



CONSULTANTS IN ENGINEERING,
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE &
PLANNING

GARRYHINCH WIND FARM

**Pre-application Consultation Request Under
Section 37B of the Planning and
Development Act 2000 (as amended) in
Respect of the Proposed Garryhinch Wind
Farm, Counties Laois and Offaly**

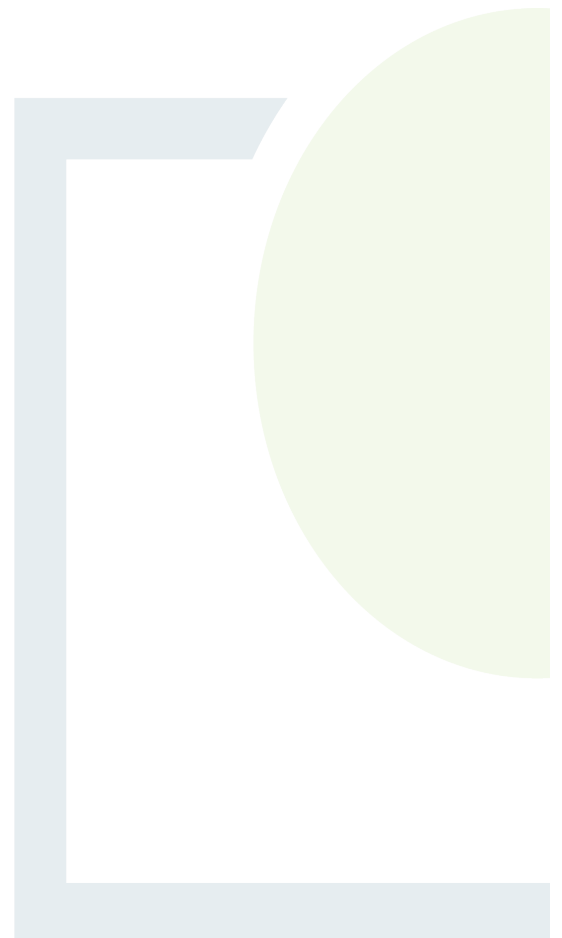
Prepared for:
Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd.

Bord na Móna

Date: November 2022

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Pre-application Consultation Request Under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in Respect of the Proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm, Counties Laois and Offaly

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company, on behalf of Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd., submits this information to an Bord Pleanála in support of a request for pre-application consultation on whether the proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm is strategic infrastructure development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fehily Timoney and Company, on behalf of Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd., submits this information to an Bord Pleanála in support of a request for pre-application consultation on whether the proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm is strategic infrastructure development.

An electronic transfer for the sum of €4,500 has been submitted in respect of the SID pre-Application Consultation process to An Bord Pleanála.

1.1 Prospective Applicant and Agent

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. is the Applicant. Fehily Timoney and Company is the Main Agent acting on behalf of Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd.

Table 1-1: Applicant and Agent Details

Details of Prospective Applicant	Details of Prospective Applicant's Main Agent
Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd., C/O Bord na Móna plc., Main Street, Newbridge, Co. Kildare Contact: Conor McGrath E-mail: conor.mcgrath@bnm.ie Tel: 087 9709028	Fehily Timoney and Company, Core House, Pouladuff Road, T12 D773, Cork Contact: Mrs. Rita Mansfield E-mail: rita.mansfield@ftco.ie Tel: 021 496 4133

1.2 Applicant's Legal Interest

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. is a subsidiary of Bord na Móna plc, a publicly owned company, originally established in 1946 to develop and manage some of Ireland's extensive peat resources on an industrial scale, in accordance with government policy at the time. Bord na Móna's lands extend to approximately 80,000 hectares in total and are located mainly in the Irish midlands.

The proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm will be located within lands which are under full ownership of Bord na Móna.

Bord na Móna has a long track record of developing energy projects, dating back to the development of the first generation of peat-fired power stations. Renewable energy is a strategic growth area for the company and is aligned with its corporate strategy, which includes reducing carbon emissions.

In 2015, Bord na Móna published its 'Sustainability Statement 2030', which sets out the company's commitment to transition to peat-free electricity generation by 2030. Renewable energy generation, including solar power, biomass and wind power, is a key component of this transition.



