

Shire of West Arthur

Wind Farm Community Consultation Summary

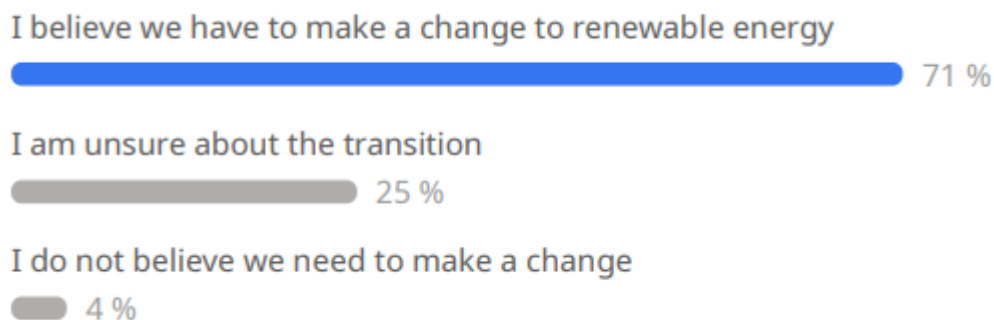


Forest to Wheatbelt

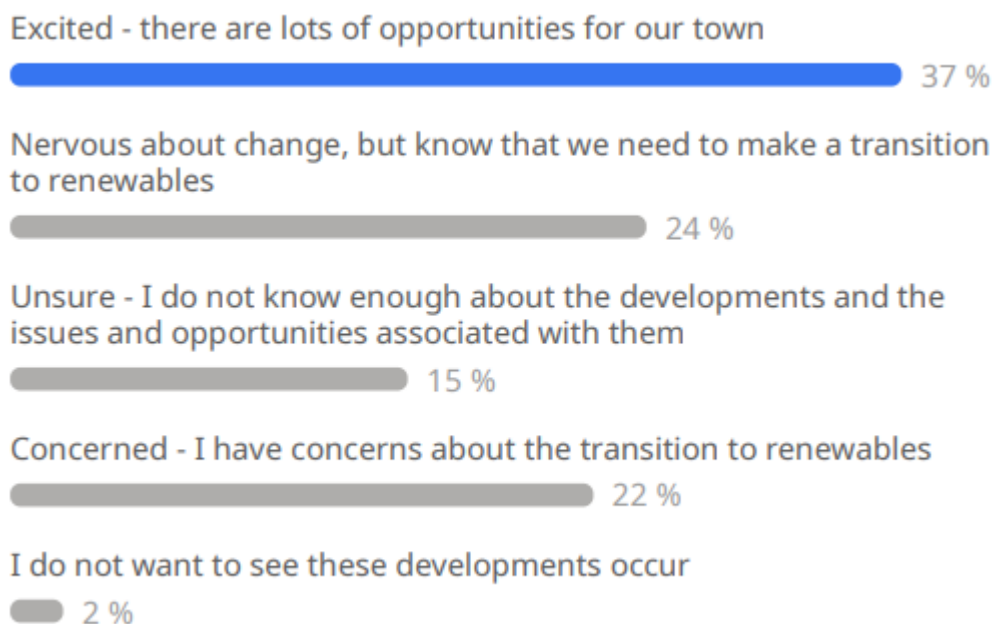
The following document presents the outcome of the Shire of West Arthur’s Wind Farm Community Consultation event on the 6th of November 2024. The evening was facilitated by Peta Ashworth – Director of the Curtin Institute for Energy Transition and the objective of the night was to identify concerns and opportunities of the local community have in relation to the proposed wind farm developments within the Shire. There were roughly 120 people in attendance.

Guest speakers included Jai Thomas Deputy Director General – Coordinator of Energy and leads Energy Policy WA, Shire CEO Vin Fordham Lamont, Graham Pearson (Acciona Energy), James Townsend (Lacour Energy), Adam West and Sarah Carlin (Green Wind Renewables) and Nathan Moir and Farooq Mannan (RES). The Shire proposed the following questions via an application called Slido and whilst not everyone at the event engaged with Slido the response provide some interesting information for the Shire. The responses are captured below in polls and word clouds. Word clouds generated in the images below have been edited to ensure that issues identified are grouped together. Words that appear bigger in these word clouds were mentioned more often by participants.

1. How do you feel about the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy? (48 people responded)



2. How do you feel about the proposed developments in the Shire of West Arthur? (41 people responded)



3. What are your biggest concerns about the proposed wind farm developments? (list three).



4. What benefits do you think wind farms will bring to the district? (list three). Words that appear bigger in the following picture were mentioned more often by participants.



