Our Case Number: ABP-316212-23

An Bord Pleanála

Westmeath County Council
Aras an Chontae
Mount Street
Mullingar
Co. Westmeath
N91 FH4N

Date: 15 June 2023

Re: Proposed development of 26 wind turbines and associated works at the Ballivor Bog Group, County Meath and County Westmeath

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned case. The contents of your letter have been noted.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board.

Please quote the above-mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Niamh Thornton
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737247

CH08

Teil	**Tel**	(01) 858 8100
Glao Áitiúil	**LoCall**	1800 275 175
Facs	**Fax**	(01) 872 2684
Láithreán Gréasáin	**Website**	www.pleanala.ie
Ríomhphost	**Email**	bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

The Secretary,
An Bord Pleanala,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1

Date: 14 June 2023
Your Ref: ABP-316212-23
Our Ref:

FAO: Strategic Infrastructure Unit.

Re: Proposed Development of 26 Wind Turbines and associated works at the Ballivor Bog Group, Co. Meath & Co. Westmeath (16 Turbines proposed in Co. Westmeath & 10 Turbines in Co. Meath)

Dear Sir/Madam,

In accordance with the provisions of Section 37E (4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), please find attached report setting out the views of the Planning Authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and on proper planning and sustainable development.

Please also find attached a record of the views of the Elected Members of Westmeath County Council (recorded at a Special Meeting of the Council on **Wednesday, 7 June 2023**) on the proposed development.

Application for expenses is enclosed.

Should you have any queries in relation to the attached, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully,

Eamonn Brennan,
Administrative Officer,
Forward Planning,
Tel No: 044-9332165
E-Mail: ebrennan@westmeathcoco.ie

Enc.

Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Strategic Infrastructure Act 2006

Report to Elected Members as required by Section 37E(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

An Bord Pleanala Reference ABP 316212-23 – Ballivor Bog Group Wind Farm.

Application Details:

Applicant:	Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd, Bord Na Mona, Main Street, Newbridge Co. Kildare.
Received	5th April 2023
Agent:	MKO, Tuam Road, Galway.
An Bord Pleanala Reference Number:	ABP 316212-23
Proposed Development (Summary):	26 No. wind turbines and all associated works (16 (no.) Turbines proposed in Co. Westmeath and 10 (no.) Turbines proposed in Co. Meath). 10 year planning permission sought and a 30 year operating life.
Site Location:	Townlands of Lisclogher Great, Cockstown, Clonmorrill, Clonleame, Bracklin, Craddanstown, Killagh, Grange More and Riverdale in Co. Westmeath; Townlands of Clondalee More, Derryconor, Clonycavan, Robinstown, Coolronan, Doolystown and Moyfeagher in Co. Meath.

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT:

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and following consultation pursuant to Section 182E of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), An Bord Pleanála has determined that this proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development within the meaning of Section 182A of the Act. In such circumstances the normal mechanism of applying to Westmeath County Council for planning permission does not apply with the proposal requiring a planning application to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála. Accordingly, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd, as required, has applied directly to An Bord Pleanala for planning permission.

The purpose of this report is to set out the Planning Authority's required views on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, having regard in particular to the matters specified in section 34(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) (hereafter referenced as the PDA 2000). The matters specified in section 34(2) are:

(i) the provisions of the development plan,

(ia) any guidelines issued by the Minister under section 28,

(ii) the provisions of any special amenity area order relating to the area,

(iii) any European site or other area prescribed for the purposes of section 10(2)(c),

(iv) where relevant, the policy of the Government, the Minister or any other Minister of the Government,

(v) the matters referred to in subsection [34](4),

(va) previous developments by the applicant which have not been satisfactorily completed,

(vb) previous convictions against the applicant for non-compliance with this Act, the Building Control Act 2007 or the Fire Services Act 1981, and

(vi) any other relevant provision or requirement of this Act, and any regulations made thereunder.

(aa) When making its decision in relation to an application under this section, the planning authority shall apply, where relevant, specific planning policy requirements of guidelines issued by the Minister under section 28.

In the interests of clarification, there are no Special Amenity Area Orders (item ii above) in County Westmeath. The matters referred to in section 34(4) of the PDA 2000 are those matters which the Planning Authority takes account of and may attach conditions relevant to, during the consideration of a normal planning application.

This report will be submitted for the consideration of An Bord Pleanala as required under Section 37E(4) of the PDA 2000.

The Members may, by resolution, decide to attach recommendations to this report (as per Section 37E(6) of the PDA 2000). The views expressed at the meeting of the Council where this report is considered shall also be attached to this report (also per Section 37E(6) of the PDA 2000).

It should be noted that an Bord Pleanala has absolute discretion to request revised proposals or further information in advance of a decision being made under section 37F(1) of the PDA 2000.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The proposed development comprises of the following components:

i. The construction of 26 No. wind turbines (There are 16 Turbines proposed in Co. Westmeath and 10 Turbines proposed in Co. Meath) and all associated hard-standing areas with the following parameters:

a. A total blade tip height of 200m,

b. Hub height of 115 metres, and

c. Rotor diameter of 170 metres.

ii. 2 No. permanent Meteorological Anemometry Masts with a height of 115 metres and associated hardstanding area and removal of existing meteorological mast.

iii. 4 No. temporary construction compounds with temporary site offices and staff facilities, in the townlands of Bracklin and Grange More.

iv. 5 No. temporary security cabins at the main construction site entrances and access points around the site, in the townland of Killagh, Grange More and Coolronan.

v. 2 No. borrow pits located in the townlands of Grange More and Craddanstown and all works associated with the opening, gravel and spoil extraction, and decommissioning of the borrow pits.

vi. 1 No. permanent 110 kV electrical substation, which will be constructed in the townland of Grange More. The electrical substation will have 2 No. single storey control buildings, a 36 metre high telecom tower, associated electrical plant and equipment, a groundwater well and a wastewater holding tank.

vii. All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the turbines and masts to the proposed electrical substation, including road crossings at R156 and local road between Lisclogher and Bracklin Bogs, and all works associated with the connection of the proposed wind farm to the national electricity grid, which will comprise connecting into the existing Mullingar – Corduff 110 kV overhead line that traverses the site.

viii. Provision of new internal site access tracks with passing bays measuring a total length of c. 28km and provision/upgrade of existing/new pathways for amenity uses measuring a total length of c. 3.3km and associated drainage.

ix. Temporary accommodating works to existing public road infrastructure to facilitate delivery of abnormal loads at locations on the R156 and R161 in the townlands of Doolystown and Moyfeagher.

x. Accommodating works to widen existing site entrances off the R156 into Ballivor and Carranstown Bogs and reopen entrances at Lisclogher and Bracklin Bogs for use as construction site entrances

and to facilitate delivery and movement of turbine components and construction materials; Entrances will be used for maintenance and amenity access during the operational period.

xi. Permanent vertical realignment of the R156 in the vicinity of the site entrance to achieve required sight lines.

xii. Construction of permanent site entrances off a local road into Lisclogher and Bracklin Bogs to facilitate a crossing point for turbine components, construction materials and operation/amenity access.

xiii. Provision of amenity access and amenity pathways using existing entrances off the R156 and local roads in the townlands of Bracklin, Coolronan, Clondalee More and Craddanstown.

xiv. 3 No. permanent amenity carparks in Ballivor Bog (50 no. car parking spaces), Carranstown (15 no. car parking spaces) and Bracklin Bog (15 no. car parking spaces) and the provision of bicycle rack facilities at each location.

xv. All associated site works and ancillary development including access roads, drainage and signage.

xvi. A 10-year planning permission and 30-year operational life of the wind farm from the date of commissioning of the entire wind farm.

This application contains the following documentation:

- Planning Application Documentation
  - Planning Application Form
  - Site Notice
  - Newspaper Notices - The Irish Independent, The Westmeath Examiner and The Meath Chronicle
  - EIA Portal Confirmation (ID: 2023049)
- Planning Application Drawings (Drawing Schedule included with Application Form)
- An Bord Pleanála Opinion
- Red Line Boundary in ESRI Shapefile format
- Letters of Consent
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
  - Volume 1 – Non-Technical Summary (NTS) and Main Report
  - Volume 2 – EIAR Appendices
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report.

3. SITE LOCATION:

The application site measures an area of approx. 1,770ha and is located in the east of Co. Westmeath and west of Co. Meath, approx. 5 km south-southeast of Delvin, Co. Westmeath, 4km east of Raharney, Co. Westmeath, and 4km west of Ballivor Village, Co. Meath. There are 16 Turbines proposed in Co. Westmeath and 10 Turbines proposed in Co. Meath.

The landcover within the application site boundary is a mixture of bare cutaway peat, re-vegetated bare peat, degraded blanket bog, scrub, low woodland and remnants of high bog. The site mainly comprises extensive areas of cutover bog that have been industrially extracted by Bord Na Mona for fuel and horticulture purposes. Approximately 18.9km of Bord na Móna permanent fixed gauge rail lines run through Ballivor, Bracklin and Carranstown Bogs. The local area is predominantly rural in character and largely comprises dispersed rural dwellings together with agricultural holdings and buildings. The lands are located to the north and south of the R156 which provides access to the site, and the roadside boundaries are mainly defined hedgerows.

Electricity grid infrastructure in the area includes the 110kV Mullingar to Corduff overhead line that traverses the application site.

There are several sensitive natural heritage sites in the surrounding area, including the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC & SPA. There are also features of archeological and historic interest in the vicinity.

It is noted that an immediately adjacent site located north west of the subject site benefits from planning permission for a Wind Farm development (Bracklyn Wind Farm ABP Ref ABP311565-21) which comprises 9 no. turbines and associated site development works. A 10-year planning permission has been granted for the construction of Bracklyn Wind Farm with a 30- year operational period from the date of first commissioning of the wind farm.

