



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

### ABP-307620-20

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<b>Development</b>	Proposed development of 15 no. wind turbines together with grid connection to extend existing Coole Wind Farm and all associated site works
<b>Location</b>	Townlands of Coole, Monkton, Camagh, Doon, Clonsura, Clonrobert and Carlanstown County Westmeath
<b>Prospective Applicant</b>	Coole Windfarm Ltd
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Westmeath County Council
<b>Type of Application</b>	Pre-Application Consultation under s.182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah Lynch

## 1.0 Pre-Application Consultation

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 from Coole Windfarm to enter into pre-application consultation under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in relation to proposed development in the townlands of Coole, Monktown, Camagh, Doon, Clonsura, Clonrobert and Carlanstown County Westmeath.

## 2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site is located to the northeast of the R396 regional road, which connects Coole village with Granard, and to the southwest of the R394 regional road, which connects Finnea village with Castlepollard. Much of the site is relatively flat and is presently in use as commercial peatlands, alongside fringe areas of commercial forestry (measuring c.9.5ha). The village of Coole, the nearest identifiable settlement to the proposed wind farm site, is located approximately 2.5km to the south. The largest settlements in the vicinity include Abbeylara, located approximately 5.5km to the northwest, Castlepollard, located 7.4km to the southeast, Granard, located 8.1km to the northwest and Edgeworthstown, located 14.2km to the west.
- 2.2. The Glore River flows through the turbine site, draining in a northwest direction before flowing into the River Inny, which marks the county boundary between Longford and Westmeath and the western boundary of the turbine site lands. Approximately 2.2km to 4.2km upstream to the north of the site, the River Inny drains from Lough Sheelin, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough, before ultimately draining into the Shannon at Lough Ree, approximately 35km to the southwest of the site

## 3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. The current proposal is for a renewable energy development consisting of up to 15no. turbines together with a grid connection. The proposed 15 turbine windfarm will constitute an optimisation and extension of a previously permitted windfarm (ref: 300686) up to 50MW.
- 3.2. The proposed works will include the following:
  - Increase in the blade length beyond that permitted

- Provide an additional two turbines which will render the project a 15 turbine windfarm and increase generating capacity above 50MW.
- Install an underground grid connection of 26km from site to Mullingar substation.

The proposed development will have a generating capacity of approximately 90MW.

## 4.0 Planning History

### Development Site

ABP 300686 Permission was granted for a ten-year planning permission for a 13-turbine wind farm with a 30-year operational life.

## 5.0 Applicant's Case

5.1. The prospective applicant's case can be summarised as follows:

- The proposed development will have a generating capacity of 90MW and as such falls within the thresholds of the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule for Strategic Infrastructure Development.
- The development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the state due to the scale of the project and social importance to the region and state. The capital investment required combined with the community gain and commercial rates would represent a significant economic contribution to the region and country. Proposal will reduce reliance of fossil fuels.
- The development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of objectives in the National Planning Framework, specifically Objective 55. It is also in accordance with the following documents:
  - Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland 2008-2020,
  - The National Climate Change Strategy,
  - National Development Plan
  - Strategy for renewable energy 2012-2020
  - National Mitigation Plan 2017
  - Climate Action Plan 2019.

- The proposal is in accordance with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly by way of its ability to contribute to a low carbon environment.
- The development would not have a significant effect on more than one planning authority as it is situated entirely within Westmeath.
- The prospective applicant concludes that the proposed development is within the 7<sup>th</sup> schedule and satisfies two of the three criteria set out in Section 37A(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- An EIAR and NIS will be prepared for the proposed development.

## 6.0 Consultations

6.1. One pre-application meeting was held with the prospective applicant on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020. Minutes are attached to the file. One presentation was made to the Board's representatives at the meeting which is also attached to the file. The principal matters arising related to the need for the proposal, the planning history of the site, alternatives considered and the issues pertaining to the development in terms of local planning policy, community engagement, potential environmental impacts and the requirement for up to date surveys to adequately inform the NIS and EIAR.

## 7.0 Legislative Provisions

7.1. Section 2(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:

*'(a) any proposed development in respect of which a notice has been served under section 37B(4)(a)';*

7.2. Section 37A of the Act states that:

"(1) An application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule (inserted by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006) shall, if the following condition is satisfied, be made to the Board under section 37E and not to a planning authority.

(2) That condition is that, following consultations under section 37B, the Board serves on the prospective applicant a notice in writing under that section stating

that, in the opinion of the Board, the proposed development would, if carried out, fall within one or more of the following paragraphs, namely—

- (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,
- (b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,
- (c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.”