5. How much do you know about wind farms?

I have spoken to the companies and read lots of material about wind farms



I have read some of the information in the local paper and on webpages so have a reasonable understanding of wind farm development



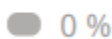
I have listened to what others in the community have said about wind farms and know a little bit about what is proposed



I do not know very much about the proposed projects and would like more information



I am not interested at all



6. What other information would you like to have available to understand more about wind farms?



7. Many companies now provide a community benefit fund - how do you think this should operate?

Managed by the Shire



Managed by the community via a board or committee structure



Managed by the companies



Other



8. What projects around the shire do you think would benefit from a community benefit fund? (list three)



9. If you are planning to sign a lease agreement with a wind farm, would you like to have a coordinated "farmer group" to discuss the proposal?

Yes



No



Not applicable



10. What other issues in relation to the proposed development should the shire consider? (list three)



The question and answer time then allowed the public to raise any questions they had in relation to the transition. The responses by the panel to the Slido questions and hard copy questions are summarised below. Some additional information has been provided after the event to clarify some of the questions.

1. If a landowner signs a contract stating that the wind company is responsible for decommissioning and goes bankrupt will the state overwrite that?

The wind farm developers include a decommissioning bond in their lease agreements. The nature of the bond will vary between developers, but in most cases the bond is valid for at least the last 5 years of the project. Wind farm projects have significant value through their infrastructure, grid connection and landowner agreements making it highly likely that a project can be sold to a new

owner if the existing project owner is no longer viable. In this instance, and the project is sold (in whole or in part) the new project owner(s) would be bound by the terms of the lease agreements in place with the host landowners, as well as the environmental, planning approvals and obligations for the project which includes the decommissioning obligations. Despite this, most developers are incentivised to recommission the assets after the initial 25–30-year periods.

Acciona responded to the Shire's request for further information and indicated that it prides itself on developing, building, owning and operating its energy projects in Australia which is also applicable to the Bellwether Wind Farm project. Acciona's lease agreements with landowners, including those related to the proposed Bellwether Wind Farm project specify that the obligations regarding decommissioning, mandate the removal of turbines within 12 months following the lease expiration.

2. Are proponents working together, and working with the Shire, on the design of community benefit schemes (and any consultation and assessments that inform them) so we can avoid over-consultation, duplication, and potentially conflicting schemes?

The Shire has previously raised the idea of having a combined community benefit scheme where little response was given from the wind farm proponents. The proponents are happy to work together at the right time but indicated that is currently too early to discuss community benefits.

Not all projects proposed for the Shire will go ahead at the same time, so it is difficult to have a fund that is cooperatively managed by a specific date. As the project is approved, and construction dates are firmed up there is an opportunity to work together for a community benefit fund and construction funds. The wind farm proponents will liaise with the Shire about the structure of the fund.

3. Longer hotter summers – will windfarm companies provide firefighting equipment if aerial bombing is not possible?

It is a myth that aerial bombing is not possible with wind turbines. Wind farm proponents have indicated that they would support aerial bombing and firefighting procedures. In the instance of a fire the Emergency Response Coordinator on site liaises with emergency services and the turbines can be remotely shut down and parked in a 'Y' shape to assist aircrafts conducting water bombing activities.

Acciona indicated that it has prepared an aviation impact assessment which has been submitted to the Shire. This considers the impact of wind farms on planes. Other existing projects owned and operated by Acciona have community benefit funds which have funded water tankers for the local fire brigades.

4. What safeguards are going to be in place to reduce or repair damage to infrastructure, such as roads, the environment, such as removing vegetation to

enable transport of turbines and people's livelihoods, when they need to 'compete' with large convoys, during the build phase?

All these measures are heavily regulated by the State. There is a noise safeguard document in place and proponents must have construction management plans, traffic management plans, and environmental management plans undertaken. These take into consideration the timing of moving equipment, and the roads which the equipment must be moved on. There are environmental approval frameworks if any changes in the environmental status.

5. Will any of the wind farm developers be offering neighbourhood agreements to those not hosting wind farms but heavily impacted by the developments. What examples are there of Compensation or Neighbour Agreements, and how can landholders in WA negotiate them with no information, no examples to assess and all details kept secret? When will the compensation and neighbour agreements be offered?

Once the key land for the wind farm is established then neighbours will be spoken to regarding the project. This could provide neighbours with opportunities such as providing resources for the development or potentially joining the project.

As the project progresses, there will be many opportunities for input from the local community to assist with shaping a fund that is specific to both the needs of the community and those of the surrounding communities. Proponents often offer a small grants program, legacy investment programs and scholarship programs to support local people and initiatives.

