

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

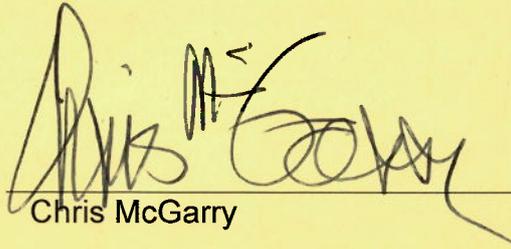
Direction
CD-021178-25
ABP-308208-20

The submissions on this file, the Inspector's report and the report of the in-house Ecologist, were considered at a meeting held on 04/11/2025.

The Commission decided to grant permission generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, for the following reasons and considerations, and subject to the following conditions.

Planning

Commissioner:


Chris McGarry

Date: 06/11/2025

DRAFT WORDING FOR ORDER

Reasons and Considerations

The Commission made its decision consistent with its duties under Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with inter alia the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the furtherance of the national climate objective.

And in coming to its decision, The Commission also had regard to the following:

- European legislation, including of particular relevance:

- Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union.
- EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC which aims to promote the use of renewable energy and amending Directive EU/2023/2413 which aims to speed up the EU's clean energy transition.
- Directive 2011/92/EU (The EIA Directive) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU.
- National and regional planning and related policy, including:
 - National policy with regard to transmission grids which are necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system. Particularly the NPF First Revision 2025 and National Strategic Objective 8 Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society.
 - The objectives and targets of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030.
- Regional and local planning policy, including:
 - Regional Spatial Economic Strategy for the Southern Region;
 - Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028.
- Other relevant national policy and guidance documents.
- The nature, scale and design of the proposed development as set out in the planning application and the pattern of development in the vicinity.
- The likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European sites.
- The reports of the Local Planning Authority and the further information provided by the applicant to the Local Planning Authority received in 2014.
- The further information provided by the applicant to The Commission received on 10th March 2023.

- The submissions made on the planning application to the Local Authority and to An Bord Pleanála in connection with the appeals.
- The report and the recommendation of the Inspector, including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment and environmental impact assessment.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Commission noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European Site. The Commission completed an appropriate assessment screening exercise in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on designated European Sites, taking into account the Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment submitted with the application and the report and screening assessment completed by the Inspector. The Commission agreed with the inspector's assessment and conclusion that the European Site for which there is potential for significant effects (when including all aspects of the windfarm project including the windfarm itself) is The Gearagh SPA. The Commission concluded, in agreement with the inspector, that Appropriate Assessment is required for that European Site.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application and appeal, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and carried out an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed development for European Sites in view of the conservation objectives for the Gearagh SPA. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an Appropriate Assessment and to allow it to reach complete, precise and definitive conclusions for Appropriate Assessment.

In completing the assessment, The Commission considered, in particular, the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development, both individually and in combination with the other plans and projects (including all aspects of the entire windfarm project as addressed in the Inspector's assessment) and taking into

account any mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, in view of the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

The Commission accepted and adopted the Appropriate Assessment carried out in the inspector's report with respect to the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Site, having regard to the Site's conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, The Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, (including all aspects of the entire windfarm project as addressed in the inspector's assessment) would not adversely affect the integrity of European Sites, in view of the Sites' conservation objectives of those Sites and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of such effects.

This conclusion is based on a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed project, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects of relevance, (including all aspects of the entire windfarm project as addressed in the inspector's assessment) and took into account all submissions received during the course of the application.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Commission completed an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development, taking into account:

- (a) The nature, scale, location and extent of the proposed development;
- (b) The Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted;
- (c) The submissions received during the course of the appeals; and
- (d) The Inspector's report.

The Commission considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and supporting documentation submitted by the applicant during the course of the appeal, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative

effects of the proposed development on the environment. The Commission agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the planning appeals.

Reasoned Conclusion of the Significant Effects:

The Commission considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant during the course of the appeal, provided information which is reasonable and sufficient to allow The Commission to reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment. The Commission is satisfied that the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report is up to date and complies with the provisions of EU Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU. The Commission considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development (including the windfarm and the substation) on the environment are those arising from the impacts listed below.

The main significant effects, both positive and negative, are:

Population and human health –Implementation of a CEMP during construction and decommissioning phases to mitigate direct negative effects. Designed in mitigation include screen planting and measures to prevent impact from shadow flicker. Application of best practice and safety measures during operation of the project. No significant negative effects. Direct, significant and long-term positive impact arising from the Community Benefit Fund for the project.