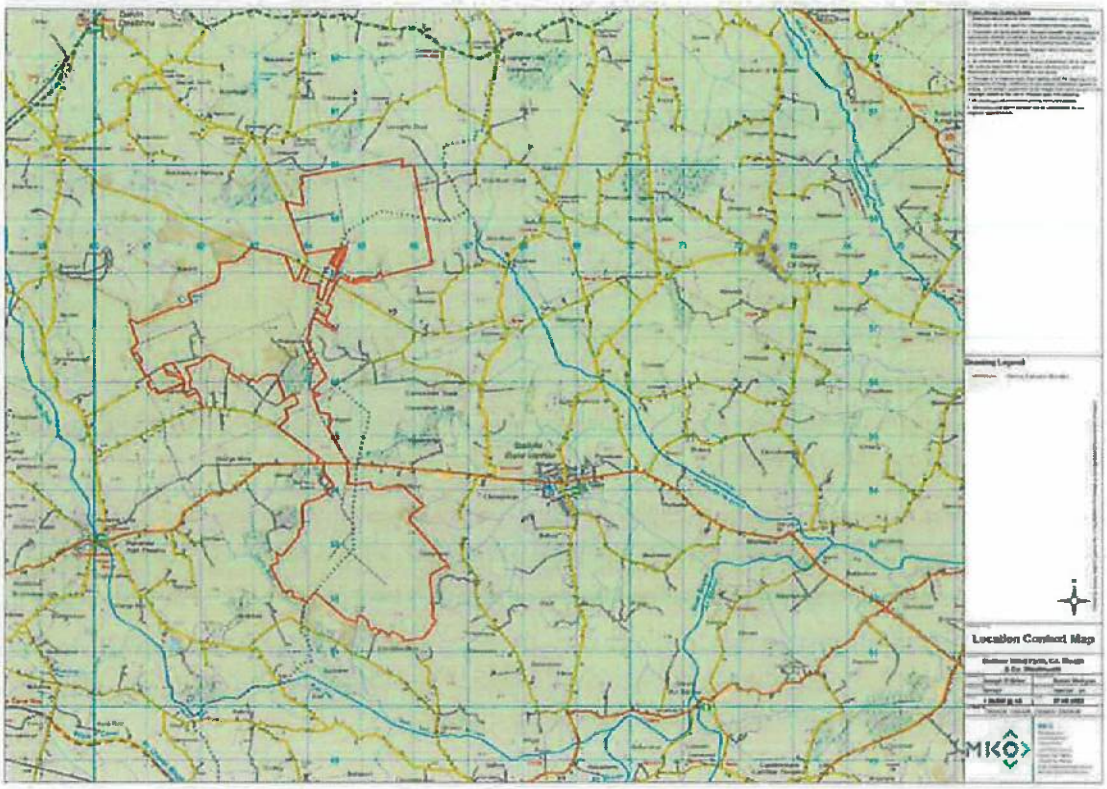

Image 1 – Application site boundary

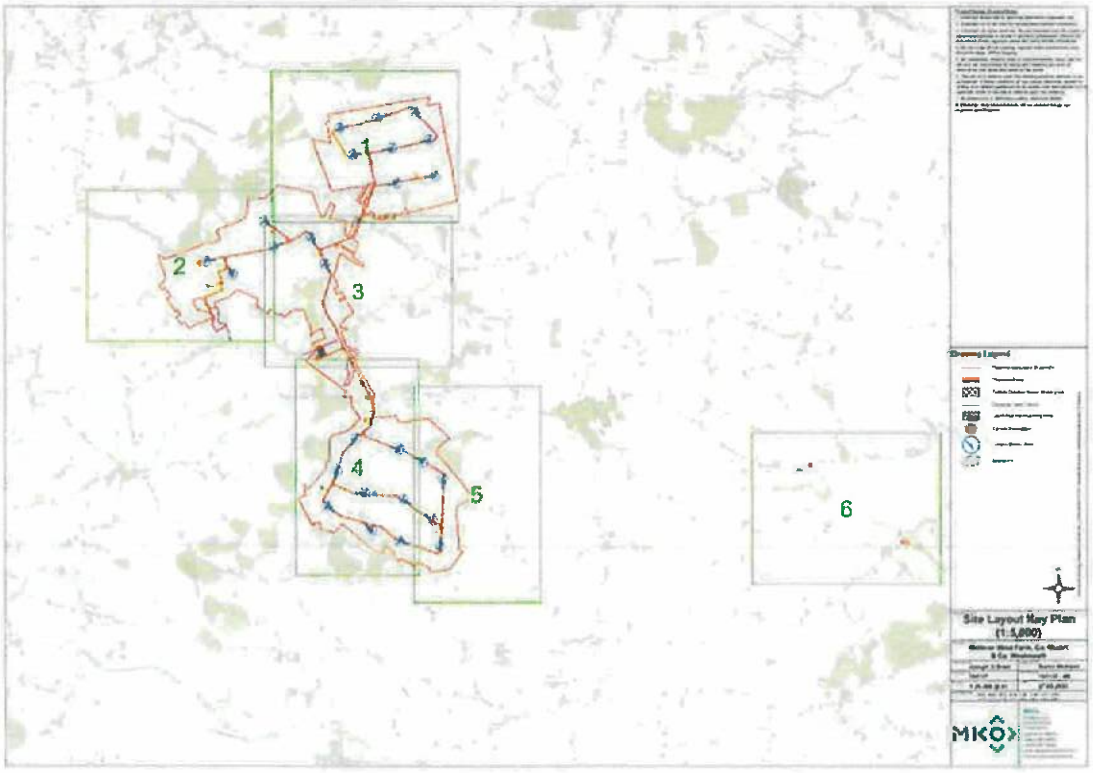

Image 2 – Site boundary with turbine locations

4. RELEVANT POLICY:

4.1 International Energy Policy Framework

Ireland is a party to the UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol which provide an international legal framework to address climate change. On November 4th 2016 Ireland and the EU ratified and made effective the Paris Agreement which aims to keep global temperature rise this century to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. This is a legally binding agreement to achieve net zero emissions by the second half of this century, through increasing national determined contributions (NDCs) over time. The NDC for Ireland and all member states will be determined by the EU which has committed to reduce GHG emission by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

In September 2015, Ireland adopted the non-legally binding United Nations' 2030 Agenda (Transforming Our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) along with all 193 Member States of the UN, which aims to deliver a more sustainable, prosperous and peaceful future for the entire world, and sets out a framework for how to achieve this by 2030. It sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) covering the social, economic and environmental requirements for a sustainable future, including, inter alia mitigating climate change and providing affordable clean energy.

4.2 European Energy Policy European Green Deal (2019)

2020 Climate and Energy Package – This policy set three key targets -20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels); 20% of EU energy to be from renewables; and 20% improvement in energy efficiency, which was agreed in 2007 and enacted in legislation in 2009.

The EU's Effort Sharing Decision addresses the emissions including from housing, agriculture, waste and transport (excluding aviation) through binding annual national targets to 2020. Under the 2030 Climate and Energy Policy Framework (European Council, adopted 24/10/14, with targets revised 2018) binding EU targets of at least 40% reduction in GHG emissions and at least 23% share of renewable energy for all energy consumed in the EU by in 2030, and at least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency. The EU's Effort Sharing Regulation (EU) 2018/842 lays down obligations on Member States with respect to their minimum contributions for the period from 2021 to 2030 to fulfilling the Union's target of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 30% below 2005 levels in 2030 in the various sectors and contributes to achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement. A GHG reduction target of at least 30% applies to Ireland.

Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC (23/04/09) – Concerns the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources. Article 4 requires each member state to produce a national renewable energy plan to achieve an overall reduction in GHG emissions of 20%, a 20% increase in energy efficiency and 20% of energy consumption across the EU to come from renewable energy by 2020. Member states are to achieve their individual binding target across the heat, transport and electricity sectors and apart from a sub-target of a minimum of 10% in the transport sector that applies to all Member States. There is flexibility for each country to choose how to achieve their individual target across the sectors. Ireland's overall target is to achieve 16% of energy from renewable sources by 2020.

Revised Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU (January 2019) – Sets new target for share of energy from renewable sources in the EU of at least 32% for 2030, with a view to increasing the target through legislation by 2023. Member States are required to set national targets to meet, collectively, the binding Union target through integrated national energy and climate plans. The final share of energy from renewable sources for Ireland's gross final consumption of energy from 1st January 2021 must not be lower than 16% and Ireland will be obliged to take the necessary measures to ensure compliance with same.

4.3 National Energy & Climate Policy

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 - Ireland has a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade. A key element from a local authority perspective is the requirement for local authorities to prepare individual Climate Action Plans. These Plans will include both mitigation and adaptation measures and are required to be updated every five years.

Key components of the Act include:

- This Act embeds the process of setting binding and ambitious emissions-reductions targets in law,
- The Act provides for a national climate objective, which commits to pursue and achieve no later than 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy,
- The Act provides that the first two five-year carbon budgets proposed by the Climate Change Advisory Council should equate to a total reduction of 51% over the period to 2030, relative to a baseline of 2018,
- The role of the Climate Change Advisory Council has been strengthened, enabling it to propose carbon budgets to the Minister which match our ambition and international obligations
- The government must adopt carbon budgets that are consistent with the Paris agreement and other international obligations. All forms of greenhouse gas emissions including biogenic methane will be included in the carbon budgets, and carbon removals will be taken into account in setting budgets,
- The Government will determine, following consultation, how to apply the carbon budget across the relevant sectors, and what each sector will contribute in a given five-year period,
- Actions for each sector will be detailed in the Climate Action Plan which must be updated annually,
- Government Ministers will be responsible for achieving the legally-binding targets for their own sectoral area with each Minister accounting for their performance towards sectoral targets and actions before an Oireachtas Committee each year,
- Local Authorities must prepare individual Climate Action Plans which will include both mitigation and adaptation measures and will be updated every five years. Local Authority Development Plans must be aligned with their Climate Action Plan,
- Public Bodies will be obliged to take account of Climate Action Plans in the performance of their functions.

Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply - The Programme for Government commits Ireland to an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade) and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. In order to contribute to the achievement of these targets, the Government has committed that up to 80% of electricity consumption will come from renewable sources by 2030 on a pathway to net zero emissions. Ensuring continued security of electricity supply is considered a priority at national level and within the overarching EU policy framework in which the electricity market operates.

The Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply sets out a number of updates to national policy in the context of the Programme for Government commitments relevant to the electricity sector, planning authorities and developers.