Acciona indicated that due to the early stage in development details cannot be provided at this time.

Green Wind has stated that any compensation or neighbour agreements is a commercial arrangement between parties and therefore contains confidentiality provisions. Discussions surrounding this will occur once a firm boundary and turbine layout has been defined. Landholders are encouraged to seek legal advice from qualified legal representatives with respect to the suitability of such agreements.

6. Other wind farms indicated that they provide a direct financial offering and landscaping options to screen views to those closest to the wind farms. What parallels and lessons are we learning from other rural and regional areas in Australia, where renewable energy proponents are engaged in getting projects going, or are we just going to reinvent the wheel, and potentially lose community harmony or projects themselves in all the noise?

In the Eastern States a group called Energy Co. assist with community engagement in relation to the renewable energy transition. This group is made up of 250 employees. A similar structure has formed here in WA called Powering WA. This group has 14 people employed to date and its mission is to provide on

the ground engagement which will commence at the end of this year. Events like this consultation evening provide advice and information to the State Government. WALGA are facilitating events with all local governments that have an interest in this area or who are impacted by these developments.

7. How can Acciona build a 3,000 MW windfarm when the amount cannot be absorbed by the grid?

All renewable energy developers in the area rely on Western Power delivering a new transmission line. Western Power determine the timeframe and the route of the new line. The existing 220kV transmission line has no capacity to add new generation; the 66 kV transmission line to the east of the Shire of West Arthur is too small to connect a wind farm.

Acciona indicated that it's Bellwether project would need to connect into the proposed new transmission line being delivered by Western Power. The preliminary layout of Acciona's projects indicates that it will be approximately 3GW. Currently, the peak demand is 4,500MW which is set to grow to 20,000MW by 2050. It is a long process of building and decarbonising the state and these developments may not all eventuate.

8. Can all these projects practically be built? Who is going to be left out?

A key factor impacting the ability of a wind farm project to proceed is access to Western Power's proposed new transmission line; a project without access to the new transmission line is unlikely to progress. All renewable energy developers in the area need to undertake two years of continuous bird and bat monitoring, and detailed flora and fauna surveys prior to construction.

Acciona indicated that it is developing the Bellwether Wind Farm with confidence of moving to construction approximately 2028/29.

9. Would the state government develop a policy around reusing/decommissioning turbines?

Wind farms are high value assets and long-term there needs to be underpinning policies surrounding recycling and decommissioning. Some of this needs to be left to the sector to self-manage. Items such as steel will have a significant value at the end of life of the turbines and will be sold. Solar panels also have a life of 25 years so the recycling process for these needs to be considered as well.

10. Western Australia erected the first Australian wind turbine in 1987 which was decommissioned recently. Over 37 years why is there not stringent WA State Government policy already in place for wind farm fire control, low frequency illness, neighbour landholder compensation and decommission bonds?

The development of renewable energy guidelines is a part of the State planning engagement, and these guidelines need to be uplifted to reflect the current situation and new technology that emerges. There are other mechanisms to

develop community benefit funds, these are not new, and all projects have a form of a community benefit fund. These funds may not be fit for purpose 10 years on so there may be opportunities to review these. Funds need to be consolidated to hit larger infrastructure fund needs.

11. What measures will be taken regarding accommodation/hospitality taking into consideration money that will come in because of the project?

The Shire has been liaising with the proponents about their proposed locations of housing and accommodation. Until the proponents know that there is a permanent project in place they cannot confirm where the construction camps will be and furthermore cannot pinpoint the accommodation options they wish to pursue. If the Shire is aware of where the construction camps are going, they can look at rezoning the land, to support this kind of development. The proponents indicated that they are aware that this is an opportunity to create jobs, however that they also need to consider the current workforce and don't want to take away workers from farmers, the Shire or other businesses. There is an opportunity to invest in businesses to support them rather than taking away from them or clearing the shelves.

12. Can Acciona explain how they calculated the size of the project? Are they only short-term access agreements? Why is land under other developers included?

Acciona has entered access licenses with almost forty landowners covering an area of approximately 110,000 hectares. Based on this, the preliminary layout for the Bellwether Wind Farm indicates that the size of the project is approximately 3GW. Until this point, it has not been appropriate to sign 30-year lease agreements and bind landowners.

The access licenses include confidentiality clauses, and the map shown during the wind farm community consultation event on the 6th of November intentionally did not identify specific landowners. The 'blob' map showed Acciona's land area with a buffer around the boundary.

