



**RES Australia**

**Whittingham Solar Farm**

**Stakeholder Management & Communication Strategy**

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**Ref:**

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Stakeholder Management and Communications Strategy is to:

- Accord with the CEC Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Development (of which RES is a founding signatory). The Charter requires us to engage respectfully with the local community, to seek their views and input before finalising the design of the project and submitting a development application.
- Set out indicative timeframes for engagement during the development of the project.
- Identify relevant stakeholders and communities relevant to the development of the Whittingham Solar Farm
- Identify specific mechanisms for engagement with stakeholders and communities.
- Identify any known or potential stakeholder and communities issues or concerns relevant to the development of the project, and incorporate feedback from relevant stakeholders where possible.

### 1.2 Principles and Objectives of Engagement

The principles underpinning community engagement adopted by RES Australia Pty Ltd (RES) align with The Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Developments developed by the Clean Energy Council.

In adopting the principles of the Guideline, RES commits to the following concerning the development of the Whittingham Solar Farm project:

- Openness. Relevant information will be shared with the community in a format that is clear, accurate, timely and honest.
- Inclusiveness. RES will work with project stakeholders to ensure their perspectives are considered.
- Responsiveness. All community concerns will be listened and responded to.
- Accountability. The project will continue to monitor, evaluate and disclose information about project activities and the identified positive and negative impacts of the project.

In turn the specific objectives concerning community engagement for the Whittingham Solar Farm project are:

- To provide accurate and timely information to all stakeholders and members of the community about the Whittingham Solar Farm project.
- To listen and respond to community opinions and concerns.
- To educate stakeholders and interested members of the community about Solar farm developments, renewable energy and the benefits to the community and wider Australian economy.
- To make information available to address false information/claims/misconceptions about the project and more broadly solar farm developments.

- To create confidence in both the RES business and the project amongst the local community.
- The engagement plan takes account of the challenges faced by Covid19.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

### 2.1 Key Project Milestones

- Drop-in Session Whittingham Public Hall Winter 2020. Refer to table 2.3 as an alternative option for a Drop in Session subject to Covid19 restrictions.
- Submission of a planning application expected in Spring 2020
- Estimated Construction Date, Spring 2021

### 2.2 Existing consultation:

Tool:	Timeframe:
Project website, email and free phone number	Website: <a href="http://www.whittingham-solarfarm.com/">http://www.whittingham-solarfarm.com/</a> Project email: <a href="mailto:info@whittingham-solarfarm.com">info@whittingham-solarfarm.com</a> Free Phone Number: 1800 118 737
Council briefings	A meeting was held at Singleton Council on 20th August 2019, with Brooke Davey Senior Planner.  An email dated 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 was sent to the Director of Planning (Mark Ihlein) providing details of the proposal.  An email dated 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 was sent to the General Manager, Director of Planning, the Mayor and Councillors, proposing a presentation at Council offices. The General Manager has advised he will be in touch with a suitable date and time.
Residential Consultation (nearby landowners).	A letter was posted to 13 landowners on the 24th and 26th February to nearby properties within a 3km radius. An example of the letter is attached below. RES made follow-up phone calls on the 25 <sup>th</sup> and 26 <sup>th</sup> of February to arrange meetings with those residents close to the site and potentially most affected.  Meetings were held with seven landowners on the 27 <sup>th</sup> and 28 <sup>th</sup> February.  The issues raised at the meeting were recorded and included within the Sears report. RES responded to each of the landowners, outlining their concerns, and updating the website with new information based on the main queries raised.
Public Meeting	A public meeting was held at the Whittingham Hall on the 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2019, as organised by residents. RES presented and answered questions. Approximately 30 people attended including several Councillors, the Mayor and members of the public. RES includes all attendees who have registered their contact details for further communications.



