

New England Renewable Energy Zone

July 2024 project update

The New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is a critical energy project for NSW that will provide clean and reliable electricity to consumers for generations to come. The first two stages of the project are scheduled for completion by 2033 to ensure energy security across NSW as our coal-fired power stations retire.



Scoping report now available for the REZ network infrastructure project

The New England REZ has reached an important milestone with the release of a scoping report for the REZ network infrastructure project. EnergyCo recently lodged the scoping report with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and it is now available to view on the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal. To view the scoping report, visit www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects and search “New England REZ transmission project”. You can also find a link on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

The scoping report provides an overview of the project and potential impacts that will require further

consideration under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. It supports EnergyCo’s request for Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) from DPHI. The SEARs will outline the requirements EnergyCo needs to address in the project’s Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

EnergyCo will prepare the EIS to comprehensively assess the impacts and overall merits of the project, and identify options to avoid, minimise and mitigate potential adverse impacts. We expect to submit the EIS for public exhibition and assessment in late 2025.

Transmission corridor update

The scoping report includes a preferred study corridor for the project which has been developed following ongoing consultation and field investigations since June 2023.

The preferred study corridor is generally 1km wide along most of the length of the proposed transmission route, but incorporates some narrower sections where co-location with existing transmission lines is proposed. The corridor narrows to about 600m through these areas.

Importantly, lodgement of the scoping report does not mean the transmission route is finalised. EnergyCo will continue to investigate and refine the corridor in response to ongoing consultation, field work and technical assessments until the lodgement of the EIS in late 2025. The study corridor will be refined to about 250m wide for the EIS.

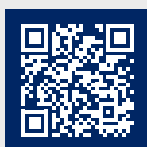
The final transmission line easements will be around 70m wide for a 500kV double circuit steel tower transmission line, and 60m wide for a 330kV double circuit steel tower transmission line. In some sections there will be two transmission lines running parallel which will require a wider easement of up to 140m wide.

How to view the corridor in more detail

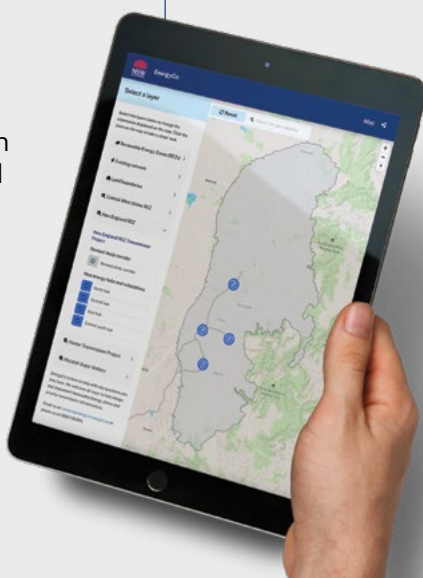
Visit EnergyCo's interactive map at caportal.com.au/energyco/rez to view the preferred study corridor. You can also find maps of the corridor by reading the scoping report via our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

The interactive map includes key features of the New England REZ such as the transmission study corridor, proposed energy hub locations, existing high voltage network and land boundaries.

Get in touch with our team if you have any questions about how to navigate the interactive map.



Scan the QR code to view the interactive map.



Community information sessions

EnergyCo will hold a series of information sessions in August and September so you can speak to the team, ask questions and provide feedback.

Muswellbrook

Tuesday 27 August, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Muswellbrook Tertiary Education Centre, 87 Hill Street, Muswellbrook

Murrurundi

Wednesday 28 August, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Murrurundi Country Women's Association Hall, 109 Mayne Street, Murrurundi

Tamworth

Thursday 29 August, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Acacia Function Centre, 559-597 Burgmanns Lane, Hillvue

Woolomin

Tuesday 3 September, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Woolomin-Duncan's Creek Memorial Hall, 53 Nundle Road, Woolomin

Uralla

Wednesday 4 September, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Uralla Neighbourhood Centre, 27 Salisbury Street, Uralla

Armidale

Thursday 5 September, 3.30pm to 6.30pm at Armidale Town Hall, 127 Rusden Street, Armidale

No formal presentation will be given, so you can drop in any time during the sessions.

What we heard about the revised study corridor

In March 2024, we held information sessions in Tamworth, Armidale and Muswellbrook that were attended by about 160 people in total. Key topics raised included:



How the revised study corridor for the project was developed



Impacts to agricultural activities from transmission lines



Bushfire and emergency management



Ongoing opportunities for engagement and feedback.

Thank you to those who took time to attend the sessions and speak with our team. We are considering all feedback received as we develop the project. Our team is available to continue discussions with the community and answer questions. You can get in touch with our team at any time via the details on the back page of this update.