13. How many is too many turbines for the Shire?

The power in WA does not connect to the east coast. The volume of renewable energy is roughly 36% and the record of renewable energy at one given time is roughly 86%. There is the need for renewable energy in the southwest to match the demand plus more (see slide in Jai Thomas's presentation. The Kojonup wind farm has been listed as the best performing wind farm in the country over the last three months.

14. Parron wind farm in Badgingarra has committed \$1000/MW/year to a community investment fund. Is there potential to have this fund in this area?

There is a desire from the wind farm proponents to collaborate with the community. The projects are in early stages and what each Community Benefit Fund looks like is still being determined. The fund is developed by the community

for the community and will have Shire involvement. The Clarke Creek wind farm is 450MW and has a community benefit fund of \$200,000/year. In WA there is not a prescribed number but there will be a range that has to be hit, or the proponent and the fund won't be looked at very fairly by the community. Best practice from elsewhere is roughly \$500-\$1500/MW.

Acciona indicated that the community will benefit from the Bellwether Wind Farm in numerous ways. While it is too early for Acciona to confirm the exact size of the Community Benefit Fund, as a minimum Acciona will develop a small grants program, legacy investment program and scholarship program to support local people and initiatives. Similar programs are run for other wind farms across Australia. Examples of benefits may include.

- Upgraded roads
- Improved council services through rates contribution
- Community grants
- Tailored neighbour benefit programs and landscape screening
- Scholarship programs
- Approximately 100 jobs during operation, including turbine technician and maintenance jobs
- Approximately 400 jobs during construction and
- Increased economic activity in the local community

15. Is it ludicrously ironic that small rural towns like Darkan are going to be losing their connection to the state power supply, being fobbed off with limited power alternatives that are proving problematic in other parts of the state, while being expected to host major renewable energy projects?

A total of 3% of power consuming customers are in regional areas. Regional power supply challenges will continue as there is a lot of pressure on Western Power to deliver. The hosting of wind turbines does not necessarily mean good reliability in the town as it is connected to the distribution network. Western Power are currently investigating stand-alone power systems and retiring networks such as those that are on a 6km line which only services one customer.

16. What impact will turbines have on farmers who will have planes for crop spraying?

Turbines are strategically designed in 'straight' strings to support crop spraying with little disruption. Farmers can notify the wind farm, and the turbines can be remotely shut down and put in park 'Y' shape to assist aircraft conducting crop spraying. When considering the placement of turbines, the wind farm proponents consult with aerial professionals.

The pilots would conduct flight plans considering potential obstacles. Pilots would consider turbines as being like other obstacles such as telecommunication towers.

17. When you sign a commercial lease suddenly that land is operating commercially on land that is zoned rural. Can this be done?

The use class 'wind farm' is not expressly listed in the Zoning Table of the Shire of West Arthur Local Planning Scheme No.2.

As such any development application received for a wind farm must be processed and assessed in accordance with the following clause in Local Planning Scheme No.2 as it applies specifically to uses not listed in the Zoning Table of the Scheme:

4.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE ZONING TABLE

4.4.2 If a person proposes to carry out on land any use that is not specifically mentioned in the Zoning Table and cannot reasonably be determined as falling within the type or class of activity of any other use the local government may:

- a) determine that the use is consistent with the objectives of the particular zone and is therefore permitted; or
- b) determine that the proposed use may be consistent with the objectives of the particular zone and thereafter follow the advertising procedures of clause 9.4 in considering an application for planning approval; or
- c) determine that the use is not consistent with the objectives of the particular zone and is therefore not permitted.

Any development application received for a use not listed in the Zoning Table of any Local Planning Scheme in Western Australia is classed as complex under the Planning Regulations and must therefore be advertised for public comment for a minimum required period of 28 days irrespective of the abovementioned clause in Local Planning Scheme No.2.

18. What government owned infrastructure needs upgrading and /or locating across West Arthur Shire? What compensation is there for impacted landowners?

Awaiting a response from relevant authorities

19. When will the wind farm companies submit Development Applications and confirm to their clients that their projects will proceed?

All renewable energy developers in the area need to undertake two years of continuous bird and bat monitoring, and detailed flora and fauna surveys.

Green Wind indicated that they would provide regular updates to their landholders to advise them on the progress of the studies, and the submission timelines.

Acciona indicated that it intends to submit a Development Application for its met mast as soon as a cultural heritage survey is completed. They will also submit their environmental approval documents when they are complete.

20. What government support & assistance is there for land holders negotiating contracts and agreements with non-transparent wind farm developers in WA?

Awaiting a response from relevant authorities

21. Why can't government heavily subsidise residential/industrial/business rooftop solar and battery storage avoiding costly transmission line upgrades, rural amenity loss and rural community discord?