### 2.3 Engagement Tools

Tool:	Timeframe and details:	Alternative plan due to Covid-19
Online (Project website, email, free phone number)	<p>Website: <a href="http://www.whittingham-solarfarm.com/">http://www.whittingham-solarfarm.com/</a></p> <p>Project email: <a href="mailto:info@whittingham-solarfarm.com">info@whittingham-solarfarm.com</a></p> <p>Free Phone Number: 1800 118 737</p> <p>Information on the website</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Project Details</li> <li>2. Project location</li> <li>3. Timelines and Subscriptions to news updates</li> <li>4. Benefits</li> <li>5. FAQ's</li> <li>6. News</li> <li>7. Contact Details</li> <li>8. About RES</li> </ol> <p>Information to be added when available</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sears response, link to DPIE portal</li> <li>2. EIA, link to DPIE portal</li> <li>3. Proposed Solar Farm Design following additional studies.</li> <li>4. Regular update of timelines</li> </ol>	No change/ questions and concerns raised will be included to the FAQs and a response will be given.
Council briefings	<p>Periodic meetings with council officers to provide updates</p> <p>Regular updates to Councillors and MP's, the General Manager at Singleton Council, and the Director of Planning. (Emails, Newsletters, phone calls)</p>	Regular updates via telephone calls and, or video conference conferencing, emails and newsletters with council officers and MP's.

Residential Consultation (nearby landowners)	<p>Meetings with neighbouring residents and adjoining landowners as required and requested, and when RES have important news or updates.</p> <p>The objective is to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify potential management and mitigation measures that address the needs of the Developer, and the community and other stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Explore possible alternatives to reduce these disagreements, and establish negotiable elements of design, technologies and locations.</li> </ol>	Phone calls with neighbouring residents and adjoining landowners as required and requested, as and when RES have important news or updates.
Newsletter via mail drop to houses within 3km of project site , meetings and newspaper advertisement.	Two weeks before the community drop-in session. (See below).	<p>A detailed newsletter, including a constraints map and solar farm design.</p> <p>The newsletters shall encourage residents to call RES for further information or visit the website.</p> <p>To be posted to all residents within a 3km radius of the site, and also including local Councillors, State and Federal MP's, and other individuals that have registered an interest and stakeholders.</p>
Community information session	<p>RES will hold a community drop-in session when we complete detailed surveys and constraints assessments. A drop-in session is proposed at Whittingham Hall and forecast to take place in Winter 2020. (The date to be confirmed). Newspaper advert and mail drop letter to advertise.</p> <p>There will be information boards providing key information on the project. This will provide an opportunity for the local community to obtain information, ask questions and provide additional feedback on the development.</p>	<p>The newsletters to include a reference to an online feedback form and include a hardcopy feedback form.</p> <p>The newsletters will be followed up with phone calls with all members of the public where there has been existing contact. I.e. the initial residential community consultation on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28 February and those individuals that attended the public meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March and have subscribed to news on the website.</p> <p>The website will provide a detailed information section relating to the drop-in session, including the design and justification of the layout following the completion of surveys and assessments prior to the design being finalised.</p>

		<p>A feedback log of the main concerns and questions raised at any time during the consultation process will be added to the website. This will include a table of issues raised and a specific response to that issue. Where issues raised have not been taken into account, an explanation of why this is the case.</p>
Other	<p>RES Australia will identify a comprehensive list of stakeholders in the local area and create a stakeholder database. The database will be used to target and inform communications throughout the project development and building phase.</p> <p>Press releases.</p> <p>Adverts in the paper.</p> <p>A dedicated website promoting the project to local business with the ability to leave an expression of interest.</p> <p>Option to subscribe to news updates on the project website.</p>	No change

## KNOWN OR POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDER ISSUES OR CONCERNS RELEVANT TO THE DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 Council

- Under the Act, Singleton Council (SC) have the right to raise concerns regarding the project under the provisions of the LEP and DCP, and the State as assessing manager are required to consider their material.
- Traffic - SC stated that generally, they prefer the condition that the rural roads are in to be maintained as a result of the development. They stated they would discuss internally regarding their preferences regarding a potential upgrade.