Armidale community information session

Critical State Significant Infrastructure declaration

In June 2024, the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces declared the New England REZ network infrastructure project as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI).

The declaration means the project is considered essential to the state for economic, environmental or social reasons.

Under the NSW *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, all CSSI applications are required to go through a comprehensive assessment process with extensive community involvement. The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will also need to approve the project before it can go ahead.

You can learn more about the planning approval process for the project by reading our fact sheet at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne.

Social impact assessment

As part of the EIS development for the REZ network infrastructure project, EnergyCo is carrying out a range of environmental and technical assessments across a number of topics.

All state significant projects need to prepare a social impact assessment for the EIS in accordance with the NSW Government's Social Impact Assessment Guideline. The social impact assessment aims to identify and evaluate potential social impacts from the project and how these will be managed.

EnergyCo has engaged specialists to develop the social impact assessment and carry out research and consultation to inform the assessment. This will include interviews and surveys with landowners, interest groups and key stakeholders throughout 2024 and early 2025.

We will keep the community informed about opportunities to get involved in this work. If you are interested in participating in the social impact consultation, please get in touch with our team to register your details.

You can find further details about the social impact assessment and preliminary findings in the scoping report.



Field studies in progress



Scotts Creek



McCullys Gap

Field surveys and investigations

EnergyCo is carrying out field investigation work along the alignment to understand constraints and opportunities and inform the environmental studies needed to assess the project. The field studies will help refine the study corridor and determine the transmission line route.

This work includes ecological and biodiversity surveys, heritage surveys, visual assessments, geotechnical investigations, understanding Aboriginal cultural values, and aerial mapping surveys. These surveys will continue to take place throughout 2024 and 2025.

Why does EnergyCo need access to my land for field work?

Field investigation work helps us carry out a robust technical and environmental assessment of the study corridor and identify potential interactions with property and business activities. It allows us to work with landowners to understand farming and property operations, ground conditions, details of sensitive flora and fauna or the locations of existing dwellings, sheds and other structural features.

Information gathered from field work helps us achieve better outcomes for landowners, communities and the environment when planning and designing the transmission route.

We will always seek permission before accessing private property for field work. We will comply with all biosecurity requirements outlined in NSW legislation and regulations, as well as any additional requirements outlined in land access agreements with individual landowners.



Biodiversity offsetting opportunities for landowners

EnergyCo is exploring a range of initiatives to offset biodiversity impacts from the REZ network infrastructure project and provide good long-term biodiversity outcomes for the region. Under the NSW Government's Biodiversity Offset Scheme, potential biodiversity impacts from a proposed development can be offset by protecting and improving biodiversity on another site. Many private landowners in and around the New England REZ have areas of native vegetation that could be used for conservation purposes as a biodiversity stewardship site. These sites can generate potential income for landowners through biodiversity offset credits.

If you are a landowner interested in hosting a biodiversity stewardship site, we would like to hear from you. We have support available for landowners to assist them through the process of establishing a biodiversity stewardship agreement.

For more information, you can read our fact sheet at energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne. You can also visit the NSW Government's Environment and Heritage website at environment.nsw.gov.au and search 'biodiversity stewardship agreements' to read their landowner guide.

Coordinating the delivery of the REZ

EnergyCo recognises the critical role of regional communities in the delivery of a modern electricity grid for NSW, including hosting new transmission lines, energy hubs, renewable energy projects, and related infrastructure.

We are working to coordinate the delivery of the REZ and provide long-term benefits to REZ communities in a number of ways. This includes:



Consulting with government agencies, councils and other stakeholders to understand key topics and priority areas for investigation



Collaborating with state government agencies and generation developers to address REZ-wide impacts and opportunities, including coordinating road upgrades and improving access to local training and employment pathways



Developing a state-wide community and employment benefit program which aims to contribute to the ongoing prosperity of REZ communities and put regions in a better position than they were prior to the energy transition.

We understand the local people who live and work in regional NSW know what is best for their community. EnergyCo will work closely with local communities, councils, First Nations people and other stakeholders to help shape the community benefit initiatives we plan to deliver.

We will provide an update on this work in late 2024 and will keep you informed about opportunities to get involved and have your say.



You can read more on our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/coordinating-delivery-renewable-energy-zones

Next steps

Work to develop the EIS for the New England REZ network infrastructure project will continue throughout 2024 and 2025. During this time, we will continue carrying out field investigations and consultation with landowners and communities to refine the transmission corridor and assess its impacts.

We expect to lodge the EIS with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for public exhibition and assessment in late 2025.

During the EIS exhibition period, communities and stakeholders will be able to make formal submissions on the merits of the project. All submissions will be considered and responded to in a submission report.