Awaiting a response from relevant authorities

22. What part of WA is the most cost-effective location, per unit of deliverable power + cost of install/running costs to build renewable energy projects? Does locality economic contribution, state investment in infrastructure & opportunity cost during the build phase, form part of this consideration?

There is no one location that is strictly better than another. There are several variables that are evaluated such as wind speed, and time of day to determine which opportunities are most viable.

23. Are large wind turbines in Ag regions the ONLY solution for future energy needs in WA? Are all potential generation methods being considered? Such as community owned and managed solar/wind/battery and/or dams as energy store projects.

Green Wind indicated that wind turbines in regional areas are not the only solution for WA's future energy needs, however solar and wind are replacement options as the State moves away from non-renewable energy options.

24. How will the State Government support small rural and regional towns, who are being expected to plan and provide for increased demands on infrastructure if wind farms or other renewables are established?

Awaiting a response from relevant authorities

25. What confidence should we place in companies & government agencies who are selective in the timing and extent of their environmental surveys, such as waiting until summer, after everything has senesced or reduced their daytime movements, due to high daily temperatures and limited moisture?

All renewable energy developers in the area need to undertake two years of continuous bird and bat monitoring.

Green Wind has indicated that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has published technical guidance to ensure adequate flora and vegetation data of an appropriate standard are obtained and used in environmental impact

assessment (EIA). All companies, including wind farm proponents must follow these guidelines.

Acciona indicated that for a Project the size of the proposed Bellwether project, this means that three seasons of flora and fauna surveys are likely to be required. As a part of the environmental approval submission Acciona will share the results of its bird, bat, and flora and fauna surveys.

26. We've been told by renewable energy proponents that they can't support local towns who will host renewable energy projects, to access subsidised rooftop solar, battery storage, cheap energy etc, yet a Victorian town will be doing so, with a French wind and solar project proponent. Why can't we?

Acciona indicated that due to the early stage of the projects, these details cannot be provided right now. As the projects progress, there will be many opportunities for input from the local community, to help shape benefits that are specific to their needs and those of the surrounding communities.

Green Wind indicated that proponents may look at a range of benefits for local communities such as initiatives supporting decarbonisation that will be developed in consultation with the community as projects mature through the development pathway towards construction and operation.

27. The turbines will add value to a property. What is the risk that local farmers can no longer expand their business by buying that local land? Is it possible that only big businesses will be able to buy the inflated price land, and plant the wind farm to trees resulting in depopulation on the local area?

Green Wind stated that land which is hosting turbines will be provided with a lease fee for hosting, creating a form of revenue from the land. As such it is anticipated the value for the land would increase as it comes with a revenue stream. This would only relate to land hosting turbines, and not other land, therefore should not impact the ability for local farmers to buy surrounding land.

28. Will the developers share the results of their fauna surveys, namely birds and bats with the shire and other landowners? This information should be freely available given the shire is promoting and trying to improve biodiversity.

Acciona has indicated that it will share the results of its bird, bat, and flora and fauna surveys as part of the environmental approval submission. Acciona have just commenced the required two years of continuous bird and bat monitoring.

Green Wind have indicated that the results from their survey, including flora and fauna, will become public information when the Wind Farm Environmental Referrals and Development Application are submitted.

29. Will the state government consider a statewide renewable energy planning policy like NSW rather than expecting small under resourced shires to develop individual local planning schemes that developers just ignore?

Awaiting a response from relevant authorities

30. If CY O'Connor got water to Kalgoorlie over 100 years ago, why can't wind turbines be placed in the middle of WA on non-arable land?

The Shire understands that wind farm developers are interested in developing in the area because of the proximity to the existing infrastructure including power lines and power stations in Collie. Any new power lines are likely to extend through the shire and as a result there is significant interest in developing the wind farms in this area.

Green Wind states that wind farms can be placed in the middle of WA on non-arable land, however they would need to connect back to the grid which would mean the creation of large distances of transmission lines. This would be a large cost to the taxpayer.

31. If there is a change in State Government next year, what are your thoughts regarding the renewable energy transition. Will it still be a top priority for the state? Or will the money already invested in the process just go to waste?

Green Wind noted that the Government of Western Australia has committed to a whole of government 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 80% below 2020 levels. Regardless of the change in government. This is a legislative requirement.

32. If local government is against any wind farm proposal, do they have the power to totally shut it down?

Local government will have input into the Development Assessment process but will not be the decision-making authority. Development Approval will be undertaken through a State Significant Project pathway or through a Joint Development Assessment Panel.