7.3. The current SID thresholds are set out within the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The relevant threshold for the proposed project is *‘An installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts’*.

#### 7.4. **Environmental Impact Assessment**

7.5. Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) transposes Annex I and II of the EIA Directive and sets out prescribed classes of development, for which an environmental impact assessment is required. The following classes are noted:

Part 2 Class 3 (i)

*‘Installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than 5 turbines or having a total output greater than 5 megawatts’*.

## 8.0 **Planning Policy**

### 8.1. **The recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU**

8.2. In December 2018, the recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU entered into force, as part of the Clean energy for all Europeans package, aimed at keeping the EU a global leader in renewables and, more broadly, helping the EU to meet its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement.

- 8.3. The recast directive moves the legal framework to 2030 and sets a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%, with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023, and comprises measures for the different sectors to make it happen. This includes new provisions for enabling self-consumption of renewable energy, an increased 14 % target for the share of renewable fuels in transport by 2030 and strengthened criteria for ensuring bioenergy sustainability.
- 8.4. Under the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (EU) 2018/1999, EU countries are required to draft national energy and climate plans (NECPs) for 2021-2030, outlining how they will meet the new 2030 targets for renewable energy and for energy efficiency.
- 8.5. Most of the other elements in the new directive need to be transposed into national law by Member States by 30 June 2021, when the original renewables directive will be repealed.

8.6. **7th Environment Action Programme to 2020**

This is an EU Action Programme which aims to guide the EU into a resource efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy.

8.7. **The Paris Agreement, 2015**

This is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with ghg emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance starting in the year 2020, which aims to keep the global average temperature rise this century to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

8.8. **National Policy**

**Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future, 2015-2030**

This White Paper on energy policy (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources – Dec 2015) provides a complete energy policy update for Ireland. It sets out a vision to reduce ghg emissions of between 80% and 95% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, falling to zero or below by 2100. The policy document recognises that the 2020 target of 40% renewables energy is likely to require a total of 3,500-4,000 MW of onshore renewables generation capacity, compared to the 2,500 MW available at the end of December 2014.

## 8.9. **Strategy for Renewable Energy, 2012 – 2020**

This Strategy reiterates the Government's position that 'the development and deployment of Ireland's abundant indigenous renewable energy resources, both onshore and offshore, clearly stands on its own merits in terms of the contribution to the economy, to the growth and jobs agenda, to environmental sustainability and to diversity of energy supply'. Strategic Goal 1 of the Strategy is to 'progressively more renewable electricity from onshore and offshore wind power for the domestic and export markets'.

The Strategy states that further strategic deployment of onshore wind projects will develop a base of indigenous and foreign companies and create employment in the short-term in wind farm construction, possible turbine component manufacturing and servicing, the opportunity to capture international supply chain opportunities and the manufacture of niche onshore renewable energy generating equipment.

## 8.10. **National Renewable Energy Action Plan (2010)**

The National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) was submitted to the European Commission in 2010. It sets out Ireland's approach to achieving its legally-binding targets, with a target of 40% of electricity consumption to be from renewable sources by 2020. The NREAP recognised that as Ireland moves towards achieving this target, the Irish grid increasingly has to cope with the challenges posed by large amounts of intermittent power and that EirGrid (the Irish Transmission System Operator) is involved in detailed examination of the issues and is pioneering several renewables facilitation studies, with a view to ensuring the appropriate management of the grid and stability of the electricity system during this transition.

A fourth progress report on the NREAP was submitted to the European Commission in February 2018. To meet the renewables energy target for 2020, the Action Plan states that it is expected that between 3,900 MW and 4,300 MW of wind needs to be connected.

## 8.11. **Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040. Chapter 3 of

the Framework addresses 'effective regional development' and includes the following policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland region:

- 'Harnessing the potential of the region in renewable energy terms across the technological spectrum from wind and solar to biomass and, where applicable, wave energy, focusing in particular on the extensive tracts of publicly-owned peat extraction areas, in order to enable a managed transition of the local economies of such areas in gaining the economic benefits of greener energy'.

Under the heading 'Planning and Investment to Support Rural Job Creation', the following is stated within the NPF with regards to 'Energy Production':

- 'Rural areas have significantly contributed to the energy needs of the country and will continue to do so, having a strong role to play in securing a sustainable renewable energy supply. In planning Ireland's future energy landscape and in transitioning to a low-carbon economy, the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies is essential. Innovative and novel renewable solutions have been delivered in rural areas over the last number of years, particularly from solar, wind and biomass energy sources'.
- 'In relation to peatlands, some of Ireland's cutaway bogs are suitable to facilitate the generation of energy, most notably wind/biomass'.