The policy statement includes explicit Government approval that:

- the development of new conventional generation (including gas-fired and gasoil/distillate-fired generation) is a national priority and should be permitted and supported in order to ensure security of electricity supply and support the growth of renewable electricity generation
- it is appropriate that existing conventional electricity generation capacity should be retained until the new conventional electricity generation capacity is developed in order to ensure security of electricity supply
- the connection of large energy users to the electricity grid should take into account the potential impact on security of electricity supply and on the need to decarbonise the electricity grid
- it is appropriate for additional electricity transmission and distribution grid infrastructure, electricity interconnection and electricity storage to be permitted and developed in order to support the growth of renewable energy and to support security of electricity supply
- it is appropriate for additional natural gas transmission and distribution grid infrastructure to be permitted and developed in order to support security of electricity supply

Climate Action Plan 2023 - provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting us on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021.

It will put Ireland on a more sustainable path; cut emissions; create a cleaner, greener economy and society; and protect us from the devastating consequences of climate change. It is a huge opportunity to create new jobs and grow businesses in areas like offshore wind; cutting-edge agriculture; and retrofitting, making our homes warmer and safer.

The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on our climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated annually to ensure alignment with our legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings.

National Mitigation Plan (DCCAE, July 2017) – Specifies the policy measures that are required to manage GHG emissions and the removal of emissions to further the national transition objective, framed around decarbonising four main carbon emitting sectors, namely; electricity generation; the built environment;

transport; and agriculture. It recognises that Ireland is not likely to meet it GHG emissions reduction target, with a reduction of only 4%-6% below 2005 levels for all sectors, with emissions exceeding the effort sharing decision limit by 13.7Mt, compared to the 20% target. It refers to quantity of carbon stored in Irish peatlands (64% of total soil organic carbon stock present) and to the National Peatland's Strategy as setting out how to sustainably manage and protect / conserve this national resource, but it does not include any explicit reference to the potential for peatland restoration / rehabilitation to contribute to climate change mitigation.

National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 - The National Landscape Strategy was published by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in June 2015. The main objectives include the development of a National Landscape Character Assessment, which would provide a framework for the protection and management of change within the landscape in terms of its cultural, social, economic and environmental values. The aim is to seek to achieve a balance between the social, cultural and economic needs and the environment and the landscape. It is stated that a National Landscape Character Assessment would ensure consistency between and within public authority functions and areas, would inform LCA's at a local level and would guide the development of landscape policy.

National Planning Framework Project Ireland 2040 (2018) – It is a goal of the Framework to refocus planning to tackle Ireland's higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country's prodigious renewable energy potential, including, inter alia onshore and offshore wind energy.

The Government will support the roll-out of renewables and protection and enhancement of carbon pools such as forests, peatlands and permanent grasslands; and climate change being taken into account in planning-related decision-making processes. The NPF sets out a series of National Policy Objectives, the following being pertinent to the proposed development:

- National Strategic Outcome 8 - Transition to Sustainable Energy states that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, more renewable 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. A target of 40% of the Country's electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020 is stated along with a strategic aim to increase renewable deployment in line with EU targets and national policy objectives up to 2030 and beyond.
- National Policy Objective (NPO) 23 - Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

- NPO 52 - The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.
- NPO 54 - Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate 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.

Policy anticipates that the forthcoming Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework will aim to identify strategic areas for the sustainable development of renewable electricity projects of scale, in a sustainable manner, compatible with environmental and cultural heritage, landscape and amenity considerations, and that the development of the Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Electricity Development Plan will facilitate informed decision-making in relation to onshore renewable energy infrastructure.

Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS 1) - RESS 1 is the first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme by the Government of Ireland and is a pivotal component of the Government's Climate Action Plan. RESS 1 uses a competitive auction process to determine which generators receive support. For projects that are successful in the RESS 1 Auction, this support typically applies for approximately 15 years.

Action Number 10 of the Climate Action Plan 2023 calls on the need to deliver onshore and offshore RESS auctions as per the annual RESS auction calendar, to deliver on the 70% renewable electricity target by 2030. RESS 1 is the first step in this important component of the Climate Action Plan.

All RESS 1 Projects are required to establish a Community Benefit Fund prior to Commercial Operation of the project. The contribution will be €2/MWh of Loss-Adjusted Metered Quantity for all RESS 1 Projects.

Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006 - These guidelines provide advice to the Board and to planning authorities on wind energy development through the Development Plan and the development management process. They are intended to provide for consistency in the approach to wind energy development in terms of the identification of suitable locations for such development and in the determination of planning applications. It is stated that the assessment of such projects should be plan-led with clear guidance on where wind energy development should locate and what factors will be taken into account.

The matters to be considered in a planning application are set out in Chapter 4. These include potential impacts on the built and natural heritage, ground conditions and drainage, visual and landscape impacts, local environmental impacts, (including noise, shadow flicker, electromagnetic interference), and adequacy of local access road network. It is stated that best practice would suggest that an integrated planning application that include grid connection information should ideally be submitted and that developers should be encouraged to engage in public consultation with the local community.

The potential environmental impacts arising from wind energy developments are discussed in Chapter 5. Guidance is given on matters such as noise, shadow flicker, natural heritage, archaeology, architectural heritage, ground conditions, aircraft safety and windtake. Whilst a setback distance is not established, it is stated that noise is unlikely to be a significant problem where the distance to the residential property is more than 500m. In respect of noise, the recommended standard is a lower fixed limit of 45dBA or a maximum increase of 5dBA above background noise and nearby noise sensitive locations, apart from very quiet areas where the daytime level is limited to 35-40dB(A). A nighttime limit of 43 dB(A) is recommended. In terms of shadow flicker, the recommended standard is a maximum of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day for dwellings and offices within 500m. It is further stated that at distances of greater than 10 rotor diameters, the potential for shadow flicker is very low.

Chapter 6 provides guidance on siting and design of wind energy development in the landscape. This includes advice on siting, spatial extent and scale, cumulative effect, spacing of turbines, layout of turbines and height of turbines. Advice is also given regarding landscape character types as a basis for application of the guidance on siting and design.

Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 – It should be noted that the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government published Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines in December 2019. A public consultation period was held until the 19th of February 2020.

The proposed key revisions include the following;

- New noise standards: The draft guidelines include proposed new standards aimed at reducing noise nuisance from wind energy developments for local residents and communities. The proposed new standards are in line with international standards, as incorporated in the 2018 World Health Organisation Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region. The permitted noise levels will take account of certain noise characteristics specific to wind energy projects i.e. tonal, amplitude modulation and low frequency noise and provide penalties for tonal noise and amplitude modulation and a threshold for low frequency noise above specified limits which, if breached, will result in turbine shut down. The implementation of a new robust noise monitoring framework is also proposed.
- Setback distance: The draft guidelines require a setback distance for visual amenity purposes of four times the tip height between a wind turbine and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a minimum mandatory setback distance of 500 metres. This setback requirement is also subject to the need to comply with the proposed noise limits outlined above.
- Automatic shadow flicker control mechanisms: Automatic shadow flicker control mechanisms will be required to be in place for the operational duration of a wind energy development project. It will be a specific condition of planning permissions that should shadow flicker occur and impact existing properties, the relevant wind turbines must be shut down.
- Community consultation: Wind energy developers will be mandatorily required to engage in active public consultation with the local community at an early stage. In this regard, they will have to prepare and submit a 'Community Report' as part of their planning application outlining how they have consulted and engaged with the local community regarding the proposed development

and how they will work with the local community to allow for the free flow of information between the community and the developer at all stages in the project.

- Community dividend: Wind energy developers will have to provide an opportunity for the proposed development to be of enduring economic or social benefit to the local community, whether by facilitating community investment/ ownership in the project, other types of benefits/ dividends, or a combination of the two.
- Grid connections: The draft guidelines contain updated guidance regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment-related requirements in respect of wind energy development projects and their related grid connections, arising from a High Court Judicial Review (O Grianna and others v. An Bord Pleanála).

The draft is subject of SEA, with the aim to issue the finalised Guidelines, following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions and views received during the consultation phase.

4.4 Regional Policy

Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 -2031

The primary purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the Region.

The RSES sets out vision based across 3 no. key guiding principles: healthy place-making, climate change, and economic opportunity. Underpinning these guiding principles are a series of Regional Policy Objectives (RPO's). The following RPO's are of particular relevance to the proposed development:

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.

RPO 10.20: Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy. This includes the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.

RPO 10.22: Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/distribution of a renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres to support an island population of 8 million people.

4.5 Local Policy and Guidance Documents

The Westmeath County Development Plan 2021- 2027 (CDP) is the overarching plan with respect to land use in the County and outlines the overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Westmeath. The relevant Sections, Policies and Objectives of the CDP, which have significance to the proposed development are outlined below.

Chapter 5 Economic Development & Employment Strategy: Transition to a Low Carbon Economy/Green Economy where a shift towards the use of renewable energy is identified as a key component and supported by policy.

CPO 5.59: Support Renewable energy initiatives that supports a low carbon transition.

Chapter 9 Rural Westmeath: Farm Diversification which notes the potential challenges within the rural economy, and acknowledges that there is a need to promote farm diversification and new employment opportunities to ensure the viability and sustain existing rural communities. The Council willingness to support diversification of the rural economy, including renewable energy is highlighted in supporting policy:

CPO 9.34: Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain employment opportunities in rural areas.

Chapter 10 Transport Infrastructure and Energy: Section 10.22 Renewable Energy Sources outlines that a favourable approach will be taken towards applications for renewable energy developments provided they are environmentally sustainable and are in accordance with general planning criteria. The most pertinent policies refer as follows:

CPO 10.139: 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.

CPO 10.140: Facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and support the implementation of actions identified in the Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and any future amendments.

Section 10.23.2: Industrial Scale Wind Farms. The Council will look favorably on the development of industrial scale wind farms and the harnessing of wind energy in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the County.

The following are relevant council policy in relation to wind farms:

CPO 10.142: Have regard 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 and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.

CPO 10.144: Ensure the security of energy supply by supporting the potential of the wind energy resources of the County in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CPO 10.146: 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.

CPO 10.147: Ensure that proposals for energy development demonstrate that human health has been considered, including those relating to the topics of:

- Noise (including consistency with the World Health Organisation's 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region);
- Shadow Flicker (for wind turbine developments, including detailed Shadow Flicker Study);
- Ground Conditions/Geology (including landslide and slope stability risk assessment);
- Air Quality; and Water Quality;
- Assessment of impacts on collision risk species (bird and bats).

CPO 10.148: With regard to wind energy developments, to ensure that the potential for visual disturbance should be mitigated by applying an appropriate setback distance, which, where relevant, complies with available Ministerial Guidelines.

