proposals underway across the region, all of which are seeking feedback and input. We sincerely thank everyone who has provided input into the Sandy Creek Solar Farm proposal to date.

Q: Is any future face-to-face engagement planned for the Project?

Consultation took place in early 2022 during the Scoping Phase, with input from various stakeholder groups. A summary of the activities undertaken can be accessed here: <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/sandy-creek-solar-farm>.

Consultation will be ongoing throughout the EIS phase to better understand community feedback and interest in the Project. Community Information Sessions will be held in mid-2023 to share the findings of the EIS and seek further feedback.

Once the EIS is released, the NSW Government will formally seek comment from interested persons and organisations.

Q: I received project information via registered post and had to drive a long way to collect it. Is there any other way I can received Project updates?

We will continue to work with you to share information in a way that works for you.

Landowners are encouraged to sign up for Project updates via email.

Community benefits

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

Lightsource bp is committed to being a responsible neighbour and engaging with the community in a proactive and effective manner. Should the Project be approved, it will be offering direct and indirect community benefits by providing local jobs, procurement, and construction contracts.

Lightsource bp is investigating options for a Community Benefit Fund to distribute contributions to the area, including immediate neighbours and the larger community. Lightsource bp values and welcomes feedback and suggestions on priority areas in the community requiring support, as well as how the community would prefer to see such a fund administered. The Community Benefit Fund will be developed further during the development of the EIS.

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.

Cumulative effects

Q: What is being done to address cumulative impacts in the area?

As a developer within the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), Lightsource bp acknowledges community concerns regarding the cumulative impact of multiple projects being proposed.

From a project perspective, cumulative impacts will be assessed as part of the technical studies being undertaken – for example, the traffic and transport assessment and social impact assessment.

At a regional level, EnergyCo is responsible for leading the delivery of REZ's, as part of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. EnergyCo is currently undertaking technical studies to investigate the cumulative impacts and demands of projects and identify strategic opportunities to minimise disruption and optimise outcomes for local communities.

Please visit energyco.nsw.gov.au for more information.

Health

Q: Are there any adverse effects from solar farms?

No. Solar is a passive form of technology, generating electricity without creating any waste products, noise, or pollutants, making it an ideal energy source to help decarbonise Australia's electricity system.

Q: Do solar farms create a microclimate?

Studies from overseas demonstrate that any heat created by a solar farm dissipates quickly, and in some circumstances large-scale solar farms have a cooling effect on the land surrounding them due to the increased shading. This also has the added benefit of increasing soil moisture.



Heritage

Q: How is indigenous heritage being assessed for this project?

An Aboriginal heritage assessment will be completed in accordance with the requirements of the SEARs, and in accordance with relevant legislation, guidelines and standards. These include:

- Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (OEH, 2011).
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents (DECCW 2010).
- Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigation of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales (DECCW 2010).

The project team will consult with local Aboriginal organisations and Traditional Owners. Joint archaeological surveys and test excavations will be undertaken to help identify any important Aboriginal sites, objects and places. Aboriginal parties will also be involved in the formulation of strategies to help manage and care for the site if the development is approved.

Q: What is historical heritage and how is it being assessed for this project?

An historical heritage assessment will investigate any archaeology/sites of importance post European contact in 1788.

Q: What are the First Nation Guidelines?

The NSW Government has issued these guidelines in consultation and negotiation with local Aboriginal communities for energy infrastructure delivered under the *Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap*. These guidelines – required under section 4(1) of the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 – will provide a foundation for increasing employment and income opportunities for local Aboriginal communities.

The implementation of these guidelines is being led by EnergyCo. Please visit <https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-infrastructure-roadmap/first-nations> for more information.

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

A: Investigations into the local heritage will be undertaken as part of the impact assessment studies.

Visual amenity

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

Solar panels are generally designed to absorb light and reflect very little sunlight. Potential glint and glare and visual impacts from the Project, as well as mitigation strategies, will be assessed as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Glint and Glare Assessments to be prepared during the EIS phase.

Mitigation strategies could include options such as visual screening using trees and adjusting the layout to relocate panels to avoid areas of high visual impact. Lightsource bp is actively looking into design options to reduce or eliminate visual impacts on nearby residences.