Biodiversity – The proposed development will result in the loss of habitat on the site and generates potential for risk of collision / injury to bats and birds. With the implementation of mitigation, including hedgerow re-instatement, protection of watercourses, pre-clearance and pre-construction surveys, measures to reduce collision risk (including curtailment), and monitoring, there will be no significant negative residual effects upon biodiversity.

Land, soils, geology, water, air quality or climate - Mitigation is formed of measures to reduce and manage impact upon land, soils, geology, water, air quality

and climate, including implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, as well as surface water management and water quality monitoring. With the implementation of mitigation, no significant residual negative impacts. During operation, residual impact will be positive upon air quality and climate due to the avoidance of emissions from fossil fuel generators.

Noise and vibration – No significant residual effects are predicted with respect to noise and vibration. Mitigation includes adherence to regulations for the control and abatement of noise during construction and the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Material assets (land use, telecommunications, electricity networks, air navigation, quarries, and utilities) – Mitigation has been designed-in to minimise potential effects, with additional mitigation including implementation of a construction and waste management plan as part of the CEMP for the project. Tailored mitigation for telecommunications including a protocol to be signed between 2RN and the developer setting out the developer's obligation to correct any deterioration in television and radio signal reception. Mitigation related to aviation includes aeronautical obstacle lighting. With the implementation of mitigation, no significant residual negative impacts.

Material assets – traffic and transportation – Mitigation will reduce impact upon traffic movements arising during the construction and decommissioning phase from HGV movements and transportation of abnormally large loads. Impact will be over a short-term, temporary period and will not be significant. During operation impact will be imperceptible.

Archaeology and cultural heritage – Mitigation primarily involves archaeological monitoring to avoid impact upon currently unknown features. Additional mitigation ensures preservation (by record or in-situ) in the event of discovery of unknown / unexpected features during construction. With the application of mitigation, no significant residual impact.

Landscape and visual impacts – In relation to the central study area, residual impact of moderate significance with respect to landscape impact. In relation to the wider study area, the significance of this landscape impact is slight, reducing to imperceptible at increasing distances from the subject site. In terms of visual effect,

the significance of visual impacts for all receptors (including from Scenic Routes), is generally in the mid to low range, with the exception of a small number of local community views. The existing landscape is not highly susceptible to development (evidenced by the 'Low' sensitivity classification in the Cork County Development Plan) and the development will be assimilated without significant residual negative visual effect.

Having regard to the above, The Commission is satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment. The Commission is satisfied that the reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making the decision. The Commission completed an environmental impact assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed and subject to compliance with the conditions set out herein, the effects on the environment of the proposed development by itself, and, cumulatively with other development in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, The Commission adopted the report and conclusions of the reporting Inspector.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

It is considered that the proposed development of a substation and associated works would accord with European, national, regional and local planning policy provision. The Commission was satisfied that an approval for the proposed development would be consistent with the national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2025. Furthermore, The Commission has performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in accordance with the requirements of Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015. The Commission considered that by reason of scale, form and extent, that, subject to compliance with the following conditions, the proposed development would be in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028, would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the area, or of property in the area, and would constitute an appropriate form of development at this location. In addition, the proposed development would contribute to the resilience of the overall energy supply network of the country, would make a positive contribution to Ireland's

national strategic policy on renewable energy and its move to a low energy carbon future and in this regard would be consistent with the national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 and 2025 The proposed development, would therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars of the application to the planning authority on 26/09/2014 as amended by the submissions received by the planning authority on 9/12/2014 and the further details received by An Bord Pleanála, including further information received on 10th March 2023 except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and of proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the environment.

3. The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Natura Impact Statement (NIS), shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the integrity of European Sites.

4. Prior to the commencement of any works associated with the development hereby permitted, the developer shall submit a detailed final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the written agreement of the

planning authority. The final CEMP shall reflect measures included in the EIAR for the appeal. A record of daily checks that the construction works are being undertaken in accordance with the CEMP shall be kept at the construction site office for inspection by the planning authority. The agreed CEMP shall be implemented in full in the carrying out of the development.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection, residential amenities, public health and safety and environmental protection.

5. Drainage arrangements including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the planning authority for such works and services. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit to the Planning Authority for written agreement a Stage 2 - Detailed Design Stage Storm Water Audit. Upon completion of the development a Stage 3 Completion Stormwater Audit to demonstrate Sustainable Urban Drainage System measures have been installed and are working as designed and that there has been no misconnections or damage to storm water drainage infrastructure during construction, shall be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement.

Reason: In the interest of public health and surface water management.

6. All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage as set out in the EIAR for the appeal shall be implemented in full. The planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any archaeological investigative work/ excavation required, following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation [either in situ or by record] of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

7. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to An Board Pleanála to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.