In January 2021, the company announced its decision to permanently end all peat harvesting in line with its change from a traditional peat business into a climate solutions company fully focused on renewable energy generation, recycling, peatlands restoration and the development of new low carbon enterprises.



2. NATURE AND SCALE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Site Location

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. are seeking to explore the potential of a renewable energy project on Garryhinch Bog and Garrymore Bog, with the proposed development being referred to as Garryhinch Wind Farm. The majority of Garryhinch Bog is located in the southeast of Co. Offaly, with the adjoining Garrymore Bog wholly within the north of Co. Laois. The proposed development will be situated within the functional areas of Laois County Council and Offaly County Council.

The location of the site is illustrated in Figure 1-1, Appendix 1.

The bogs are located c. 6.4km west of Portarlinton and c. 3.7km north of Mountmellick in Co. Laois, and c. 2km southwest of Clonygowan in Co Offaly. The proposed wind farm development will potentially involve works in the following townlands: Backwood, Ballymacrossan, Barranaghs, Clonygowan, Clonyhurk, Clonyquin, Coolavoran, Coolagh and Derrymullen, Cooltycanon, Dernacart, Forest Lower, Forest Upper, Garryhinch, Garrymore, Magheranaskeagh.

There are several access points off the local road network into the bogs. The N80 is to the west of the site, with the R420 on the northwest and the R423 to the south. The bogs are surrounded by low density rural housing, and by a number of towns and villages. However these are relatively distant from the site, with c. 580 properties within a distance of 2km from the proposed development boundary. The proposed wind farm site falls within the following Electoral Division (ED): Graigue and Garrymore in County Laois and Ballyshear, Clonygown and Hammerlane in County Offaly. The 2016 Census population and draft 2022 Census population for each of these EDs shows an overall population increase for the area.

Electoral Division	2016 Population	2022 Population
Graigue	235	207
Garrymore	183	262
Ballyshear	396	411
Clonygown	567	722
Hammerlan	555	582

Garryhinch Bog extends for c. 3.6km from north to south and c. 2.5km from east to west. Garryhinch Bog is almost entirely regenerating cut away bog, comprising birch/willow scrub and areas of more open dry heather through a few pools and drains. The site is almost entirely surrounded by farmland. The River Barrow is located c. 1.5km to the south. Garrymore Bog extends for c. 1.5km from the north to south and for c.1.5km east to west. This site was in commercial peat production until recently, and comprises almost entirely bare peat, with strips of remnant bog and regenerating cutover bog around the margins. Garrymore is almost entirely surrounded by farmland. The River Barrow is located c. 750m to the southwest.

The closest amenity trail to the proposed development site is an off-road walking/mountain bike trail on Coillte forestry lands c. 1.9km to the south east of the Garryhinch site, with horse riding also a popular recreation activity in the surrounding region. St Brigid's Community Hall is located c. 1km southeast of the site.



The site does not overlap with any statutory designated sites. However, there are several designated sites in the wider environment including inter alia the Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA, Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, Charleville Wood SAC, Clonreher Bog NHA and Hawkswood Bog NHA.

2.2 Size/Scale of Development

The proposed wind farm project will likely comprise between 10 and 14 no. wind turbines with power rating of between 5.0 MW to 7 MW. Central to the proposal, is the supply of power from the proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm to the Irish electricity network via underground cable. It is currently proposed to construct a new 110kV substation on-site and connect by underground cable to the proposed Electricity Supply Board 110 kV/MV electricity station at Bracklone which is consented (Planning Application: 20638, Laois County Council) but not yet constructed. This arrangement will be subject to consultation with EirGrid. The potential grid route options are at an early stage of consideration and may be subject to change.

The development will also include access roads and entrance(s), borrow pits, electrical cabling for grid connection, temporary construction compounds and a permanent anemometry mast. New sections of turbine access routes will also be required. All wind farm cabling, including connection to the onsite substation, will be laid underground.

The number, hub and tip height and position of individual turbines will be dependent upon a number of factors including technical and environmental considerations. The surveys and assessments carried out during the EIA process, coupled with feedback from public consultation and stakeholder engagement, will be used in an iterative manner to influence the design of the proposed wind farm and to ensure that any likely significant environmental impacts are minimised where possible or negated completely.

The final design will reflect the environmental and technical constraints across the site and will aim to create a balance between energy production and environmental and technical issues.

