



COROP SOLAR FARM

COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Corop Solar Farm is being developed by the Leeson Group, a Melbourne based renewable energy company which has successfully developed multiple solar farms throughout Victoria.

Having considered land in a number of locations the site was selected due to the low number of dwellings in proximity to the land, limited flora and fauna values being a substantially altered agricultural landscape, notable capacity for solar energy generation and connection to the 220kV transmission line.

The proposal requires a Planning Permit Application (PPA) to be submitted to Campaspe Shire Council. In considering an application, the council must give any persons potentially affected an opportunity to comment on the proposal.

2 INTENTION OF CONSULTATION

Leeson Group's consultation is primarily intended to inform, consult and involve stakeholders so decisions about planning, construction, operation and eventual decommissioning of the solar farm are made in the best interests of all parties.

A second and important reason for engaging with the community is to support the growth of renewable energy activities in the region. Leeson Group will provide technical information in plain English so the community is aware of the benefits and opportunities the growth of the renewables industry can provide in Victoria.

3 STAKEHOLDERS

The Corop Solar farm proposal has two primary groups of stakeholders:

- approvals and review bodies
- community members and groups potentially affected or interested

Approvals and review

The likely approvals and review bodies include: Campaspe Shire Council; the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP); Ausnet; Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA); VicRoads; Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority; and emergency services.

Most of the contact with these organisations is related to technical and planning matters and they are therefore not covered in this engagement plan. However, early meetings are included in the table of consultation.

Campaspe Shire Council is being consulted regarding appropriate consultation.

Community

- Adjacent landowners, businesses and tenants on Old Corop Road, Geodetic Road, Bedwell Road and Carag Road
- Environment and sustainability groups
- Local people interested in direct or contract employment with the project
- Traditional owners
 - The project requires a Cultural Heritage Management Plan which will be developed in consultation with the Taungurung Land and Waters Council.

4 OPPORTUNITIES, ISSUES AND RESPONSES

The planning permit application, planning report and associated documents will be available to the public when the application is submitted. However, they are long and technically detailed documents that can be difficult for non-technical stakeholders to navigate.

The table below summarises likely areas of community interest that Leeson Group will address during the planning stages. Fact sheets will be prepared in plain English and distributed as required as the project progresses.

Potential issue or opportunity	Response
Landscaping and visual impact on nearby residences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leeson Group is meeting with landowners to understand their issues. The proposal allows for screening on all boundaries of the solar farm. A landscaping plan will be prepared: that is likely to be required as a condition of any planning permit. A fact sheet will be prepared to provide more information.
Ecology and habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A flora and fauna report has been prepared. The report's recommended management measures will be implemented. There may be opportunities for local groups to be involved in monitoring bird behaviour.
Potential for glare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The composition and positioning of the panels, proposed screening and fencing means there is unlikely to be any glare effect. A fact sheet is being prepared to explain the technical elements of the project.
Traffic impact during construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Traffic Impact Assessment has been prepared. The report's recommended management measures will be implemented. A traffic management plan (TMP) will likely be a condition of any planning permit. Notice of any disruption will be provided in a timely manner: the notification process will be included in the TMP. Leeson Group will meet with neighbouring businesses to understand any critical times or seasons so project planning can take it into consideration. A fact sheet is being prepared to provide more information.
Likely damage to roads during construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Traffic Impact Assessment has been prepared. The report's recommended management measures will be implemented. Leeson Group will meet with Council and neighbours to understand any specific issues.
Construction impacts: noise, dust, access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A construction management plan (CMP) will likely be a condition of any planning permit. The infrastructure required is minimal: there is no requirement for large earthmoving equipment or large cranes Nearby residents will be given early information about activities which may affect them in a timely manner: the notification process will be included in the CMP. A fact sheet is being prepared to provide more information.
Potential employment opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leeson Group will, where possible, use local contractors for construction and operation of the farm. During construction there will be significant employment opportunities: we expect up to 400 full time workers over a 24 months construction period. Employment over the operational life is expected to be around 20 full-time and 15 part-time staff.

Potential issue or opportunity	Response
Operational issues: eg security, land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use management protocols will be developed to cover weed and pest management. The solar array areas will be kept weed free by routine spraying and appropriate land use and biosecurity measures. Fire risk will be reduced through pasture management, fire breaks and provision of access, water and pumps as required. The entire site will be fenced with signage at regular intervals warning of high voltage; CCTV will be installed.
Opportunity for community benefits	<p>Opportunities will be developed in consultation with the local community. Some examples from another Victorian project developed by Leeson Group include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local sourcing of goods and services where feasible. The local contractor worked to identify capability in the local community and maximise opportunities for local suppliers to participate in the project. Collaborating with the District Hospital to support local infrastructure upgrades to existing facilities within the hospital. Working with the local councils to explore the potential for smart infrastructure upgrades in the local area e.g. solar powered street lighting. A biodiversity recovery project focused on the areas impacted by the 2019/2020 bushfires within the Victorian region. A fact sheet will be prepared to provide example from other projects.
Impact on farming in the region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are aiming to create a dual use of the site. Assessment so far suggests the most effective and sustainable method to manage the land is to implement grazing Cropping is still being assessed. Viability requires further investigation of the land, soil, drainage and paddock access. This would be carried out after planning approval.

5 CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES TO MAY 2020

Leeson Group has already engaged with several stakeholders, and will continue to do so through the planning, construction and operation of the project.

