

h, not long after these thoughts began, Alison found herself in an unlikely conversation at the Hay visitor centre with a hook. Kate had been stranded in town after getting a flat tyre, and she visited the centre every day while the garage sorted her car. Over those visits, the two began chatting. “Eventually, Alison asked me what I did for work,” Kate recalls. “And I told her that my job was to make sure regional communities had the support they needed to benefit from big renewable energy projects. Her response was immediate: “Oh my god – you’re the people I’ve been looking for.”

It turns out, was mutual. Kate had been looking for regional towns that wanted support navigating large-scale renewable energy projects. In Hay, she saw the perfect chance to help a community harness the benefits of renewables while sidestepping the pitfalls of large-scale projects.



“The first priority was to make sure everybody was informed about the REZ and what it meant for them. In these situations, the community and council can feel completely overwhelmed, because you’ve got developers talking to different landowners and groups, and everyone’s hearing bits and pieces fifth-hand, unsure what’s true and what’s just rumour. The best way to counter this is to focus on building transparency and trust.”

– Kate Hook, RE-Alliance Community Engagement Manager

Community engagement is crucial for governments, too. Without local communities on board, major infrastructure projects like REZs can lead to even failure. Ensuring local voices are heard and the benefits are clear makes it easier for governments to meet their obligations.

From the start, in Hay, RE-Alliance started with education. Working with Alison, they set up a ‘Renewable Energy 101’ workshop for the community to learn why the energy shift was happening, why it was happening in Hay, and what Hay could gain from these projects. “I remember the first workshop being a bit of a flop, with a lot of folded arms across chests,” Kate recalls of the workshops. “But by the end, people were saying, ‘Let’s see what the community thinks, and what the developers are offering.’”