A preliminary study of the existing road network and potential obstructions analysis has been undertaken for a possible Turbine Delivery Route (TDR). The components will be delivered to the site by specialist transport vehicles and assembled on-site. Wind turbine components are expected to be transported to the proposed site via the N80 national route which runs in a north / south direction on the west of the site, with the R420 and R423 regional routes to the northwest and the south of the site. However, the turbine delivery route is subject to study and assessment to determine the most appropriate route. Some minor junction works, or temporary road closures may also be required to facilitate the delivery of larger components to site.

The project will also include for the development of a public recreational amenity in the form of walking/cycling trails, within the proposed development site, the design for which will be developed alongside the wind farm infrastructure design. The design will also seek to link into existing or proposed amenity developments in the vicinity of the site.



3. CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT WITH REGARD TO THE CRITERIA SET OUT IN SECTION 37A(2)

3.1 Class of Development within the 7th Schedule

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. intend to apply for planning consent directly to An Bord Pleanála through the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) process. The following section sets out the factors which qualify the proposed project as SID.

To qualify for SID under section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), a proposed development must firstly fall within a class specified in the Seventh Schedule to the 2000 Act. Part 1 of the Seventh Schedule, as amended, which specifies, inter alia, the following classes of development:

“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 nature and scale of the proposed development comprising between 10 and 14 no. turbines with individual power outputs of between 5 MW to 7 MW, the proposed development comes within the scope of Class 1 of the Seventh Schedule of the Strategic Infrastructure Act, 2006 (as amended), with the proposed development expected to provide an output of at least 50 megawatts.

3.2 Statement as to Why the Development Should be Regarded as SID

Section 37A(1) of the Planning and Development Act (as amended) states that an application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule shall, if the following condition is satisfied, be made to the Board under Section 37E and not to a planning authority.

Section 37A(2) says:

“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 planning guidelines 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.”

Is of Strategic Importance to the State of Region

In compliance with Section 37A(2)(a), it is the applicant’s opinion that the proposed development would be of strategic economic and social importance to the State and wider Leinster Region.



The proposed development will contribute to the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in line with national policies and objectives such as the 'Climate Action Plan 2021' (CAP 21), 'Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021' enacted by the Government and National Policy Objective 55 from 'Project Ireland 2040: The National Planning Framework'.

It is this commitment to energy and climate policy that justifies a clear need for renewable energy generation in Ireland. An updated CAP 21 was published in November 2021, and provides a framework for delivering the Irish Government's target of a 51% reduction (relative to 2018) in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. CAP21 follows the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which commits Ireland to a legally binding target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions no later than 2050, and a reduction of 51% by 2030. As part of this plan, the Government is also committed to reducing emissions by an average 7% per annum by 2030, with an objective to more than double Ireland's onshore wind energy capacity to 8.2GW by 2030 in order to meet new renewable energy targets and reduce emissions by increasing the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to up to 80% by 2030. This will be a significant challenge, however, these changes are necessary if Irish society is to avoid having stranded fossil fuel assets as the transition accelerates in the 2030-50 period. Furthermore, the CAP emphasises that only by adapting now, can our enterprises remain competitive and our society resilient.

With a potential installed capacity of up to approximately 98 MW, the proposed development should be considered economically and socially strategically important to the state in challenging climate change.

The proposed development will create employment opportunities relating to the construction, operation, and decommissioning. Additionally, rates will be made payable to both Offaly and Laois County Councils by the developer and a Community Benefit Scheme will be put in place. All of these will result in a positive impact on the economic profile of the subject area.

Would Contribute Substantially to the Fulfilment of the National Planning Framework / Regional Strategy

In terms of Section 37A(2)(b), it is considered that the proposed development will contribute substantially to the fulfilment of the objectives of the Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework, Climate Action Plan (CAP 21) and The Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES). In the national context, the proposed development will fulfil the commitment in a number of objectives from the 'Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework' in relation to sustainable development of rural areas, sustainable management of natural capital, renewable energy generation and carbon footprint.

'Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018-2027' emphasises the importance of investment in renewable energy sources to increase share of renewables in Ireland's energy mix for a transition to sustainable energy.

The Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP 21) includes a target to increase electricity generation from renewable sources to 80% by 2030. To achieve 80% renewable electricity production in Ireland by 2030, there needs to be a significant escalation in renewable energy production in Ireland with actions such as:

- Electricity must reduce emissions somewhere between 62% and 81%, a difference of 19%.
- Increasing the share of electricity demand generated from renewable sources to up to 80% where achievable and cost effective, without compromising security of electricity supply.
- Expand and reinforce the grid – through the addition of lines, substations, and new technologies.
- Increasing the share of electricity demand generated from renewable sources to up to 80% where achievable and cost effective, without compromising security of electricity supply.



- At least 500 MW of these renewables will be delivered through local community-based projects, subject to competition as appropriate

With a potential installed capacity of up to approximately 105 MW, the proposed development will contribute substantially to national targets as set out in the CAP 2021.

Regionally, the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES) supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the region, stating that the renewable energy needs of the region, in the form of wind, solar and biomass, will be likely to be met in rural area.

The majority of the proposed development area within County Offaly is zoned as an “Area Open for Consideration For Wind Energy Development” under the Wind Energy Strategy within the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027. A small area of the Garryhinch Bog (ca. 2.2km²) proposed for development sits within an area identified in the Wind Energy Strategy as ‘Not Suitable for Wind’. The area of proposed development within County Laois is described as an “Area Open for Consideration” for wind energy development within the Wind Energy Strategy of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The addition of renewable electricity from the proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm would impact greatly on the region’s sustainable renewable electricity generation, in line with regional policy.

Would have a Significant Effect on the Area of More than One Planning Authority

In relation to Section 37A(2)(c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the development is located within the administrative boundaries of Offaly County Council and Laois County Council. The project will be connected to the national grid and will provide renewable energy to the region with potential to generate up to approximately 282GWh/year¹ which could power approximately 65,000 homes and displace the emission of over 15,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per annum from other less clean forms of energy generation.

On the basis of the above, the proposed wind farm meets the threshold of Section 37 (a)(1) as set out in Paragraph 1 of the Seventh Schedule and the requirements of Section 37 (a)(2).

¹ Capacity factor of 29.3 (SEAI, ‘Energy In Ireland’ 2020 Report)



4. CONCLUSION

We respectfully request An Bord Pleanála consider the proposed Garryhinch Wind Farm as Strategic Infrastructure Development by reason of its scale and its importance to the Irish State in reducing the nation's reliance on fossil fuel and the requirements to transition to a low carbon society in compliance with the Climate Action Plan 2021.

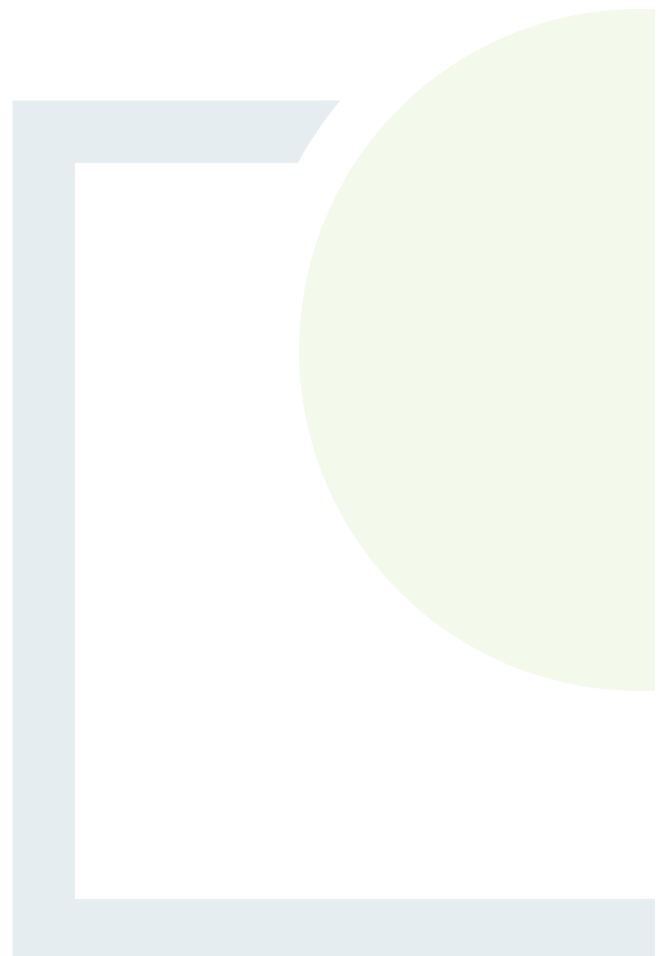
Please contact Rita Mansfield of Fehily Timoney & Company with respect to a pre-application consultation meeting. Contact information is included in Section 1.1.