Armidale



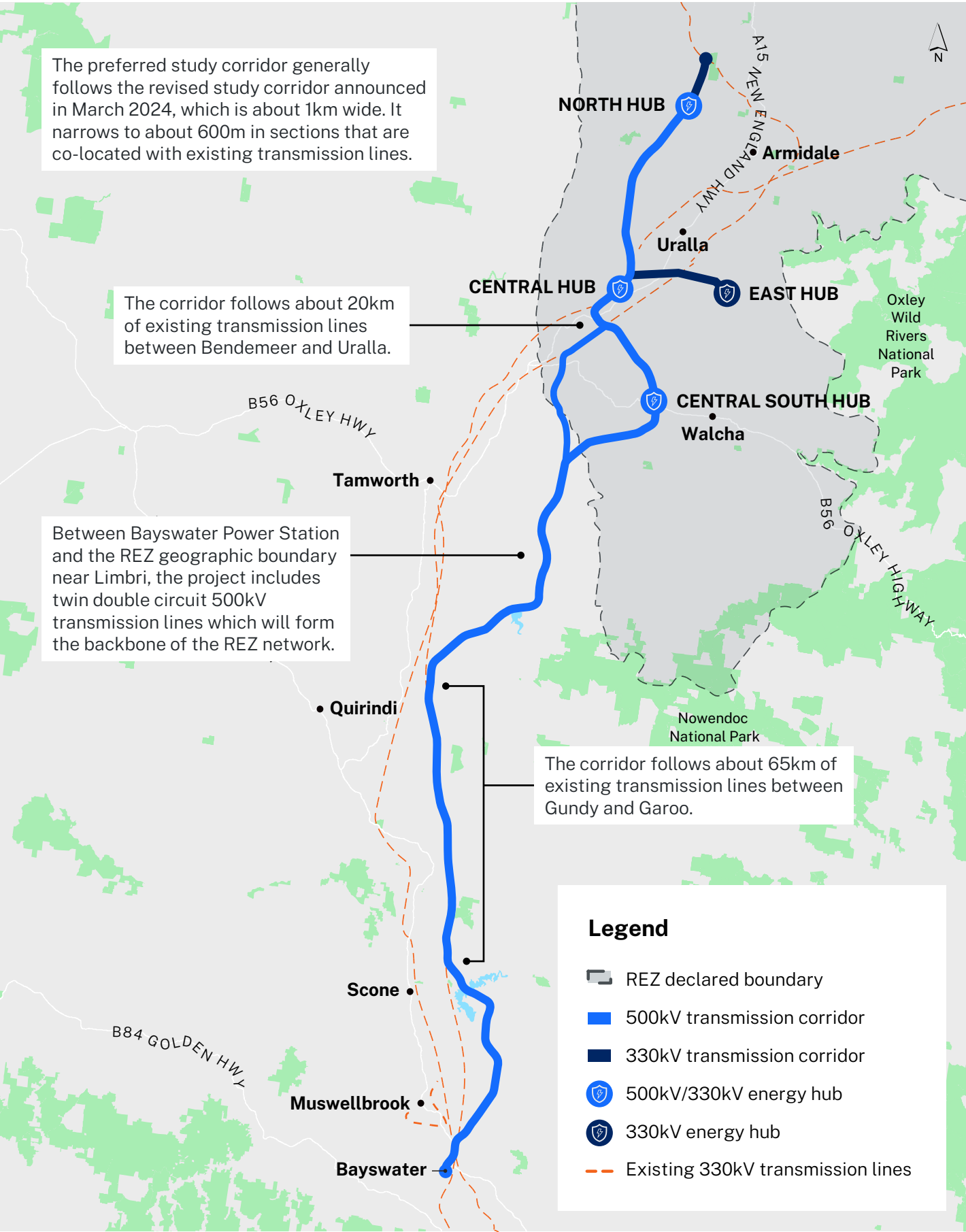
Tamworth

Project development timeline



Tamworth

New England REZ network infrastructure project



About EnergyCo

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is a statutory authority responsible for leading the delivery of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) as part of the NSW Government's Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

EnergyCo is working closely with communities, investors and industry to deliver the state's first five REZs.

For more information about EnergyCo, visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco.

Contact us

For more information about the New England REZ project, you can visit our website or contact the project team.



nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au



1800 061 114
(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)



energyco.nsw.gov.au/ne



If you need help understanding this information, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** and ask them to call us on **1800 061 114**.



Share your feedback

EnergyCo wants to hear what you think about our plans. If you have questions or want to give feedback, please get in touch with our team. You can find more information on our website by scanning the QR code or by visiting energyco.nsw.gov.au.