National Policy Objective 55 seeks to 'promote renewable energy generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet objectives towards a low carbon economy by 2050'. The pretext to this Objective states that 'development of the Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Electricity Development Plan will also facilitate informed decision making in relation to onshore renewable energy infrastructure'. National Strategic Outcome 8 relating to the 'Transition to Sustainable Energy' states that:

'New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, more renewables focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy'.

**Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly 2019-2031**



RPO 7.36: Planning policy at local authority level shall reflect and adhere to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.

#### 8.12. **Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020**

Chapter 2 of the Development Plan includes the following Strategic aims:

- vi - Supporting the role of rural areas and the countryside in sustaining the rural economy and its role as a key resource for agriculture and agri-food, forestry, energy production and reduction, tourism, recreation, mineral extraction and/or other new and emerging rural based enterprises;
- vii - Supporting and promoting the growth of the tourism sector in the county;
- viii - Supporting and promoting the growth and development of the renewable energy sector in the county;
- ix - Protecting the county's natural assets by maintaining and/or improving the quality of the lakes, water and groundwater, landscape, parks, open spaces, architectural, archaeological and cultural heritage and material assets.

#### Wind Energy

Policies and objectives relating to wind energy are primarily addressed under Chapter 10 of the Development Plan, titled 'Energy and Communications'. The Plan acknowledges various energy policy documents and recognises the national target of 40% electricity to be sourced from renewable resources by 2020. The following energy policies of the Plan are of particular relevance to this appeal:

- P-EN1 – 'To promote renewable forms of energy where it is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of an area';
- P-EN2 – 'To support local, regional, national and international initiatives for limiting emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources which make use of the natural resources in an environmentally acceptable manner, and having particular regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive';

- P-EN4 – ‘To support the National Climate Change Strategy and, in general, to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases’;
- P-EN5 – ‘To support the sustainable development of the infrastructure required to assist the Midland Region in the delivery of renewable energy, particularly in the context of the need to make a transition from peat to renewable energy’.

Chapter 10.5 of the Plan specifically addresses wind energy and sets out the context for this energy regime, matters for consideration when dealing with wind energy proposals and refers to the ‘Wind Energy Development Capacity Map’ of the Plan, as a guide to whether or not a wind farm development would be open for consideration in a particular area. This map was varied as part of Variation No.1 of the Development Plan and, as previously provided for, it identifies the appeal site as being located in a ‘low capacity’ area for wind energy development. Of the 11 no. landscape character areas, ten are identified as having ‘low-capacity’, with the ‘Uisneach’ area approximately 25km to the south of the proposed main turbine site having ‘no-capacity’. Chapter 10.5.2 of the Plan addresses ‘industrial-scale wind farms’ and sets out that following on from national and regional guidance ‘the preferred locations for large-scale energy production, in the form of wind farms, is on cutover cutaway peatlands in the county, subject to nature conservation and habitat protection requirements being fully addressed’. The Plan confirms the intention to review policies and objectives in relation to industrial-scale wind farms following focussed review of the WEDG.

Specific guidance relating to wind energy applications is outlined in Section 10.5.3 of the Plan, including the need for wind energy developments proposed on peatlands, to adhere to the construction guidelines specified in Appendix 4 of the WEDG. Section 10.6 of the Plan states the policies and objectives for wind energy in County Westmeath, the following of which are relevant:

- Policy P-WIN1 – ‘To encourage the development of small-scale wind energy development and single turbines in urban and rural areas and Industrial Parks, provided they do not negatively impact upon environmental quality, landscape, wildlife and habitats or residential amenity’;
- Policy P-WIN2 – ‘To strictly direct large-scale energy production projects, in the form of Wind Farms, onto cutover cutaway peatlands in the county, subject to environmental, landscape, habitats and wildlife protection requirements being

addressed. In the context of this policy, industrial scale/large-scale energy production projects are defined as follows: Projects that meet or exceed any of the following criteria:

- Height: over 100m to blade tip, or
- Scale: More than five turbines
- Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW’;
- Policy P-WIN3 – ‘To ensure the siting and development of wind turbines is carried out in accordance with the requirements of the DoEHLG Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, and as otherwise amended’;
- Objective O-WIN1 – ‘To prepare and implement a Management Plan for the Industrial Peatlands in the county, in consultation with stakeholders and adjacent Local Authorities, during the lifetime of the plan. Said plan shall focus on recreational opportunities, renewable energy, hydrological and ecological considerations and shall be subject to environmental assessment and the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive’.