Chapter 11 Climate Action: Chapter 11 address the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change. Relevant policy is as follows:

CPO 11.1: Support the implementation and achievement of European, National, Regional and Local objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation as detailed in the following documents, taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures which have been outlined through the policy objectives in this Development Plan:

- National Mitigation Plan (2017 and any subsequent versions);
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions);
- Climate Action Plan (2019 and any subsequent versions);
- Any Regional Decarbonisation Plan prepared on foot of commitments included in the emerging Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region;
- Relevant provisions of any Sectoral Adaptation Plans prepared to comply the requirements of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, including those seeking to contribute towards the National Transition Objective, to pursue, and achieve, the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the end of the year 2050; and
- Westmeath County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

Chapter 12 Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure policy: In Section 12.17 peatlands are acknowledges as one of our oldest surviving ecosystems and associated key value for biodiversity, regulation of climate as a valuable natural carbon sink, water filtration and supply.

Relevant council policy in this regard is as follows:

CPO 12.65: 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.

5. EIA SCREENING:

The proposed development falls within the definition of a project under the EIA Directive as amended by Directive 2014/52 and falls within the scope of Class 3 under Part 1 Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, (as amended), Development for the Purposes of Part 10:

Energy Industry (j) 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.

EIA is required, and the applicant has submitted an EIAR.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

File Ref. 91/403 – Michael Flanagan applied for permission for development of a quarry. **Outcome** - Refused

File Ref. 00/322 – Michael Flanagan applied for permission for reopening of gravel pit. **Outcome** - Refused

File Ref. 15/6135 - Bord na Mona Energy Ltd applied for permission to erect a guyed wind monitoring mast, with instruments, up to 100m in height, at Lisclogher Bog, Lisclogher Great, Co Westmeath. The purpose of the proposed mast is to assess the suitability of the company's adjacent lands for wind farm development. **Outcome** - Granted

File Ref. 16/6259 – Bord na Mona Powergen Limited applied for permission to erect a guyed wind monitoring mast with instruments up to 100m in height. The purpose of the proposed mast is to assess the suitability of the company's adjacent lands for wind farm development. **Outcome** - Granted

File Ref. 21/620 - Bord na Mona Powergen Limited applied for retention permission for continued use of an existing Guyed Wind Monitoring Mast with instruments, 100m in height on its lands at Lisclogher Bog, Lisclogher Great, Co. Westmeath for a further period of three years. The purpose of the mast is to assess the suitability of the company's adjacent lands for wind farm development. Previous planning application reference number 16/6259 refers. **Outcome** - Granted

Lands adjacent to northwest of application site

Strategic Infrastructure Development ABP Ref ABP311565-21 - Wind Farm Development including 9 turbines and all associated works. **Outcome** – Granted.

7. ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION RELATING TO THE SUBJECT SITE.

None.

8. DESIGNATION SITES:

8.1 EUROPEAN – Special Protected Areas (SPA's) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)

An Appropriate Assessment was carried out for the Proposed Development in compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. As part of this assessment, the potential for the Proposed Development to have an effect on any European sites in the Zone of Influence (ZoI) was considered. There are seven SACs and seven SPAs (Natura 2000 sites), located in the Likely Zone of Impact, including:

- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299)
- Mount Hevey Bog SAC (002342)
- Girley (Drewstown) Bog SAC (002203)
- Lough Lene SAC (002121)
- Lough Bane and Lough Glass SAC (002120)
- White Lough, Ben Loughs and LoughDoo SAC (001810)
- Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (001957)
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)
- Lough Derravaragh SPA (004043)
- Lough Owel SPA (004047)
- Lough Ennell SPA (004044)
- Garriskil Bog SPA (004102)
- Lough Iron SPA (004046)
- Boyne Estuary SPA (004080)

Following the detailed assessment provided in a Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report undertaken by appointed consultants, the applicant noted that the potential for likely significant effects on the following European Sites cannot be excluded in the absence of mitigation:

- River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC
- River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA

The report notes that there is a potential pathway for direct effects on otter and kingfisher where the species occurs outside the Natura 2000 sites (SAC and SPA's) a result of habitat loss within the proposed

development site boundary. There is hydrological connectivity between the proposed development and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA via watercourses within and adjacent to the site boundary which discharge to the Stonyford River to the east and the Deel (Raharney) River to the south-west both of which are designated as part of the SAC and SPA.

It's stated that the proposed development has the potential to cause deterioration in water quality during the construction, operational and decommissioning phase of the development.

As a result, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been submitted as part of this SID application.

The Natura Impact Statement outlines several mitigation measures that need to be implemented during the construction and operational stages of the development to avoid any significant impact on the above European Sites. Full details of the mitigation measures in relation to watercourse protection, noise emissions, air emissions are discussed in the submitted EIAR. The NIS concludes that the proposed development, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site. The application was referred to WCC Environment Section who raise no objection to the above.

In this case, An Bord Pleanala is the competent authority for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA), and it is an issue for the Bord to decide on the adequacy of this NIS and issue a determination on the Appropriate Assessment criteria for potential impacts on the relevant European sites.

8.2 NATIONAL DESIGNATIONS - Natural Heritage Areas

These are well described in the EIAR. There are six NHAs situated within the 15km potential zone of influence of the proposed development site, including:-

- Molerick Bog NHA (001582) - approx. 3.9km south of the application site.
- Girley Bog NHA (001580) - approx. 10.3km north-east of the application site.
- Wooddown Bog NHA (000694) - approx. 11.4km west of the application site.
- Jamestown Bog NHA (001324) - approx. 12.5km north-east of the application site.
- Milltownpass Bog NHA (002323) - approx. 13.1km north-west of the application site.
- Lough Derravaragh NHA (000684) - approx. 14.4km south-west of the application site.

The EIAR concludes in Section 6.5.1.1.1 that:

"There will be no direct effects on these sites given that the Proposed Development is located entirely outside and >3km from any of these designated sites.

No habitat or surface water connectivity was identified between the Proposed Development and these designated sites. Surface water from the Proposed Development Site drains to the Deel (Raharney) River to the west and south of the site and to the Stonyford River to the east of the site, both of which discharge to the River Boyne which in turn flows east before discharging to the Irish Sea >70km downstream of the site.

Given the absence of connectivity and the distance between the Proposed Development and these NHAs, no potential for indirect effects on these sites due to deterioration of water quality or habitat loss/degradation has been identified.

No pathway for effect was identified and these sites are not within the likely zone of influence."

The conclusions of the EIAR appear reasonable in this regard.

9. PROTECTED STRUCTURES/ACA/SPECIAL AMENITY AREA ORDERS:

There is 1 no. Protected Structure (RPS) within the landholding boundary associated with the proposed development:-

- Permanent narrow gauge Bord na Mona railway line (RPS 021-008)

The centre point for this structure is located to the northeast of the Ballivor Works within the northern section of Ballivor Bog. It is described in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (Reg. No. 15402102) as follows:

"Description: Permanent narrow gauge Bord na Mona railway line, erected c.1952, for transporting turf to the Ballivor Processing Plant, Co Meath. Now only used to transport carriages brought in for servicing. Constructed of steel I beams. Railway line is three foot wide and is laid in ten yard sections. Level crossing to main road comprises concrete piers with steel cross bars. Much of the earlier permanent narrow gauge is overgrown by vegetation. Located to the east of Raharney, close to the border with County Meath.

Appraisal: Board na Mona narrow gauge railways and ancillary structures are an important element of the twentieth century industrial and economic heritage of Ireland. They are a common feature of the landscapes of the Bog of Allen, particularly in Co Westmeath, Co. Offaly, Co. Longford and Co. Kildare and are almost a type that is unique to the midlands of Ireland. They are important historical reminders of the attempts of the Irish Government(s) to create employment in the midlands and utilise peat as a natural resource on an industrial level in the mid twentieth-century and have a huge social and economic importance to the midlands as a result. The simple steel and concrete level gates complete this record and add incident to the bog landscape."

It is indicated that 'the proposed roads will interact the rails at 7 locations'. Chapter 12, section 12.7 of the EIAR states that since the roads will be floated, there is no requirement to remove any of the tracks and in this regard no direct effects will occur. Furthermore, no level crossings will be negatively impacted. An extensive railway network will remain on the site however for future generations. The EIAR states that mitigation measures to include the provision of information signage will be required and implemented and will be erected at various locations along the proposed amenity trails.

Sixty-eight RPS structures are located within 5km of the nearest proposed turbine. Chapter 12, Section 12.3.1.12 of the EIAR states that the majority of structures are located within 'urban' settings of Delvin to the north, Raharney to the southwest and Ballivor to the southeast. The assessment of impacts on visual setting was undertaken using both the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), as presented in Chapter 13 of the EIAR. It is noted in the EIAR that

the ZTV shows that all of the locations where the RPS structures are located may theoretically have 21 - 26 turbines visible. However, the EIAR states that this is a conservative scenario, and in reality, buildings (which are not taken into account in the ZTV model) may result in much fewer turbines actually being seen in reality.

It is noted that the proposed development provides for an operational phase of 30-years and, as a result, any likely visual effects will be entirely reversed following the decommissioning of the proposed wind turbines.

10. PUBLIC SERVICES:

Public Water Supply: It is proposed to install a groundwater well adjacent to the substation. The proposed groundwater well and associated extraction has the potential to effect local groundwater levels in the surrounding lands. The applicant notes that the abstraction rate for the proposed groundwater well at the substation will be comparable to a domestic well, with a well supplying a single household typically abstracting less than 1m3 /day. The well is proposed in a locally important aquifer which is moderately productive only in local zones. This aquifer forms part of the Athboy GWB which is comprised of only moderate permeability rocks where groundwater flow is concentrated in the upper weathered zone of the aquifer. The applicant further states that due to the nature of the bedrock aquifer and the proposed extraction rate, no effects on local groundwater levels should occur. WCC Environment Department were consulted on the above proposals during the course of the application and raise no objection in this regard.

Sanitary Facilities: The applicant has noted that Wastewater will not be treated or disposed of onsite. During the construction phase of the development, it is proposed to install port-a-loos with an integrated waste holding tank and these port-a-loos will be located at the temporary construction compounds, and they will be removed from the wind farm site on completion of the construction works. The applicant proposes that all wastewater effluent will be collected in a wastewater holding tank and periodically emptied by a licensed contractor and disposed of in wastewater treatment plants.

