



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-317616-23

Development

Proposed wind farm development.

Location

Located in the townlands of
Glenconaun More, Craghera and
Cloonkett, Co. Clare.

Planning Authority

Clare County Council

Applicant(s)

Cloonkett Green Energy

Type of Application

Pre-application consultation under
section 37B of the Planning &
Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

Date of Site Inspection

17th August 2023

Inspector

Liam Bowe

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Cloonkett Green Energy Limited requested pre-application consultations under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, for the proposed development of a wind farm, including a substation with a connection to the national electricity grid, and a turbine delivery route near Moneypoint, Co. Clare. The request was received from Fehily Timoney on behalf of the applicant.
- 1.2. It is proposed to construct 14 wind turbines with tip heights of 150m and rotor diameters of 136m with an estimated maximum export capacity of 63MW, including a 220kV loop-in/loop-out substation with connectivity to an existing overhead line facilitating connection to the national grid. The location for the substation is proposed at the western end of the wind farm site.
- 1.3. The primary purpose of the pre-application consultation was to address the issue of whether or not the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure for the purposes of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended), and to consider matters relating to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area or the environment which may have a bearing on the Commission's decision, and procedures involved in making the application.
- 1.4. This report provides an overview of the proposed project, a summary of the meetings and the advice provided by the Commission's representatives at these meetings, and legislative provisions. The report recommends that the Commission determine that the proposed development does fall within the definition of development under section 37A of the Act. It also recommends a list of prescribed bodies that should be forwarded copies of any application.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The prospective site is located within the administrative area of Clare County Council, approximately 21km to the southwest of Ennis and 20km to the northeast of Kilrush. The nearest settlement to the prospective site is the village of Kildysart, located c.3.5km to the southeast, and Moneypoint Power Station is located c.16km to the southwest.

- 2.2. The prospective site is made of four parcels of land. These comprise of the main body of the site where the wind turbines are proposed, and three smaller parcels of land where temporary accommodation works are required along the proposed turbine delivery route. The lands are made up of agricultural fields bounded by hedgerows, some areas of conifer plantations and some peatland. There is significant electricity generation and transmission infrastructure in the area and in the vicinity of the prospective site generally associated with Moneypoint and Tarbert power stations.
- 2.3. European sites, proximate to the site include the Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165) and River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries River SPA (Site Code: 004077).
- 2.4. There are two recorded monuments located immediately to the west of the main body of the site including a ringfort (CL059-005) and earthwork (CL059-018).

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. As refined during the course of the pre-application consultation, the proposed development will include the following elements:
- Construction of 14 no. wind turbines with a tip height of 150m,
 - Internal access tracks,
 - Hard standings,
 - Meteorological mast,
 - Construction of 1 no. on-site 220kV loop-in/loop-out electrical substation,
 - Connection to existing overhead lines via 6 no. pylons (3 no. strain tower and 3 no. single circuit mast tower),
 - Removal of 1 no. existing pylon to facilitate loop-in connection,
 - Internal electrical and communications cabling,
 - Temporary construction compounds,
 - Temporary accommodation works for the turbine delivery route between Foynes port and Clookett Wind Farm site, and

- On-site borrow pits to reduce material import/export requirements.

4.0 Precedent Decisions

There are a number of precedent decisions in relation to developments of this nature, there are summarised in the table below:

ACP Ref. No.	Development Description	Decision Date	ACP Decision
320745	17 turbines and grid connection	2025	Is SID
315655	12 turbines and grid connection	2024	Is SID
309259	10 turbines and grid connection	2023	Is SID
313375	13 turbines and grid connection	2023	Is SID

5.0 Prospective Applicant's Submission

5.1. The prospective applicant submitted a cover letter with the pre-application consultation request. The reasons why it is considered that section 37B of the Act is the appropriate consent route for the proposed wind farm development are set out in the cover letter and the pre-planning presentations. The prospective applicant's case can be summarised as follows:

- The prospective applicant believes that the proposed development is strategic development as defined under the 7th Schedule of the Act given that the project includes for 14 no. turbines with individual power outputs of between 4.5MW each, thus having a total maximum export capacity greater than 50MW.
- The proposed windfarm with a total maximum export capacity of 63MW would be of strategic economic or social importance to the state and region and will constitute a significant addition to Ireland's renewable electricity supply, contributing towards Ireland's target of 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and a target of 9GW from onshore wind.

- The proposed development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of the objectives in the National Planning Framework, specifically referencing National Policy Objectives (NPOs) 1b, 21, 52, 53, 54 and 55. NPO 54 seeks to reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system and NPO 55 seeks to promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations.
- The proposed development is in keeping with objectives in the Southern Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), specifically, Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) 9, 40, 50, 56, 87, 90, 92, 95, 96, 97, 99, 219 and 222. RPO 87 relates to a low carbon energy future; RPO 99 relates to support for wind energy; RPO 219 relates to supporting the provision of new energy infrastructure; and RPO 221 relates to support for renewable energy generation and transmission network.

6.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

- 6.1. 3 pre-application consultation meetings were held in relation to the proposal.
- 6.2. The 1st meeting was held on the 5th of October 2023. Full details of the meeting and matters raised are contained in the Commission's Record. The meeting's Chair outlined the general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process. The prospective applicant provided, inter alia, an overview of the site location, a description of the overall development and the relevant legislation. It is the opinion of the prospective applicant that the proposed wind farm, electrical substation and grid connection qualifies as strategic development.
- 6.3. The 2nd meeting was held on the 4th of March 2025. Full details of the meeting and matters raised are also contained in the Commission's Record. The prospective applicant presented updates in relation to their planning application preparation by providing a site location drawing and confirming that the intended maximum export capacity of the proposed development would be 63MW. Updates were also provided in relation to landscape and visual impact studies, ecological studies and community engagement. It remained the opinion of the prospective applicant that the proposed electrical substation and grid connection cable qualifies as strategic development.