Stakeholder	Activity	Outcome
Campaspe Shire	Various preliminary meetings to gather information, advice and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further meetings will be scheduled as planning progresses.
EPA	Phone call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmed no requirement for approvals
Country Fire Authority	Phone call	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on defensible space, access arrangements, likely permit conditions for water supply, access etc
Ausnet	Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary applications approved, discussion on detailed design underway. Further meetings will be scheduled as planning progresses
Landowner of proposed site	Various meetings	<p>Consultation which resulted in agreement regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site configuration Screening for dwellings

Stakeholder	Activity	Outcome
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access between proposed lots <p>Further meetings will be scheduled as planning progresses.</p>
Adjacent landowners	Individual meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various discussions regarding proposed project, proximity to the dwellings and suggested screening, potential impact on farm business, flooding, salinity and other environmental issues Further meetings proposed, see Section 6.
Taungurung Land and Waters Council	Discussion with specialist consultant	Cultural Heritage Management Plan being developed
Goulburn Broken CMA	Email discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter confirming no objection to the development
DELWP	Email discussion through Campaspe Shire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Response to DELP request for further information 7 November 2019 Correspondence on land licenses 4 June 2019

6 CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES –JULY/AUGUST 2020

Date & activities	Stakeholder	Reason	Outcome
<u>5-15/8</u> Phone call and/or meeting	Council	Discuss proposed consultation plan in the light of COVID19 requirements. Show fact sheets, for information	Information from Council will inform likely consultation activities and opportunities to share information on the proposed Corop solar farm.
<u>3-7/8</u> Phone calls, emails or letters	Neighbouring landowners PPA submitters	Offer video or phone meetings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer questions and provide information about the project Understand likely activities and understand how they may be affected during construction Discuss any specific issues raised Gather local knowledge about climate, environment and business operations Confirm Leeson Group's intent to be a good neighbour 	Meeting dates set for following two weeks.
<u>10-21/8</u> Video or phone meetings	Neighbouring landowners PPA submitters	As above	Information will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform the final planning report and associated documents Provide input to management plans likely to be conditions of any permit Determine the need for any further or ongoing meetings.

Date & activities	Stakeholder	Reason	Outcome
<u>10-14/8</u> Fact sheets published	Community	Provide plain English information on solar farming and the Corop project	Community is better informed and has the opportunity to be involved in the planning process.
<u>17-21/8</u> Video meetings, advertised via email, local newspaper if avbl	Neighbouring landowners & Other community	Answer any new queries, listen to new ideas or issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community has best opportunity to engage despite COVID 19 restrictions.
<u>21/8</u> Draft engagement report	Council Community	Feedback what we've heard in the July consultation, and how it has affected the PPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunity for further feedback. Builds trust about the process for Council and Leeson Group
28/8 Updated report for PPA	Council	Adds to detail provided in the original community engagement section of the Planning Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides better context and evidence that engagement has been robust and genuine

7 ONGOING CONSULTATION

Leeson Group is committed to continuing and improving its consultation as the project develops.

Update and review

If a planning permit is issued, further consultation will build on the outcomes of consultation to August 2020. It will also respond to any conditions attached to the permit

Management plans

Any management plans (eg landscape, traffic, construction, environment) required as conditions of the planning permit are likely to have community engagement sections. These would likely include:

- Processes for early consultation
- Notification timeframes for works or other activities
- Means for resolving any complaints or issues.

Community benefits

Once planning approval is obtained there will be consultation with the community about benefit sharing. This will likely include a workshop or drop in session where we show examples of other benefit sharing in solar projects, then work with the community to design a program that suits the district.

Areas to be covered could include:

- Social sustainability activities
- Investing in local community infrastructure
- Supporting local groups, facilities and projects
- Local industry participation

8 INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED

Planning for the solar farm provides an opportunity to share plain English information with interested community members.

Key messages

Overarching

- Leeson Group is an Australian company working with local farmers and businesspeople to develop Victoria's renewable energy industry.
- Solar farms are an ideal use of compact areas of land in northern Victoria.
- Solar farms have a minimal environmental impact, especially given the exceptional benefits they provide.
- The project will have a significant positive impact on the Victorian State Renewable Energy Target

Project specific

- Leeson Group will purchase the land once the project is ready to be constructed
- Leeson Group's Corop solar farm has been carefully planned to use less productive land. The land is no longer irrigated and has some issues with flooding and salinity. Grazing and cropping will be continued where possible on the property
- The farm will deliver 320MW of electricity – enough to supply a large area of country Victoria
- The project will create a positive social impact through community benefit programs and local employment during construction and operation
- The farm has a design life of 40 years. If after that time it does not continue, the land can easily return to agricultural use.

Fact sheets

Leeson Group will prepare fact sheets which will provide general information but can also be used in discussion with adjacent landowners.

The fact sheets will be made available to Council and the local newspaper to generate interest in the project and its benefits for the region. They will include pictures of the type of equipment being used and a clear explanation of how the panels move.

- Corop Solar Farm fast facts: what are we building, timeline, employment, benefits for Victoria and the region
- What is a solar farm?: why are solar farms designed and built the way they are?
- Solar panels and glare: how the panels move, how glare is managed, some misconceptions explained
- Maintaining a solar farm: what's involved in the operation of a solar farm once it's commissioned
- Protecting the environment: flora and fauna, sustainable farming, eventual decommissioning
- Community benefits: examples from other projects, how the community can be involved.