#### Variation No.2 of the Plan

On the 19th day of May 2017, Variation No.2 was formally incorporated into the Development Plan, involving an amendment to the wind-energy strategy for the County, comprising the insertion of the following additional planning policy (P-WIN 6) to Section 10.6 of the Plan:

- P-WIN 6 – ‘To provide the following separation distances between wind turbines and residential dwellings –
  - 500 metres, where height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 25 metres but does not exceed 50 metres.
  - 1,000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 50 metres but does not exceed 100 metres.
  - 1,500 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 100 metres but does not exceed 150 metres.
  - More than 2,000 metres, where the height of the wind turbine generator is greater than 150 metres’.

## Peatlands

Section 5.11 of the Plan addresses peatlands, which cover 9% of the County terrain and are recognised as a valuable habitat. The following ‘peatland’ policies and objectives are of relevance:

- P-PTL1 – ‘To protect the county’s designated peatland areas and landscapes, including any historical walkways through bogs and to conserve their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational heritage’.
- P-PTL3 – ‘To require the preparation of Hydrological Reports for significant developments within and in close proximity to peatlands, and to take account of same in the assessment of impacts on the integrity of peatland ecosystems’
- P-PTL4 – ‘To plan and prepare for the future sustainable and environmentally sensitive use of large industrial bog sites when peat harvesting finishes and to encourage a balanced approach to the redevelopment of cutaway bogs, including habitat creation, in conjunction with adjacent Local Authorities. This plan will have regard to both National and Regional frameworks with regard to the future use of peatlands, including cutaway bogs’.
- O-PTL4 – ‘To consider designating peatlands at Coolnagun, Corlanna, Lower Coole, Mayne, Ballinealoe and Clonsura as archaeological heritage areas, where it is considered an ancient trackway or road may have been constructed’.
- O-PTL6 – ‘To support the preparation of a Sustainable Holistic Management Plan for the future use of the Industrial Peatlands in the county, which recognises the role of peatlands in carbon sequestration’

### **8.13. Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2020-2026**

The plan maintains the policy of the current plan in relation to separation distances from wind turbines.

### **8.14. Designated Sites in proximity to site**

- Derragh Bog cSAC (002201) c. 3.5km
- Moneybeg and Clareisland Island cSAC (002340) c. 3.4km
- Lough Derravagh SPA – c.5km

- Garriskil Bog cSAC (000679) c.4.6km
- White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo cSAC (001810) c. 9.9km
- Ardagullion Bog SAC (002341) c. c.7.4km
- Lough Bane and Lough Glass cSAC (002120) c. 11.9km
- Lough Owel SAC (002193) c. 12.7km
- White Lough, Ben Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810) c. 9.9km
- Lough Derravaragh SPA (004043) c. 5km
- Lough Iron SPA (004046) c. 11.7km
- Garriskil Bog SPA c. 7.3km
- Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA – c. 2.1km
- Lough Lene SAC c. 8.8km
- Lough Sheelin SPA c. 4.2km

## 9.0 **Assessment**

### 9.1. **Strategic Infrastructure**

9.2. The proposed development will comprise 15 turbines with a combined generating capacity of 90MW and will include a 26km grid connection from the proposed windfarm site to a substation in Mullingar. The current SID thresholds are set out within the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The relevant threshold for the proposed project is *'An installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts'*. Having regard to the combined generating capacity of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the development accords with Section 37A(1) of the Act.

9.3. Accordingly under Section 37A(2), the proposed development must fall within one or more of the following conditions:

- (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,

9.4. The prospective applicant's case is that the proposal satisfies the conditions under 37A(2)(a) of the Act due to the scale of project which would generate more than 50MW.

The applicant also refers to the capital investment required for the construction of a project of the scale proposed and when combined with the commercial rates, contributions and community plan proposal associated with the operation of the proposed development the prospective applicant considers that the proposal would be of strategic economic importance to both the region and the state. It is contended that the proposed development will assist in meeting national renewable energy targets and will also result in significant reductions in carbon emissions from electricity generation and reduce the country's reliance on fossil fuels.

9.5. Having regard to the national and regional policy context and the details of the subject proposals outlined above, I am satisfied that the development would be of strategic economic importance to the State and the Region and would therefore comply with the condition set out in section 37A(2)(a) of the Act.