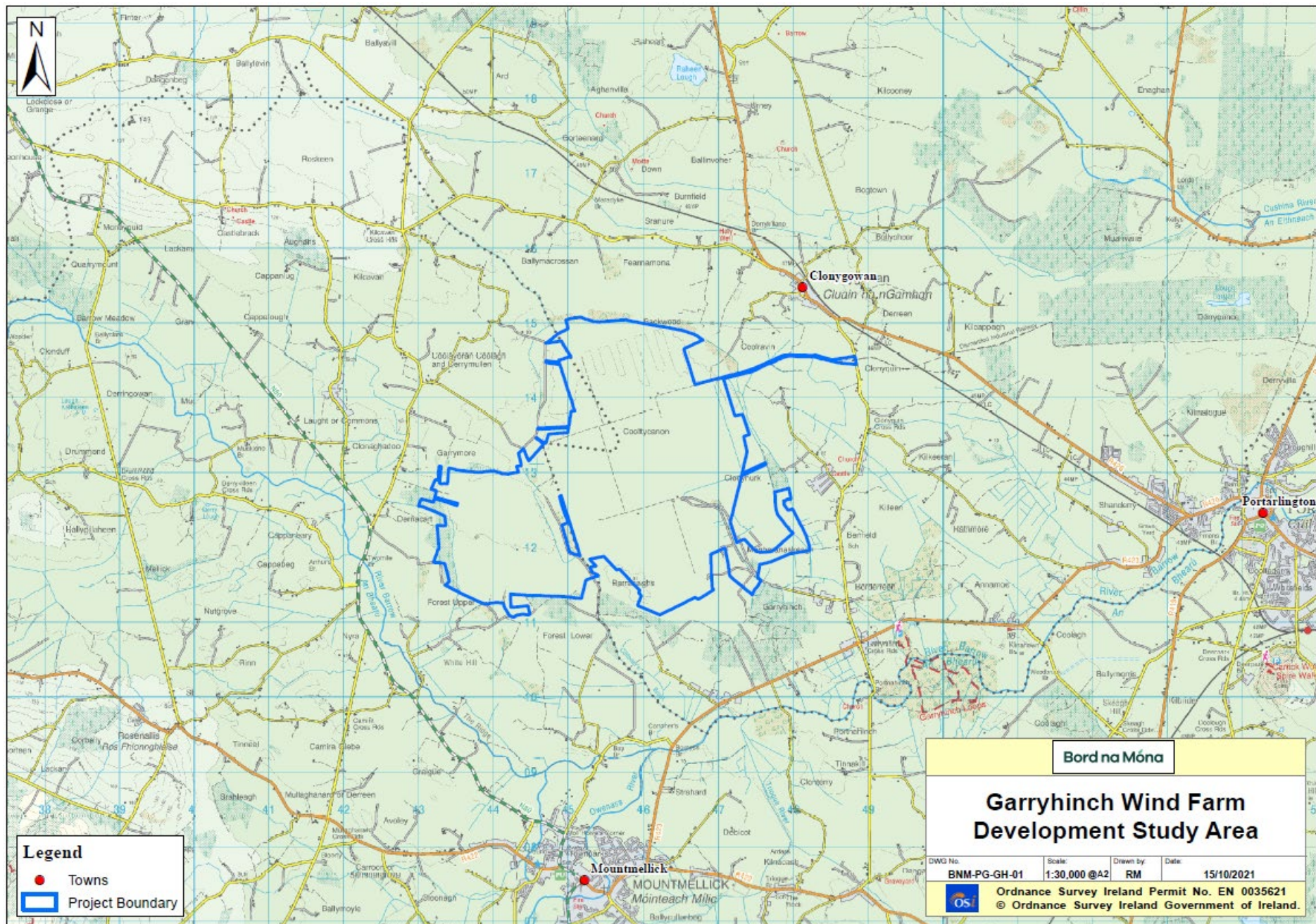


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APPENDIX 1

Figure 1-1: Garryhinch Wind
Farm Location







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