Photomontages illustrating views of the Project from multiple viewpoints and residences will be made available as part of the EIS phase to allow for further feedback and design refinement.

Workforce and security

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

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

Bushfire risk

Q: Has Lightsource bp considered the risk of bushfires?

A bushfire threat assessment will be undertaken as part of the EIS process, informing a Bush Fire Management Plan (BFMP) which will be developed in accordance with the requirements of the Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019. Consultation with the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and/or NSW Fire and Rescue will be undertaken during preparation of the BFMP.

Lightsource bp will undertake vegetation management for the life of the Project, as well as implement strategies such as on-site water tanks, an Asset Protection Zone, perimeter roads to serve as a fire break, strategic placement of access gates, management of grass height, and 24/7 monitoring. Two to four operational staff will be present and monitoring the site on a full-time basis.

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.

Weed management

Q: Will the Project contribute to weed spread in the region?

Weeds will be controlled on site. Management strategies will be documented in an overarching Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Transport and traffic – construction

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

A detailed Traffic Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the EIS, in consultation with the local Councils. This assessment will identify any road upgrades required to the proposed transport route to accommodate the Project's construction traffic.

Any required road upgrades would be undertaken prior to construction commencing and will be followed by a dilapidation survey to record the condition of the roads.

During construction, Lightsource bp will be responsible for maintaining the condition of the roads along the local transport routes. Following construction Lightsource bp will fully restore the local roads to the condition recorded in the dilapidation survey.

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

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

During construction there will be increased traffic movements. Transport routes will be selected for truck and light vehicle access and these routes will be considered and confirmed as part of the EIS.

Outside of the construction phase truck movements will be minimal and light vehicles will be used for security and maintenance.

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

All staff and contractors will receive training and guidance on managing stock crossings.

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

Piling will be performed by a mechanical ram. Concrete bases are used in some circumstances, which sit roughly three metres below the surface.



Operations

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

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.

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

Current plans propose that the Project will be operational for at least 35 years. At that time Lightsource bp will either extend the Project life using existing infrastructure, repower the site by replacing key components, or decommission the Project.

Q: What happens at the end of the Project?

When the Project is decommissioned all infrastructure will be removed and the land returned to its previous use. Lightsource bp has a partnership with Lotus Energy to manage the recycling of solar panels, including during decommissioning and throughout the life of the Project.

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

The Project area will be fully contained and fenced. Activities on adjacent properties will not be impacted by the proposed solar farm.

Employment and contractor opportunities

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

The Project will create about 600 full time jobs during construction and 10 ongoing full time jobs during operation. Lightsource bp intends to source employment locally as much as possible to maximise economic benefits for the community.

Additionally, Lightsource bp will work closely with the local Councils and other key stakeholders to maximise local procurement and employment opportunities.

If you are interested in keeping up to date with opportunities, please register your interest at www.lightsourcebp.com/au/projects/sandy-creek-solar-farm. More details will be available as the project progresses.

Approvals, process, and timing

Q: How is the proposed Sandy Creek Solar Farm Project being assessed?

The proposed Project is being assessed as a State significant development (SSD), under Part 4 of the New South Wales (NSW) *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) is the determining authority for SSD applications.

Q: What are the steps in the approvals process?

The figure (right) shows the steps within the approvals process, what stage we are currently at, and the likely timing of each stage.

Q: When was the Scoping Report completed and what were the findings?

The Scoping Report was completed in April 2022. A copy of the report can be found online at: <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/sandy-creek-solar-farm>.

Q: What are the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs)?

The SEARs outline the site investigations, studies and consultation required as part of undertaking the environmental, social and economic impact assessments, and preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Project.

The SEARs require the following impact assessment investigations be undertaken for this Project:

- Biodiversity
- Heritage (Aboriginal and historic)
- Land
- Visual
- Noise
- Transport
- Water
- Hazards
- Social Impact
- Economic
- Waste

The SEARs are available to view online at: <https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/sandy-creek-solar-farm>.

Contact us

If you have feedback or questions about the Project, please feel free to reach out to the team at any stage.

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