



AXEDALE SOLAR FARM

Planning permit granted

The 160-megawatt Axedale Solar Farm and battery project has been granted a planning permit by the City of Greater Bendigo and Campaspe Shire Councils, marking a major milestone for the renewable energy development in the area.

UPC\AC Renewables Australia Head of Solar Development, Killian Wentrup, said the approval of the project was welcome news for the local community and the State of Victoria.

“Over the past 18 months UPC has conducted a range of detailed site-based environmental surveys, talked to neighbouring landowners and met with the broader community, Councils and Victorian Government agencies to discuss our plans for this project,” Mr Wentrup said.

“We have worked closely with the traditional owners of the land, the Taungurung people, to investigate the cultural heritage on the site, resulting in the identification of a number of artefacts which will be protected during construction and operations.

“The project site is on mostly cleared, non-irrigated, grazing land and has the solar farm has been designed to protect patches of remnant trees and to allow sheep to continue to graze in and around the solar panels.

“The solar farm will provide a source of income for a number of local farmers, and will benefit the wider local community through a community benefit fund which will soon be established.

“It will also generate opportunities for local contractors and direct employment opportunities during construction and a number of long-term jobs.”

The project is being proposed across a 365-hectare non-irrigated site about seven kilometres north-east of the rural Victorian township of Axedale. The site has historically been used for grazing and dry-land cropping.

It would produce enough clean, renewable electricity to power more than 55,000 homes, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 200,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year, the equivalent of taking about 45,000 average cars off the road.

Plans for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with a capacity of up to 60 megawatt hours are also being progressed as part of the project. The BESS would be able to dispatch energy to the grid at times of high energy demand and to provide services to assist with network stability when required.

Construction is expected to begin in mid-2021, after grid connection and financing arrangements for the project are finalised.

The solar farm will be built over 12-18 months and generate up to 250 jobs at its peak. An additional 50 construction jobs are expected to be created if the battery storage facility is installed. Several ongoing jobs will also be created to service the solar farm over its 30-year life.

A number of conditions were placed on the project development and ongoing operation as part of the approval. These include:

- Protection for small parcels of remaining native vegetation and the un-named waterway which runs through the site
- Requirements to manage pests & weeds, and stormwater & erosion; and
- The submission of management plans for construction, traffic management, waste, environmental risks and noise.

A Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the site also been completed in cooperation with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council. The plan provides guidance on measures before, during and after construction to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage on the site.

A Community Benefit Fund will be established as part of the project development to help support local projects. UPC\AC Renewables Australia will provide annual funding for the program over the 25 to 30 year working life of the solar farm.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information
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