The staff toilets associated with the control building during the operational phase of the development will be connected to an onsite sealed storage tank with all wastewaters being tankered off site by permitted waste collector to wastewater treatment plants. It is proposed that the wastewater storage tank will be fitted with an automated alarm system that will provide sufficient notice that the tank requires emptying.

WCC Environment Department were consulted on the above proposals during the course of the application and raise no objection in this regard.

Surface Water: The surface of the cutover bog is drained by a network of parallel field drains that are typically spaced every 15 - 20m. The field drains are approximately 0.5 - 1.5m deep and in most areas, they intercept the mineral subsoil underlying the peat. These field drains mostly feed into larger main drains which drain the bogs towards the outfall locations. There are a number of shorter cross drains which intersect the small field drains. There are various outfalls on the bog boundaries. All of the bogs

are gravity drained. Surface water draining from the site is routed via settlement ponds in accordance with the IPC license requirements prior to discharge into off-site drainage channels, streams, and rivers.

The drainage design for the proposed development has been prepared by Hydro Environmental Services Ltd. (HES). Chapter 4 of the EIAR discusses the drainage proposals for the development. The general design approach for this development intends to utilise and integrate the project with the existing land infrastructure where possible.

The applicant intends to employ two drainage methods to control drainage water within the Wind Farm Site during construction, thereby protecting downstream surface water quality and aquatic habitats. The first method proposed involves 'keeping clean water clean' by avoiding disturbance to natural drainage features, minimising any works in or around artificial drainage features, and diverting clean surface water flow around excavations and construction areas. The second method involves collecting any drainage waters from works areas within the proposed development site that might carry silt, to allow settlement and cleaning prior to its release.

The documents submitted note that during the construction phase, all surface water runoff will be treated to a high quality prior to being released. Interceptor drains will be installed either side of the access road alignment to divert any surface water away from the construction area. All new roadways will be constructed with a camber to aid drainage and surface water runoff. Other features such as swales, check dams, level spreaders, piped slope drains, vegetation filters, settlement ponds, silt busters and silt bags will be incorporated into the drainage design. All drainage outfall from the proposed site is routed through existing settlement ponds that remain in-situ from the previous site use.

A drainage inspection and maintenance plan are included in the CEMP.

Further, the applicant has noted that *"there will be no risk of increased flooding down-gradient of the site as a result of the Proposed Development due to these drainage measures. A surface water monitoring programme will be put in place during the construction phase."*

WCC Environment Department were consulted on the above proposals during the course of the application and raise no objection in this regard provided all mitigation measure are implemented in full.

11. FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT:

A Flood Risk Assessment was carried out by Hydro-Environmental Services (HES) and further details of Flood Risk Assessment are found in Appendix 9-1 of the EIAR.

The Flood Risk assessment reports that no instances of historical flooding events were identified in historic OS Maps, OPW maps, GSI maps and the CFRAM maps.

The applicant notes that the Local Authority Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) mapping indicates that areas in the northwest of Lisclogher Bog are vulnerable to fluvial flooding and mapped within Flood Zone A (100-year flood event). However, it is noted in the Flood Risk Assessment that site walkovers have revealed that this section of the mapped watercourse does not exist and that this error indicates that the SFRA flood zones mapped in this region are incorrect as they assume the presence of a surface

watercourse. The FRA also notes *"that based on site observation, lack of flooding in winter 2015/2016, and the high drainage density within the bog at this location, that the actual flood risk in this area is the same for the entire Lisclogher Bog, and it should be mapped in Flood Zone C."*

CFRAM mapping includes modelled flood levels for the 10-year and 100-year flood events and the levels, modelled near Ballivor village, range from 64.19 – 65.34m OD. The reports states that these levels are above the proposed outfall pipe elevations at the proposed site which are 67.97 – 79.13m OD.

The main risk of flooding across much of the proposed site is via pluvial flooding due to the low permeability peat soils and subsoils. The surface of the cutover bog contains an extensive network of peat drains with surface water outflows from the bogs. The report notes that the existing drainage network has reduced the risk of pluvial flooding across much of the proposed site. However, following periods of intense and prolonged rainfall events localised surface water ponding is still likely to occur in places. To mitigate against this the applicant has proposed that all site infrastructure will be raised above existing ground levels by approximately 1m.

The report notes that the proposed development substation is particularly sensitive to flooding. A site-specific flood analysis has been completed for the substation location and this determined the peak flood levels at the proposed substation site for 100-yr and 1000-yr rainfall events to be 74.3 and 74.6m OD respectively. The applicant has therefore recommended that the Substation floor level be raised to >74.9mOD (74.6mOD + 0.3m freeboard). The proposed final floor level of the substation is 74.9mOD and it's noted in the report that at this elevation the risk of flooding at the substation site is negligible.

A justification test was carried out for the site. The justification test concludes that the proposed development is designed and laid out in a manner that reduces flood risk, and that there is negligible potential for an increase in flood risk downstream of the proposed development.

The Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the risk of the wind farm contributing to downstream flooding is also very low, as the long-term plan is to implement Bord na Móna's decommissioning and rehabilitation plans at the proposed site. These decommissioning and rehabilitation plans are aimed to stabilise and rehabilitate the peat bogs by placing the existing peatland environments on a path towards naturally functioning peatlands. With the implementation of the rehabilitation plans, surface water runoff from the Ballivor Bog Group should be reduced, thereby decreasing the downstream flood risk.

The proposed wind farm development will be constructed with its own drainage system which will provide additional surface water attenuation.

It's anticipated that with the cumulative effect of the proposed development and the decommissioning and rehabilitation plans, that there will be a reduced risk of fluvial flooding downstream of the proposed site.

The report finally notes *"The overall risk of flooding posed at the proposed site is assessed to be low, and all proposed infrastructure will be located at or above Flood Zone C elevations".*

WCC Environment Department have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment and raise no objection in this regard.

12. WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE:

The majority of the application site is located in the river Boyne_SC_050 sub-catchment. Meanwhile, the southwest of the site, including much of Ballivor Bog and small areas of Carranstown and Bracklin bogs, is located in the river Boyne_SC_040 sub-catchment. Both the above sub- catchments are located in the Boyne Catchment (07).

The Deel River flows southwards approximately 2.1km west of the proposed site. The Deel River flows southwards through the town of Raharney and joins with several small streams which drain the southwest of the application site. The Curris River is located immediately to the west of Ballivor Bog and flows to the south before discharging into the Deel River approximately 1.4km south of the site. The Deel then continues to the southeast and confluence with the River Boyne approximately 4.5km south of Ballivor village. The eastern section of the application site is drained by the Stonyford River. The Stonyford River flowing to the southeast, approximately 700m east of Lisclogher Bog and continues to the southeast before it discharges into the River Boyne approximately 7km east of site. The site is drained by several small 1st and 2nd order streams which flow to the east and discharge into the Stonyford River.

The majority of the bedrock geology underlying the proposed site is mapped as the Dinantian Pure Unbedded Limestones of the Waulsortian Limestone Formation and the Dinantian Upper Impure Limestones of the Lucan Formation. These bedrock geology formations are classified by the GSI as a Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones. The Tober Colleen Formation which is mapped to underlie sections of Lisclogher Bog and Bracklin Bog is classified as a Poor Aquifer – Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones .

The 4 (no.) bogs comprising the application site are underlain by the Athboy Groundwater Body which is characterized by poorly productive bedrock. This Groundwater Body has been assigned 'Good Status' and the 3rd Cycle Boyne Catchment Report lists states that the Athboy GWB is "at risk" of not meeting its WFD objectives. The vulnerability rating of the bedrock aquifer underlying the site is classified as "Moderate" to "Low".

The EIAR contends that strict mitigation measures listed in Chapter 9, section Section 9.5.2 and 9.5.3 in relation to maintaining a high quality of surface water runoff from the development and groundwater protection will ensure that the proposed development presents no likelihood for significant effects on surface or groundwater quality following the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures.

13. ENVIRONMENT IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT (EIAR) (Comments)

The following section gives the Planning Authority's views in relation to the adequacy of the EIAR submitted as part of this planning application. Where possible it has been attempted to keep the planning assessment separate from those comments specifically relating to environmental impact, it should be noted that there is somewhat of a crossover.

In this case, An Bord Pleanála is the competent authority for the purposes of carrying out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIAR submitted by the applicant informs this EIA, as does information available to the Board and information given by the Local Authority.

The Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (August 2018) specify that (as per EU Directive 2014/52/EU) there is a requirement for the EIAR to be prepared by component experts. For the most part, the EIAR is set out in a clear format and consists of a wide-ranging, comprehensive assessment of the full range of issues and factors that could reasonably be anticipated for a wind farm development of this scale. The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is considered adequate.

The section below provides a brief summary of the environmental impacts of the proposal as outlined in the chapters contained in the EIAR.

13.1 Chapter 1 – Introduction

The introduction is clearly set out and refers to the legislative context of the Environment Impact Assessment with regard to Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 37A of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended.

The main EIAR text follows a 'grouped format' structure whereby environmental factors are assessed and presented as separate chapters. Chapters are organised in a consistent approach which commences by considering the existing or baseline environment, with a subsequent assessment of the likely significant impacts of the proposed development followed by identification of measures to mitigate and monitor.

Reference is made to the scoping process carried out along with interaction undertaken with the various stakeholders during the consultation process. The AA Screening Report considered the preparation and submission of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) necessary to inform an Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2).

Chapter 1 of the EIAR states that each chapter has been completed by a component expert(s) and a 'Statement of Authority' has been provided in each chapter. The level of expertise of the component experts appears reasonable however this is a matter for the Board to determine.

This chapter concluded that no general difficulties or limitations, including technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge, were encountered in compiling the information required to be provided in this EIAR. Where specific difficulties or limitations were encountered in relation to specific environmental factors, they are reported in the individual chapters of this EIAR, as appropriate.

13.2 Chapter 2 – Background to the Proposed Development

This chapter of the EIAR presents policy information on Energy and Climate Change policy and targets, the strategic, regional, and local planning context for the proposed development, scoping and consultation, and the cumulative impact assessment process. This section includes the policies and targets which have been put in place at the various levels of Government both national and international in relation to renewable energy and climate change. The details provided set out the need for the

proposed development to aid Ireland in meeting its national targets and European commitments in relation to climate change and decarbonisation.

