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Realising a dream

By Robert Somers

A NEWLY-formed co-operative is well on the way to realising its dream of establishing Australia's first community-owned wind farm, organisers say.

The Leonard's Hill wind farm

project isn't struggling to find investors, according to its proponents Hepburn Renewable Energy Association.

Hepburn Renewable Energy Association spokesperson Koos Hulst said investors would be

found by the first quarter of next year.

The State Government has provided one-million dollars, but another seven-million dollars needs to be raised by the community.

Daylesford and District Landscape Guardians last week called on HREA to show where the money was coming from.

Mr Hulst said HREA would listen to any concerns the com-

munity had about the wind farm, even those of the guardians.

"Since it's a community-owned wind farm we want to listen to other people's opinions, even if they're against ours," he said.

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Dream of community wind farm well on its way to reality

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Mr Hulst said he couldn't put a time frame on the project's completion.

"It depends on a lot of things, it's not like buying candy, these are big, big machines," he said.

The wind farm, to be situated at Leonards Hill about 10kms south of Daylesford, will have a capacity of four Megawatts and produce enough electricity to power more than 2000 homes, nearly half the number of houses in the Hepburn Shire.

The project will be owned by the members of a co-operative and profits will be shared among them.

Inaugural project chairperson Simon Holmes à Court said the board was well equipped to steer the project's initial stages.

"There is a fantastic array of skills on the board. We've set up all our sub-committees and each sub-

committee is working hard to make sure the project is professional and successful for the community."

The two-turbine facility gained approval from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Appeals tribunal in July.

Mr Holmes à Court encouraged people to make contact with the co-operative's board members.

"Board members can be emailed directly from the HREA website.

"We look forward to receiving feedback and ideas from the whole community."

"There's still a lot of work to be done to get over our last major hurdle which is the capital raising.

"We plan to launch the public capital raising early in the new year.

"We're very focussed on getting the maximum number of community members to benefit from this fantastic community project."