### 3.2 NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

- Consultation with the adjoining landholders/ community should be undertaken/ commenced prior to lodgement of SEARS request;
- Consultation with the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) will be required prior to lodgement of the SEARS Response to determine the extent of visual impact mitigation along the New England Highway frontage;
- DPIE detailed that the following assessments should be undertaken in the scoping report:
  - o Noise impact assessment
  - o Existing Mineral explorations;
  - o Socio-economic assessment (for example to include near-by accommodation options for the construction staff highlighted).



## STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION & ANALYSING

Interest Group:	Stakeholder & Contact Details:	Interest:	Level of Interest:	Engagement Activities:
Federal and State Representation	Federal Member for Hunter Joel Fitzgibbon j.fitzgibbon.mp@aph.gov.au (02) 4991 1022	Federal member of Parliament.	TBC	Correspondence with an offer for face to face briefing. Keep informed with a newsletter or as otherwise agreed with the member.
	State Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen upperhunter@parliament.nsw.gov.au (02) 6543 1065	State member of Parliament.	TBC	Correspondence with an offer for face to face briefing. Keep informed with a newsletter or as otherwise agreed with the member.
Local Government	Singleton Council Brooke Davey - Senior Development Planner bdavey@singleton.nsw.gov.au (02) 6578 7290 Mary-Anne Crawford <a href="mailto:mcrawford@singleton.nsw.gov.au">mcrawford@singleton.nsw.gov.au</a>  Mark Ihlein Director of Planning <a href="mailto:mihlein@singleton.nsw.gov.au">mihlein@singleton.nsw.gov.au</a>  Jason Linnane General Manager 02 6578 7206 0417 419 408 <a href="mailto:jlinnane@singleton.nsw.gov.au">jlinnane@singleton.nsw.gov.au</a>	Roads authority for local roads. Creation of economic and employment opportunities. Community benefits.	High	Correspondence, briefings and meetings with Councillors and Council Officers.
Federal Government	Dept. of Environment & Energy 1800 803 772	Authority for EPBC approvals. Compliance with EPBC Act.	Medium	Correspondence albeit EPBC referable flora and fauna on the site, will be assessed under the

		Potential environmental impacts.		bilateral assessment process with NSW and the Federal Government. Meetings to be arranged if and when required.
	Clean Energy Regulator 1300 553 542	Impacts on carbon reduction.	Low	Correspondence.
NSW STATE GOVERNMENT	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Singleton Office Iwan Davies - A/Team Leader - Energy & Resources   Planning & Assessments E: <a href="mailto:iwan.davies@planning.nsw.gov.au">iwan.davies@planning.nsw.gov.au</a> T: 02 9274 6296 Tatsiana Bandaruk - Energy and Resources   Department of Planning, Industry and Environment E: <a href="mailto:Tatsiana.Bandaruk@planning.nsw.gov.au">Tatsiana.Bandaruk@planning.nsw.gov.au</a> T: 02 8275 1349	Planning authority for Projects of State Significance. Potential environmental impacts.	High	Regular briefings and regular meetings with representatives of the DPIE.
	Biodiversity and Conservation Division T: Steven Cox <a href="mailto:Steven.cox@environment.nsw.gov.au">Steven.cox@environment.nsw.gov.au</a> (02) 9995 5000	Heritage Impact Permit authority. Potential environmental and heritage impacts.	High	Correspondence, briefings and / or meetings.
	Environmental Protection Agency <a href="mailto:nfo@epa.nsw.gov.au">nfo@epa.nsw.gov.au</a> (02) 9995 5555	Authority for Environmental Protection Licences. Potential environmental impacts.	Low	Correspondence.
	Roads and Maritime Services Peter Marler - Manager of Land Use Assessment E: <a href="mailto:peter.c.marler@rms.nsw.gov.au">peter.c.marler@rms.nsw.gov.au</a> M: 0427 530 849	Transport impacts on State roads.	High	Correspondence, briefings and / or meetings.