Detail is provided regarding the background of the site, with Bord na Móna acquiring extensive peatlands and associated areas principally for the industrial harvesting of peat for energy and as horticultural growing media. In January 2021 Bord na Móna formally took the decision to cease industrial scale peat extraction on its land bank. Bord na Móna has been examining a range of after uses of its land bank post peat extraction. Potential uses examined and developed include amenity and the co-location of large-scale renewable energy production with existing and previously identified uses. This chapter explains that large tracts of cutover and cutaway peatlands have been rehabilitated, are currently undergoing rehabilitation, or will be undergoing rehabilitation in the coming years. It also provides examples of other windfarm schemes such as Mount Lucas and Cloncreen wind farms to demonstrate that peatland rehabilitation and wind farm development can co-exist successfully. It states that since the cessation of peat harvesting in 2020 and the increased urgency to develop renewable energy alternatives, cutaway bogs present potentially ideal locations for renewable energy infrastructure.

The opportunity to develop and deliver renewable energy infrastructure on land that can function as a carbon store and has the potential to revert to a carbon sink as well as enhance wildlife habitats is highlighted.

The relevant planning history of the application site, planning applications in the vicinity of the site and other wind energy applications within the wider area have been outlined in this section of the EIAR.

Details of pre-application meetings with relevant Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála regarding the scheme have been provided.

To gather a comprehensive view of cumulative impacts on environmental considerations and to inform the EIAR process being undertaken by the consenting authority, each relevant chapter within the EIAR includes a cumulative impact assessment where appropriate. The cumulative impact assessments carried out in each of the chapters of this EIAR consider all potential significant cumulative effects arising from all land uses in the vicinity of the proposed development. This chapter concludes that the proposed development has been designed to mitigate impacts on the environment and other mitigation measures are set out within the EIAR.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and reasonable, however it is considered that an assessment of all permitted renewable energy developments in the vicinity of the proposal should also be considered in this regard.

13.3 Chapter 3 – Consideration of reasonable alternatives

This chapter of the EIAR includes a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer which are relevant to the project and its specific characteristics and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the environmental effects.

Do Nothing' Alternative: The 'Do-Nothing' scenario has been assessed, i.e. an outline of what is likely to happen to the environment should the project not be implemented. In this regard, it is envisaged that the

site would continue to be managed under the requirements of the relevant IPC licence and therefore the ongoing site management and environmental monitoring, peat stockpile removal (due to be completed by 2024), and wind measurement would continue. In addition, if the Proposed Development were not to proceed, the implementation of peatland rehabilitation plans as required under IPC License would occur. Likewise, the Peatland Climate Action Scheme (an enhanced form of peatland rehabilitation in selected adjacent bogs) would continue to be implemented. It is stated that these land uses and activities will also continue if the Proposed Development does proceed. It is noted that the submitted rehabilitation plan is draft version.

The EIAR considers that this scenario is a lost opportunity to capture a significant part of County Meath and Westmeath's renewable energy resource, and to contribute to meeting Government and EU 2030 targets for the production and consumption of electricity from renewable resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is stated that the opportunity to generate local employment, development contributions, and rates would also be forgone. Further, the EIAR considers that the proposed amenity access points and associated carparks would not be constructed in this scenario and therefore this recreational opportunity would be lost.

Alternative Locations: The EIAR informs that Bord na Móna owns circa 80,000 ha of land, primarily in the midlands of Ireland. An assessment of potential future uses of this landbank was published by Bord na Móna in 2011 in a document entitled 'Strategic Framework for the Future Use of Peatlands'. This report identified the potential for the development of renewable energy and other developments on Bord na Móna lands.

The EIAR quotes the NPF policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region. Consequently, the EIAR states that when considering suitable locations for the proposed development, the assessment was confined to lands within the Bord na Móna landholding only as these lands have been identified in a national and regional context as being suitable for this type of development.

The assessment carried out for the determination of a suitable location for the proposed development was a two-stage process. The first stage comprised the identification of a number of candidate sites while the second stage comprised a site-specific assessment.

Ten sites were identified as having a higher potential for wind energy development and these were then brought forward for site-specific assessment. Of the sites assessed, Ballivor was selected as a site with relatively low potential for environmental effects similar to a number of the other sites on the list that met the relevant criteria. Due to, for instance, the close proximity of potential grid connection, it was deemed that Ballivor should be progressed for detailed assessment and planning consideration.

Alternative Renewable Energy Technologies: The EIAR states that alternative sources of renewable electricity generation considered for this site, given its scale, is solar photovoltaic (PV) energy plant (a solar farm). It is stated that to achieve the same energy output from solar energy, the site would require a significantly larger development footprint due to the significant difference in capacity factors between solar and wind technologies and the footprint of the technology infrastructure. Further, a solar development would have a higher potential environmental effect on Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Traffic and Transport and Biodiversity at the site. Chapter 2 of this EIAR also sets out the need and benefits of

the proposed development. For these reasons, wind energy is considered in this EIAR as the most suitable renewable electricity generation option for the site.

Alternative Designs: The EIAR informs that the design of the proposed development has been an informed and collaborative process from the outset, involving the designers, developers, engineers, landowners, environmental, hydrological, geotechnical, archaeological, and traffic specialists.

Throughout the preparation of the EIAR, the layout of the proposed development has been revised and refined to take account of the findings of all site investigations and baseline assessments, which have brought the design from its first initial layout to the proposed development layout. It is indicated that the design process has also taken account of the recommendations and comments of the relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations, the local community and local authorities as detailed in Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

Alternative Electricity Substation and Grid Connection: The EIAR informs that as the Mullingar to Corduff 110kV overhead line traverses the site at Carranstown Bog, it was decided that the proposed 110kV substation would be sited within this Bog in order to connect into the existing grid infrastructure and thereby negating the need to utilise the public road network for grid connection works. Three location options for the proposed substation were selected. Due to the location of option A under the existing overhead line, minimal additional ground disturbance and overhead line is required. Other options B and C would have required additional ground disturbance and grid connecting infrastructure including overhead lines to connect this substation to the national grid. As a result, option A was considered as the viable location.

Alternative Met Mast Locations: The EIAR states that the initial design included three proposed meteorological masts located in Lisclogher Bog, Bracklin Bog and Ballivor Bog, each at a height of 140m. Free standing masts were chosen as they are considered to have less potential impact on birds. It is stated that upon further consultation with Eirgrid it was confirmed that two met masts at Ballivor and Bracklin alone would capture the required data for the entire project. As such, the proposed mast in Lisclogher Bog was considered redundant and therefore no longer brought forward. Further analysis also confirmed that the lower mast height of 115m was the optimal height to capture the necessary wind data. Therefore, the final design incorporates two met masts at a 115m height located at Bracklin and Ballivor Bogs. The EIAR considers that as the proposed masts in the final design are smaller and fewer in number, they have a reduced environmental and visual impact.

Alternative Locations for Temporary Infrastructure: The EIAR considers that the use of multiple temporary construction compounds was deemed preferable to the alternative of a single large compound in the centre of the site, mainly as it will facilitate more efficient construction practices and will result in shorter distances for traffic movements within the site during construction. As a result, vehicle emissions and the potential for dust arisings will be reduced.

It is stated that the use of onsite borrow pits represents an efficient use of existing onsite resources and reduces the need to transport large volumes of construction materials along the local public road network to the site. The use of an onsite resource, that would only likely be developed for the proposed development, reduces the use of off-site existing quarry material assets.

The findings of geological site investigations concluded that there were 3 (no.) potential borrow pits within the Bord na Móna landholdings; Borrow Pit no. 1a and no. 1b in Carranstown Bog, separated by a proposed wind farm track, Borrow Pit no. 2 within the townland of Craddanstown, adjacent to Applicant's landholding, and Borrow Pit no. 3 in Ballivor Bog at the south of the Wind Farm Site Boundary. After further investigations and volume calculations, and discussions with surrounding landowners, it was determined that Borrow pit no. 3 in Ballivor Bog would not be carried forward to planning due to the lack of suitable access/egress onto surrounding local roads, its considerable distance from the other bogs and the overall low yield of materials it would have provided.

Alternative Delivery Routes and Access options for Turbine Components: This section discusses the options considered for turbine component delivery to the site, the options considered for the construction phase site entrances and the options considered for the operational phase for maintenance and amenity use.

The EIAR informs that three potential transport routes were identified for turbine component delivery to the site. As Option A required temporary works within the designated area of the River Boyne SAC/SPA which created additional potential ecological, ornithological and visual impacts, and generated additional noise and air emissions, the preferred and selected option for component delivery is Option C. It is noted that due to the difficulties in acquiring third party agreements along Option B, this route was not considered further.

Three entrance points for component delivery were identified and considered as part of the design process. Haul Route Option B did not progress and therefore Site Entrance Option C was removed from the design as it was no longer required. As such, an assessment of the feasibility of Option A and B was undertaken. After further design refinement it was concluded that components could be delivered directly into Ballivor Bog from the R156 if it was sufficiently widened. In addition to this, the comparison of the environmental impacts between Option A and Option B reinforced the decision to selection Option A as the preferred and optimal component entrance design.

Alternative Construction/Operational Entrance Options: Several construction site entrances were assessed for the purposes of general construction traffic, heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) and light goods vehicles (LGVs, including personnel vehicles), as well as operational entrances for maintenance and public amenity access.

Alternative Wind Farm Site Boundary Options: The EIAR informs that the project evolved from a 35 turbine layout across 5 bogs to a 26 turbine layout across 3 bogs. Lisclogher West Bog was removed from the project due to environmental sensitivities and was therefore no longer required as part of the Wind Farm Site Boundary. Turbines were removed from Carranstown to eliminate the most visually impactful turbines of the wind farm design on local receptors, and a turbine was removed from Bracklin West after further noise and shadow flicker modelling and discussions with the design team of the Bracklyn Wind Farm. The final substation location Option A was selected for the northwest of Carranstown Bog. Therefore, Carranstown East and Bracklin West were no longer required as part of the Wind Farm Site Boundary. Subsequent to these design revisions, Carranstown East and Bracklin West were selected by Bord na Móna for the Peatland Climate Action Scheme(PCAS). Once all elements of the project design were finalised, the Wind Farm Site Boundary was subsequently refined.