(b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,

9.6. It is submitted by the prospective applicant that the proposed development would be in accordance with the promotion of sustainable energy development as set out in the provisions of Delivering a Sustainable Energy Future for Ireland 2008-2020. It is further stated that the development is in accordance with the The National Climate Change Strategy, National Development Plan and Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012-2020, the project is also compliant with the overall objectives of the National Mitigation Plan 2017, Climate Action Plan 2019 and the overall national objective to decarbonise electricity generation.

9.6.1. The prospective applicant also states that the proposed development would contribute to the objectives of the NPF and the provisions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly. Having reviewed the NPF, I note the following relevant National Policy Objectives (NPOs) which aim to reduce our carbon footprint and promote renewable energy:

- NPO 54: Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate change action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions;

- NPO 55: Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.

9.7. At Regional level I note that the RSES for the Eastern and Midlands region recognises the need to shift its reliance on using fossil fuels and natural gas as its main energy source to a more diverse range of low and zero-carbon sources, including renewable energy and secondary heat sources and acknowledges that generating electricity from renewable sources requires onshore wind, bioenergy, solar and offshore energy.

9.8. The Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region which includes the use of wind energy.

9.9. Having regard to the above, I am satisfied that the development would meet relevant national policy objectives of the NPF and would serve to fulfil the relevant regional policy objectives of the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. The development would therefore satisfy the requirement set out in section 37A(2)(b) of the Act.

(c ) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.”

9.10. The site is fully contained within the area of one planning authority, Westmeath County Council. While the haul routes have the potential to traverse parts of other counties. This will be a temporary period during the construction phase of the development. Having regard to the information submitted I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have any significant effect on any other planning authority area outside of Westmeath. Accordingly, I am therefore of the opinion that the proposal would not come within the scope of this requirement to be considered as complying with section 37A(2)(c) of the Act.

#### 9.11. **Prescribed Bodies**

9.12. In view of the scale, nature and location of the proposed development, as described in this report, it is recommended that the prospective applicant should consult with the prescribed bodies listed in the attached Appendix in respect of any future application for approval

## 10.0 Conclusion

10.1. Based on the foregoing assessment, it can be concluded that the proposed development would exceed the threshold set out in the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and therefore satisfies Section 37A(1) of the Act. It can also be concluded that the development is of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of Section 37A(2)(a) and Section 37A(2)(b) of the Act. Therefore, in overall conclusion, the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure.

### 10.2. Environmental Impact Assessment

10.3. The development falls within the thresholds of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 for the purpose of EIA, the applicant has indicated that an EIAR will be submitted with the application which is considered to be appropriate.

### 10.4. Appropriate Assessment

10.5. The proposed development is proximate to a number of European Sites including Lough Derravagh SPA site code 004043. The applicant has indicated that it is their intention to include an NIS with the application which is considered to be appropriate.

## 11.0 Recommendation

11.1. I recommend that the Board serve a notice on the prospective applicant, pursuant to Section 37(B)(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, stating that it is of the opinion that the proposed development constitutes a strategic infrastructure development within the meaning of Section 37A of the Act for the reasons and considerations set out below.

## 12.0 Reasons and Considerations

12.1. Having regard to the size, scale and location of the proposed windfarm and related development, and to the policy context, it is considered that the proposed development comprising the development of a 15 turbine windfarm with associated infrastructure and an overall output of 90 MW and associated connection to the electricity grid infrastructure on a site in the townlands of Coole, Monkstown, Camagh, Doon,



Clonsura, Clonrobert and Carlanstown County Westmeath, constitutes development that falls within the definition of energy infrastructure in the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, thereby satisfying the requirements set out in Section 37A(1) of the Act.

- 12.2. The proposed development is also considered to be of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of Section 37A(2)(a) and 37A(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. An application for permission for the proposed development must therefore be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under Section 37E of the Act.

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Sarah Lynch  
Senior Planning Inspector

12<sup>th</sup> November 2020

## **Appendix 1**

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant for the purposes of Section 37E (3) (c) of the Act.

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Development Applications Unit)
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Westmeath County Council
- Irish Water
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Environmental Protection Agency

- The Heritage Council
- An Taisce
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Health & Safety Authority
- Office of Public Works

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.

**Note** : The prospective applicant should be advised to submit a standalone document (which may form part of the EIAR) with the planning application, which outlines the mitigation measures, in the interest of convenience and ease of reference.