	<p>Tim Chapman - Development Assessment Officer E:<a href="mailto:Timothy.CHAPMAN@rms.nsw.gov.au">Timothy.CHAPMAN@rms.nsw.gov.au</a> M: 0412 274 356</p>			
Economic Development	<p>RDA Hunter Room AG-5, Block A, 266 Maitland Road Tighes Hill NSW 2297 (02) 4940 8355</p>	Economic development.	Low	<p>Correspondence. Keep up to date with newsletters, website and / or local media.</p>
	<p>Invest in New South Wales Hunter Level 5, 26 Honeysuckle Dr NEWCASTLE NSW 2300 <a href="https://www.investregional.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/">https://www.investregional.nsw.gov.au/regions/hunter/</a></p>	Economic development.	Low	<p>Correspondence. Keep up to date with newsletters, website and / or local media.</p>
	<p>(Federal Government) Dept. of Infrastructure and Regional Development PO Box 594, CANBERRA ACT 2601 (02) 6274 7111 1800 075 001 <a href="https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/utilities/contact.aspx">https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/utilities/contact.aspx</a></p>	Opportunities for regional growth.	Low	<p>Correspondence.</p>
Tourism	<p>Destination NSW Level 2, 88 Cumberland Street Sydney NSW 2000 (02) 9931 1111 <a href="https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/contact-us">https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/contact-us</a></p>	<p>Impacts on tourism. Economic development.</p>	Low	<p>Correspondence. Keep informed with a newsletter.</p>

Emergency Services	NSW Rural Fire Service- Whittingham 65 Range Rd (140.11 km) 2330 Whittingham, New South Wales, Australia (02) 6966 7800 (02) 6575 1200	Bushfire planning. Bushfire risk management.	High	Correspondence, briefings and / or meetings. Will be referred as part of EIS.
	State Emergency Services- Singleton Suite 9/9-11 Queen St, Singleton NSW 2330 (02) 6572 4669	Emergency response. Prevention and risk management.	Medium	Correspondence. Meetings where required.
	Fire and Rescue- Singleton 1A Pitt St, Singleton NSW 2330 (02) 6572 1495 <a href="https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9210&amp;station=266">https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9210&amp;station=266</a>	Emergency response. Prevention and risk management.	Medium	Correspondence. Meetings where required.
Aviation	Singleton Airport Paul Rees singletonair@bigpond.com	Impacts on aviation. Glint and glare)	Medium	Correspondence, briefings and / or meetings.
	Dochra Airport Through the Department of Defence as per detail below	Impacts on aviation.	Low	Correspondence. Meetings where required.
Military	Department of Defence Ben McLean - Executive Officer External Land Planning & Regulation Benjamin.mclean3@defence.gov.au	Impacts on the usability of the training facility; Vibration impacts caused from the training facility.	Low	Correspondence.

	M: 0435577984 Troy Carter - Assistant Base Manager - Singleton Military Area & NSW Depots  Troy.Carter@defence.gov.au M: 0439 608 810			
Registered Aboriginal Parties	Wonnarua People	Impacts on Aboriginal heritage.	High	Consultation in general accordance with the 'Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents' (2010).
Agricultural Associations	NSW Farmer's Association Level 4/154 Pacific Hwy, St Leonards NSW 2065 (02) 9478 1000	Use of rural lands. Impacts on local agriculture and related industries.	Low	Correspondence. Keep informed with newsletter and website.
Community Groups	Whittingham Public Hall Inc President Helen Blasko 0418440118 <a href="mailto:Whittinghampublichall@gmail.com">Whittinghampublichall@gmail.com</a>	Opportunity to register any interest in the project.	Medium	Correspondence. Keep up to date with newsletters, website and / or local media.
Local Residents	Owners of properties adjacent to the Solar farm.	Neighbourhood impact. Impact on roads. Community benefits.	High	Correspondence and individual meetings. Community information session(s). Keep up to date with newsletters, website and local media.
Community Groups	Landcare Australia - Sydney (Head Office) Level 3, 6 Help St Chatswood NSW 2067 Ph: 02 9412 1040	Opportunity to register any interest in the project.	Low	Correspondence. Keep up to date with newsletters, website and / or local media.
	Local businesses	Economic opportunities. Community benefits.	Medium	To be discussed with local councils.