Alternative Mitigation Measures This chapter indicates that mitigation by avoidance has been a key aspect of the design process for the scheme. The EIAR states that avoidance of the most ecologically sensitive areas of the site reduces the potential for environmental effects. Where loss of habitat occurs on the site, this has been mitigated with the proposal of Habitat Enhancement Plans. It is states that the alternative to this approach is to encroach on the environmentally sensitive areas of the site and accept the potential adverse environmental effects associated with this. The EIAR considers that the best practice design and mitigation measures set out in this EIAR will contribute to reducing likely impacts and have been designed to break the pathway between the site and any identified environmental receptors.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.4 Chapter 4 - Description of the Proposed Development

In Chapter 3 of the EIAR a detailed description of the proposed development is provided along with development layout configuration.

Particulars are provided regarding development components including turbines type and capacity, assembly mechanism, meteorological mast, onsite electricity substation and control Buildings, grid connection and cabling, construction compounds, rural electricity supply, security cabins, borrow pits, sand and stone requirements, peat and spoil Management Plan, site entrances, and turbine component transport route.

For the purposes of this EIAR, the proposed wind turbines are indicated as having an overall tip height of 200m. The turbines each consist of a three-bladed rotor attached to a nacelle (hub) which contains the mechanical drive train and electrical generation mechanisms, mounted on a tower of tubular construction. The turbines will be multi-ply coated to protect against corrosion. It is proposed that the turbines would be of an off-white or light grey colour to blend into the sky background and minimise visual impact. Construction management and decommissioning details are also provided.

It is noted that Bord na Móna is proposing a Community Gain Scheme model for Ballivor Wind Farm. It is stated that the fund will be available for the lifetime of the project and will look to support the local community, through funding of projects and services, as required. A description of the Community Benefit proposal is outlined in this chapter and in the 'Ballivor Wind Farm Community Report'.

Details regarding proposed Amenity Pathways and Carparks is also provided in this chapter, comprising approx. 28km of internal road network for amenity use (walkways and cycleways), amenity links in the form of new and upgraded tracks along in Ballivor Bog and at existing entrances into Lisclogher and Bracklin Bogs to provide a greater variety of walking loops, and three new public car parks with bicycle rack facilities for recreational use.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and reasonable.

13.5 Chapter 5 – Population and Human Health

Chapter 5 identifies, describes and assesses the potential effects of the proposed development on population and human health. The key issues examined in this chapter of the EIAR include employment,

settlement and land use patterns, population and demographic trends, tourism and amenity, and human health (health and safety and shadow flicker).

From a socio-economic perspective, the EIAR states that during the construction and decommissioning phases, it is estimated that at peak construction between 100-120 jobs will be created. It is indicated that this will have a knock-on effect on the local economy through the supply of services to the workforce. Whilst at a regional level additional employment will be created through the supply of services and materials (such as stone and concrete) to the wind farm. It is also indicated that 2-3 permanent jobs will be created for the operational lifetime of the development and an estimated 20 and 40 jobs during decommissioning. It is stated that the project will result in significant rate payment to both Co. Meath and Co. Westmeath as well as providing approx. €14 million Community Funding for the local area over the lifetime of the project.

Regarding impact on residential amenity, the EIAR states that noise and shadow flicker modelling have been carried out as part of this EIAR, which shows that the proposed development will be capable of meeting all required guidelines in relation to noise thresholds and the shadow flicker thresholds set out in the 2006 DoEHLG Wind Energy Guidelines or 2019 draft Wind Energy Guidelines. It is stated that the proposed development has been designed to maximize turbine separation distances to dwellings in the area, with no turbines located within 815m of an occupied dwelling. An assessment of roadside screening was carried out for roads within 5km of the proposed turbine locations, with both the methodology and findings of this described in Chapter 13. It is stated that many of these roads have intermittent screening, and therefore intermittent views rather than full visibility of the site.

It is stated that all mitigation measures as outlined under noise and shadow flicker in this EIAR will be implemented in order to reduce insofar as possible impacts on residential amenity at properties located in the vicinity of the proposed development. The EIAR considered that with the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in relation to noise and shadow flicker, the proposed development will not result in any significant impact on residential amenity.

The EIAR considers that the assessments carried out and detailed in the EIAR show that the residual impacts effects on human health during the wind farm construction phase are not significant and will not lead to significant effects on any environmental media with the potential to lead to health effects for humans. It is envisaged that the potential for negative health effects associated with the proposed development is imperceptible. Further, it is considered that the proposed Ballivor Wind Farm is capable of offsetting carbon emissions associated with the burning of fossil fuels. It is stated that during the operational stage the wind farm will have a long term, moderate positive effect on air quality as set out in Chapter 10 which will contribute to positive effects on human health and assist in Ireland reaching its emissions targets and renewable energy goals.

It is further stated that the proposed development will have a long-term positive impact on tourism due to the social and recreational benefits associated with the recreational amenity walkways/ paths. As such, it is considered that the proposed development will have a long-term imperceptible negative impact of visitor experience to attractions in the wider landscape. The addition of dedicated recreational and amenity routes for locals and tourists will have a significant positive effect on tourism and recreation in the local area.

The overall conclusion of this chapter is that any adverse effects of the proposed development on population and human health are unlikely to be significant. It is considered that this chapter is comprehensive and well presented. It is recommended that conditions ensuring shadow flicker regulation be attached in the event of any grant of permission on the site.

13.6 Chapter 6 - Biodiversity

This chapter assesses the likely significant effects (both alone and cumulatively with other projects) that the proposed development may have on biodiversity and sets out the mitigation measures proposed to avoid, reduce or offset any potential significant effects that are identified. The residual impacts on biodiversity are then assessed. It is stated that particular attention has been paid to species and habitats of ecological importance.

The Introduction of this chapter provides a description of the legislation, guidance and policy context applicable to Biodiversity. This is followed by a comprehensive description of the ecological survey and impact assessment methodologies that were followed to inform the assessment of likely significant effects on ecological receptors. A description of the baseline ecological conditions and receptor evaluation is then provided. This is followed by an Assessment of Effects which are described with regard to each phase of the proposed development: construction phase, operational phase and decommissioning phase. Potential cumulative effects in combination with other projects are fully assessed. Proposed mitigation and best practice measures to avoid, reduce or offset the identified effects are described and discussed. This is followed by an assessment of residual effects taking into consideration the effect of the proposed mitigation and best practice measures. The conclusion provides a summary statement on the overall significance of predicted effects on Biodiversity.

This chapter concludes that following consideration of the residual effects (post mitigation) it is considered that the proposed development will not result in any significant effects on any of the identified 'Key Ecological Receptors'. No significant effects on receptors of International, National or County Importance were identified. The potential for effects on the European Designated Sites are fully described in the Appropriate Assessment Screening report and Natura Impact Statement that accompanies this application. The NIS concludes that in view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, the proposed development either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on the European Sites that were assessed as part Appropriate Assessment process. The EIAR states that following the implementation of mitigation, no potential for significant effects on Nationally designated sites downstream, of the site were identified. It is envisaged that provided the proposed development is constructed and operated in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation measures that are described within this application, significant individual or cumulative effects on ecology are not anticipated at the international, national or county scales or on any of the identified Key Ecological Receptors.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.7 Chapter 7 – Ornithology

This chapter assesses the likely significant effects that the Ballivor Wind Farm development may have on avian receptors. It states that particular attention has been paid to species of ornithological importance. Where potential effects are identified, mitigation is described and residual impacts on avian receptors are assessed. This chapter is supported by Technical Appendices 7-1 to 7-4, which contain data from the surveys undertaken including full details of the survey times, weather conditions, and other relevant information together with the bird records themselves. Confidential Appendix 7-5 contains sensitive records of protected species breeding sites. Appendix 7-6 contains the Collision Risk Assessment (CRA) document which illustrates how the Collision Risk Modelling was undertaken for the application site. Appendix 7-7 contains the bird monitoring programme.

The Introduction of this chapter provides a description of the application site and the relevant legislation, guidance and policy context regarding ornithology. This is followed by a description of the ornithological surveys and impact assessment methodologies that were followed to inform the assessment of likely significant effects on avian receptors. A description of the Baseline Ornithological Conditions and Receptor Evaluation is then provided. This is followed by an Assessment of Effects, which includes direct habitat loss, displacement and death from a collision. Effects are described with regard to each phase of the application site: construction, operational and decommissioning. Potential cumulative effects in combination with other projects are also fully assessed. Proposed mitigation and best practice measures to ameliorate the identified effects are described and discussed. This is followed by an assessment of residual effects taking into consideration the effect of the proposed mitigation and best practice measures.

The conclusion provides a summary statement on the overall significance of predicted effects on ornithology. This chapter concludes that following consideration of the residual effects (post-mitigation), it is considered that the application site will not result in any significant negative effects on any of the identified Key Ornithological Receptors. The EIAR informs that provided the application site is constructed, operated and decommissioned in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation measures that are described within this application, significant individual or cumulative effects on ornithology are not anticipated at the international, national or county scales or on any of the identified Key Ornithological Receptors.

Section 7.6.2.3 of this chapter notes that Kingfisher was observed within the wind farm site on two occasions during surveys. Both observations were along drainage ditches. The EIAR states that given the ecology of kingfisher, habitat use at the proposed site is limited to watercourses and drainage ditches. It further states that all watercourses within the site are subject to a 50m buffer from the development footprint, therefore there will be no habitat loss in relation to watercourses. It is stated that Kingfisher were infrequently observed utilising drainage ditches, however, drainage ditches are a suboptimal habitat for kingfisher and significant areas of more suitable habitat will remain within, and adjacent to, the site post construction. Significant habitat loss effects during the construction phase are not predicted in this EIAR.

The EIAR states that Goodship and Furness (2022), found that kingfisher showed a low to medium sensitivity to human disturbance, with birds being disturbed by human activity between 9.5m and

24.6m. The EIAR considers that the construction activity is therefore unlikely to deter flight activity within the Wind Farm Site. Furthermore, the habitats within the Wind Farm Site are considered suboptimal for kingfisher and it is stated there will be substantial areas of undisturbed suitable habitat within the site and the wider surroundings during the construction phase. Significant disturbance during the construction phase is not predicted in this EIAR.