- 6.4. The 3rd meeting was held on the 17th of July 2025. Full details of the meeting and matters raised are also contained in the Commission's Record. The prospective applicant presented further updates in relation to their planning application preparation, and confirmed the extent of the prospective site, the number of proposed turbines and turbine sizes. Updates were also provided in relation to the turbine delivery route, and consultations with and feedback from prescribed bodies. It remained the opinion of the prospective applicant that the proposed electrical substation and grid connection cable qualifies as strategic development.

7.0 Legislative Provisions

7.1. Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

- 7.1.1. 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)',

- 7.1.2. The Board is asked to decide if the proposal as outlined is or is not strategic Infrastructure Development as defined by Section 37A of the Act. Strategic Infrastructure is defined in the Seventh Schedule of the Act and Class 1 includes the following category of development: *'an installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a windfarm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50MW'.*

- 7.1.3. Section 37A (2) of the Act requires that any development specified in the Seventh Schedule should be made to the Board, if the proposed development falls within one or more of the following:

(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 significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.

7.2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 7.2.1. An application submitted under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, shall be accompanied by an EIAR, as required for any application made under this section of the Act.
- 7.2.2. In addition, 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'.

7.3. Appropriate Assessment (AA)

- 7.3.1. The nearest Natura 2000 sites are as follows:
- Lower River Shannon SAC (c.1km to the west and c.3.8km to the southeast), and
 - River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (c.3.8km to the southeast).

The prospective applicant has indicated that it is their intention to include an NIS with the application which is considered to be appropriate.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Section 37A (1) – Is the development specified in the Seventh Schedule of the Act?

- 8.1.1. Based on the information submitted by the prospective applicant through the consultation process, the proposed development would include 14 turbines with a potential to generate 4.5MW of power each, giving a total power output of c.63MW. The proposed development would exceed the 50MW threshold of the Seventh Schedule development under Class 1 (Energy Infrastructure). Therefore, the proposed development satisfies Section 37A(1) of the Act.

8.2. Section 37A (2) - Does the proposed development specified in the Seventh Schedule fall within one or more of the paragraphs referred to as (a), (b) and (c) and outlined below?

(a) – Strategic Economic or Social Importance to the State or Region

- 8.2.1. The prospective applicant's case is that the proposal satisfies the conditions under section 37A(2)(a) of the Act as it will represent a significant economic contribution to the region and to the country as a whole. The proposed windfarm with an output of approximately 63MW will constitute a significant addition to Ireland's renewable electricity supply, contributing towards Ireland's target of 80% renewable electricity and 9GW from onshore wind by 2030.
- 8.2.1. It is an objective of the Climate Action Plans 2024 and 2025 to accelerate renewable energy generation, key performance indicators of which is to deliver 80% renewable electricity and 9GW from onshore wind by 2030. The project would assist in meeting national renewable energy targets and would also result in significant reductions in carbon emissions from electricity generation, while reducing the country's reliance on fossil fuel. The proposed development appears to meet the requirements for strategic economic and social importance by contributing to renewable electricity generation and carbon reduction targets set out in the Climate Action Plan and would make a positive contribution to same.
- 8.2.2. Having regard to the national policy context and the details of the subject proposals outlined above, I am satisfied that the development would clearly 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) - Fulfilment of Objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy.

8.2.3. The prospective applicant states that the proposed development would contribute to the objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the provisions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region.

8.2.4. 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.

8.2.5. At regional level, I note that the RSES for the Southern 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. The Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region which includes the use of wind energy. The following Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) are relevant:

- RPO 87 - Low Carbon Energy Future: The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.

- RPO 99 – Renewable Wind Energy: It is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and off shore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.
- RPO 219 - New Energy Infrastructure: It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.

8.2.6. 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 Southern Region. The development would therefore satisfy the requirement set out in Section 37A(2)(b) of the Act

(c) - Significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.

8.2.7. The site is fully contained within the area of one planning authority, Clare County Council. However, it is within proximity to the border with County Kerry in the Shannon estuary and, given its proximity, landscape and visual impact considerations may have the potential to have significant effects within Kerry County Council's administrative area. Similarly, the turbine delivery route is proposed to traverse a significant part of Limerick City & County Council's administrative area from the delivery point of the turbines at Foynes port. Accordingly, I am therefore of the opinion that the proposal would also come within the scope of this requirement to be considered as complying with section 37A(2)(c) of the Act.

8.3. Prescribed Bodies

8.3.1. 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 application for approval.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1. Based on the above assessment, it can be concluded that the proposed development would exceed the threshold set out in the Seventh Schedule of the Act and therefore satisfies the requirements of Section 37A(1) of the Act. It can also be determined that the development is of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of Section 37A(2)(a), Section 37A(2)(b) and Section 37A(c) of the Act. Accordingly, the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure.
- 9.2. I consider that the proposed development as described in the prospective applicant's submission constitutes strategic infrastructure coming within the scope of section 37A of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended), therefore necessitating an application to be made directly to the Commission.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1. I recommend that the Commission serve a notice on the prospective applicant, pursuant to Section 37B(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.

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

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

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.



Liam Bowe
Senior Planning Inspector

9th September 2025

Appendix A: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Commission:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU)
- Minister for Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- National Parks & Wildlife Service
- Minister for Transport
- Clare County Council
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Irish Aviation Authority
- An Taisce
- Fáilte Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- Irish Water
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Water and Energy
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- GSI
- Limerick County Council
- Kerry County Council

- Southern Regional Assembly

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.