	Australian Rail Track Corporation (08) 8217 4366	Owns and manages the Main North Railway- to the west and south of the site	Medium	Correspondence.
	Owners of dwellings within 3km of the solar farm.	Neighbourhood impact. Impact on roads. Community benefits.	High	Correspondence and meetings (where required). Community consultation event(s). Keep up to date with newsletters, website and / or local media.
Local Media		Singleton Argus (local news), Louise Nichols, 0439 084 032. Hunter Valley News, Jessica Rouse, <a href="mailto:jessica.rouse@2nm.com.au">jessica.rouse@2nm.com.au</a> , 0498627723		





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To the occupier  
118 MITCHELL LINE OF ROAD  
WHITTINGHAM  
NSW 2330

24 February 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **RE: POTENTIAL RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introducing RES**

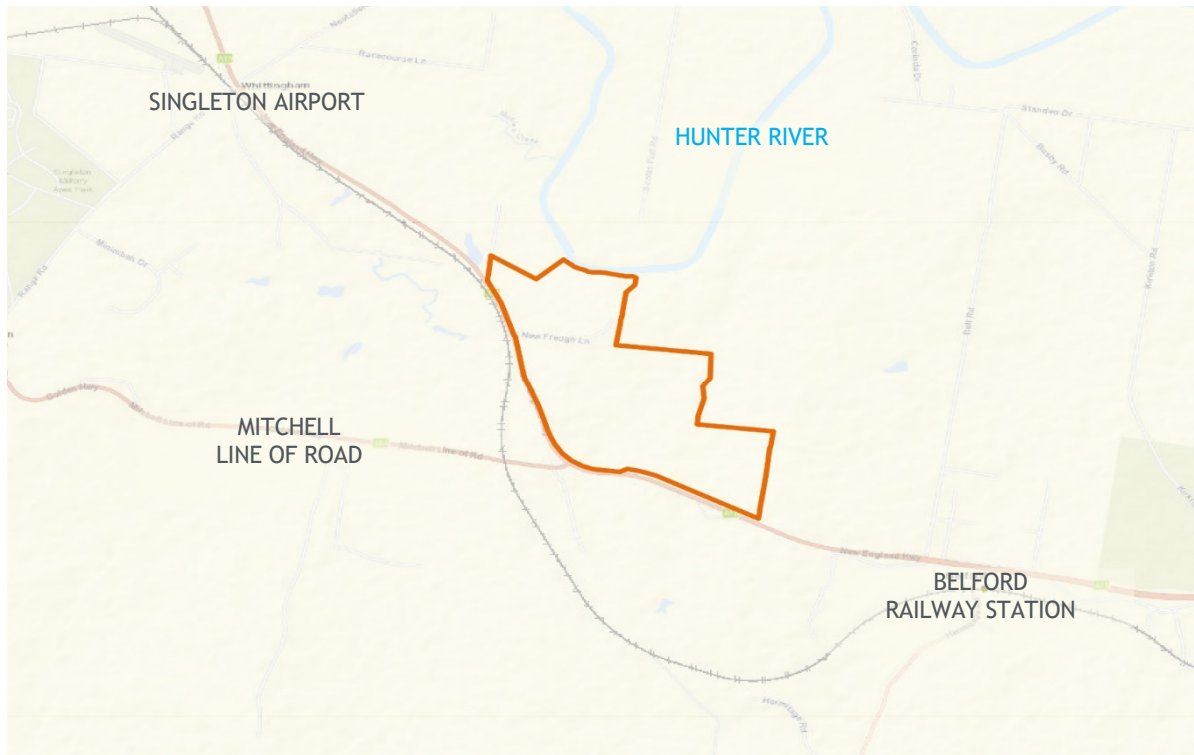
RES (Renewable Energy Systems) is the world's largest independent renewable energy company with 38 years of experience. RES has developed and/or built over 17,000 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy capacity worldwide and supports an operational portfolio of assets exceeding 5,500 MW. RES is active in a range of energy technologies, including onshore and offshore wind projects, solar, energy storage, transmission and distribution. For more information about RES and our portfolio of worldwide renewable assets, please visit [www.res-group.com](http://www.res-group.com).

### **Potential Solar Farm in Whittingham**

We have recently undertaken a preliminary feasibility analysis to assess the potential to develop renewable energy projects across NSW. This assessment has identified two properties, approximately 4km southeast of Whittingham as having the potential to host a solar farm, based on a number of criteria that were assessed. The properties are bounded on the south by the New England Highway and by agricultural land on the other sides and lies within the Singleton Council in NSW as outlined in red in the plan below. The proposed site is up to 90MW with a site area of around 250 hectares and is predicted to provide enough renewable energy to power approximately 36,000 average NSW homes.

Across Australia, renewable energy projects benefit landowners by providing stable long-term income which helps to buffer against the impacts of droughts, bushfires, floods, storms and poor market conditions. Other benefits include supporting local businesses through the supply chain, providing long term employment opportunities and supporting a wide range of community organisations through the provision of a community fund, which is applied to all RES projects.





The project would help Australia achieve its national targets to decarbonise our electricity supply as well as providing more secure, low cost generation.

During the construction period direct jobs will be generated and full-time staff will be required during the operation and maintenance phase.

The employment benefits extend through the local supply chains to fuel supply, vehicle servicing, hotels/motels, cafés, pubs, catering and cleaning companies, tradespersons, tool and equipment suppliers and many other businesses.

Environmental impact assessments have started as part of the scoping report. Expert consultants are carefully assessing the impact of the solar farm which will allow our technical team to produce a solar farm design.

These studies will include heritage, noise, visual impact, transport route assessment, traffic impact assessment and ecology. flood modelling, acoustic assessment, stormwater management plan, bushfire assessment, land contamination assessment, socio economic assessment and soil assessments.

#### **Planning process**

**Pre-lodgement:** RES is currently preparing a scoping report which is the early stage of the development application process. Prior to lodging a Development Application for the solar farm, RES will consult with the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPIE) and submit a scoping report. As part of the scoping report, RES will consult with local residents in close proximity to the site and summarise the results of early community engagement. Any initial feedback received will be considered by the DPIE and will inform the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) requirements. Prior to submitting the Development Application and whilst preparing the EIS, RES will hold further Consultation with local residents in the form of a drop-in session at a local community hall. RES will prepare and finalise the EIS as part of the Development



Application and aim to refine the design of the project to avoid or minimise impacts where possible.

**Lodgement:** RES lodges the Development Application and EIS online. During the exhibition period, anyone can make a written submission on the Development Application.

**Contact us;** As part of our community consultation, RES is initially contacting residents in close proximity to the solar farm and offering to meet with you individually at your house to discuss the project. Any questions you have, can be discussed. We will be in the area on **Thursday 27 February, or Friday 28 February. If these dates are not suitable, we can organise to meet on an alternative date.**

**To make an appointment please contact us on:**  
**info@whittingham-solarfarm.com or 0435 714 542 or call our Solar Free Phone on 1800 118 737 to request a call back.**

We encourage you to get in touch with us at any time if you have any concerns about the solar farm or if you support the proposal.

More information will soon be available on the project website: [www.whittingham-solarfarm.com](http://www.whittingham-solarfarm.com)

We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Douglas', written over a light grey circular background.

Andrew Douglas  
Development Project Manager  
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