The EIAR states that Kingfisher were not observed within the site with any regularity, and disturbance displacement associated with operational turbines are not therefore considered to result in a measurable reduction in the number of Kingfisher within the site. Significant displacement is not predicted during the operational phase.

Kingfisher species was not recorded flying at potential collision height during the extensive vantage point survey work undertaken at the Wind Farm Site. The EIAR considers that collision related mortality is not likely to significantly impact this species during the construction or operational phase.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive. However, it is considered that a nocturnal assessment should have been carried out to assess the impact of the proposal on nocturnal activity, e.g. swans and wild geese who migrate at night and inform likely effects to be incorporated into this chapter of the EIAR.

13.8 Chapter 8 – Land Soils and Geology

This Chapter informs that Hydro-Environmental Services (HES) was engaged by MKO to carry out an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed Ballivor wind farm development on the land, soil and geological environment. This chapter includes a baseline assessment of the environmental setting of the proposed development in terms of land, soils and geology and discusses the potential likely significant effects that the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development will likely have. This chapter also considers any potential cumulative and in-combination effects on the land, soils and geological environment which may result from the proposed development. The EIAR informs that where possible, appropriate mitigation measures to avoid any identified significant effects to land, soils and geology are recommended and the residual effects of the proposed development post-mitigation are assessed.

This chapter informs that as a result of historic peat extraction activities and associated drainage works the land and topography of the proposed site has been significantly modified. It is stated that peat extraction activities ceased at the proposed site in the summer of 2020 and the former peat production areas are not available for revegetation.

It is stated that site data indicates that 70% of the proposed turbine locations have a peat depth ≤3m, with only 2 no. proposed turbine locations having a peat depth in excess of 5m. The deeper peat areas have generally been avoided in the proposed development layout. The peat deposits at the proposed site are underlain by glacial tills comprising of clay, silts, sands and occasional gravels. The glacial till deposits are underlain by limestone bedrock.

The EIAR informs that the proposed development will typically involve removal of peat and subsoils (spoil) for access roads, internal road network, internal cable network, hardstanding emplacement, turbine

foundations, substation, crane hardstands, compounds and met mast foundations. Estimated volumes of peat and spoil to be excavated are approx. 732,000m3 . Excavated peat and spoil will also be used for reinstatement and landscaping works as close to the extraction point as possible or stored within the proposed onsite borrow pits. The handling and storage of peat and spoil will be done in accordance with the Peat and Spoil Management Plan (Appendix 4-2 to the EIAR).

It is stated that storage and handling of hydrocarbons/chemicals will be carried out using best practice methods. Measures to prevent peat and subsoil erosion during excavation and reinstatement will be undertaken to prevent water quality impacts.

A Geotechnical and Peat Stability Assessment was undertaken for the proposed site which indicates an acceptable margin of safety, that the proposed site is suitable for the proposed development and is considered to be at low risk of peat failure. A number of control measures are given in the peat stability assessment to manage all risks associated with peat instability.

The EIAR considered that the proposed development has a very small development footprint when compared to the overall area of the proposed site and the wider Ballivor Bog Group. It is therefore considered that no significant effects on land will occur during the construction, operation or decommissioning phases of the proposed development.

It is stated that the peat bog at the proposed site is already degraded by the historical harvesting and drainage. For this reason, and with the implementation of the mitigation measures detailed in this EIAR and the best practice measures detailed in the Peat and Spoil Management Plan, this chapter considers that no significant effects on peat and soils will occur during the construction, operation or decommissioning phases of the proposed development.

With the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this EIAR, this chapter considers that no significant effects on the underlying limestone bedrock geology will occur during the construction, operation, or decommissioning phases of the proposed development.

An assessment of potential cumulative effects associated with the proposed development and other developments on land, soils and geology has been completed. The land, soils and geology assessment confirms there will be no significant cumulative effects on land, soil and geology as a result of the proposed development. The assessment found that the cumulative effect with the bogs rehabilitation plans will result in an overall positive effect on the local land, soils and geological environment due to the small footprint of the development.

It is considered, on the basis of the information provided that the proposed development would not result in any adverse impact on the lands, soils and geology of the area.

13.9 Chapter 9 – Hydrology and Hydrogeology

This chapter informs that Hydro-Environmental Services (HES) was engaged by MKO Ireland to carry out an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed Ballivor wind farm development on the hydrological and hydrogeological environment. This chapter includes a baseline study of the existing water environment (surface water and groundwater) in the area of the proposed development and

associated works, identifies likely significant effects of the proposed development on surface water and groundwater during construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the development, identifies mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset significant negative effects, assesses significant residual effects, and assesses cumulative effects of the proposed development and other local developments.

The Baseline/Receiving Environment is considered in this chapter and comprises Site Description and Topography, Water Balance, Regional and Local Hydrology, Wind Farm Site Drainage, Baseline Assessment of Site Runoff, Flood Risk Assessment summary, Surface Water Quality, Hydrogeology, Groundwater Vulnerability, Groundwater Hydrochemistry, Water Framework Directive Water Body Status & Objectives, Groundwater Body Status, Surface Water Body Status, Designated Sites and Habitats, Water Resources, and Receptor Sensitivity.

Likely Significant Effects and associated mitigation measures are considered in this chapter. Regarding the do-nothing scenario the EIAR states that if the proposed development were not to proceed, the proposed site would continue to be managed under the requirements of the relevant IPC licence and therefore the ongoing site management and environmental monitoring, peat stockpile removal, and wind measurement would continue. The implementation of peatland rehabilitation plans as required under IPC License would also occur. Likewise, the PCAS scheme in adjacent Bogs would continue to be implemented. Other existing land use practices including local small scale turbary activities would continue along the margins of the proposed site. It is noted that these land uses and activities will also continue if the proposed development does proceed. The EIAR notes that if the proposed development were not to proceed, the cumulative effect of the do nothing scenario and the implementation of the Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plans for the Ballivor Bog Group (including the PCAS scheme) would result in a moderate, positive, direct, long-term effect on bog hydrogeology and a moderate, positive, indirect, long-term effect on downstream surface water quality and quantity.

The EIAR considers likely significant effects and mitigation measures during the construction and operational phase of the proposed development and concludes that no significant effects on the hydrological and hydrogeological environment would occur subject to mitigation measures where applicable.

This chapter presents an assessment of the potential cumulative effects associated with the proposed development and other developments on the hydrological and hydrogeological environment. It is stated that the main likelihood of cumulative effects is assessed to be hydrological (surface water quality) rather than hydrogeological (groundwater). The EIAR informs that due to the hydrogeological setting of the proposed site (i.e. low permeability peat, silts and clays overlying a poor bedrock aquifer) and the near surface nature of construction activities, cumulative impacts with regard groundwater quality or quantity arising from the proposed development are assessed as not likely. Overall the assessment is considered comprehensive, pre-emptive and proactive, raising no concerns in this regard.

13.10 Chapter 10 - Air and Climate

This chapter identifies, describes and assesses the potential significant direct and indirect effects on air quality and climate arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development. The EIAR considers that the cumulative benefit of the carbon savings as a result of the proposed Ballivor Wind Farm along with the provision of a carbon sink within the re-wetted peatlands through the peatland rehabilitation of all bogs under IPC licence and the accelerated form of peatland rehabilitation at selected areas would assist the national and international objectives for offsetting CO2 emissions and achieving a climate neutral Ireland by 2050 as set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

Regarding Air Quality and Health, the EIAR considers that whilst there is potential of such emissions to be generated from the site operations, a number of mitigation measures will be implemented at the site to reduce the impact from dust and vehicle emissions, which are discussed in Section 10.2. The EIAR informs that peat extraction ceased at the Ballivor Bog Group in June 2020 and as current activities at the Wind Farm Site and surrounding landscape area non-industrial in nature, air quality sampling was deemed to be unnecessary for this EIAR.

Likely significant effects and associated mitigation measures regarding air quality and climate are considered in this chapter. Regarding a 'Do-Nothing' scenario, it is stated that if the proposed development were not to proceed, the site would continue to be managed under the requirements of the relevant IPC licence and therefore the ongoing site management and environmental monitoring, peat stockpile removal, and wind measurement would continue. Further, the implementation of peatland rehabilitation plans as required under IPC License would occur. Likewise, the PCAS scheme in adjacent Bogs would continue to be implemented. It is noted that these land uses and activities will also continue if the proposed development does proceed.

It is also stated that there would be no exhaust/greenhouse gas emissions from the wind farm construction plant and vehicles, nor would there be dust emissions due to the movement of the same. However, it is stated that if the proposed development were not to proceed, the opportunity to capture part of Meath and Westmeath's valuable renewable energy resource would be lost, as would the opportunity to contribute to meeting Government and EU targets for the production and consumption of electricity from renewable resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The cumulative impact of providing a carbon sink within the re-wetted peatlands through the peatland rehabilitation under IPC licence and the accelerated form of peatland rehabilitation at selected areas under the PCAS scheme, combined with the carbon savings as a result of the proposed Ballivor Wind Farm would be lost. Further, the opportunity to generate local employment and investment and to diversify the local economy would be lost.

The Chapter considers likely significant effects and associated mitigation measures during the construction, operational and decommissioning phase, concluding that no significant effects on air quality or climate would occur subject to mitigation measures where appropriate. It is noted that the EIAR considers the development to result in long-term moderate positive indirect effect on Air Quality due to the offsetting of approximately 6,035,010 tonnes and 8,717,237 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO 2) per annum (Against EU FFC) from providing renewable energy in the range of approximately 70,036 to

101,163 Irish households with electricity per year. It is also noted that the EIAR considers the development to result in long-term moderate positive impact on climate as a result of reduced greenhouse gas emissions due to replacing more traditional electricity generation with renewable generation.

The EIAR considers it essential that any wind farm development in a peatland area saves more CO2 than is released. However, it is noted in this chapter that the application site predominately comprises cutover peatland which has been subject to industrial peat extraction and drainage over several decades and consequently the peatland habitats and hydrology are highly degraded and modified from their original state. As such, the EIAR considers that the peatland habitat loss would not be as significant as that of an intact peatland. It is stated that the percentage loss of carbon sequestration arising from the construction of the windfarm is determined to be range between 2.9% and 7.7%. It is also noted that the volume of CO 2 that will be lost to the atmosphere will be offset by the proposed development between 1.17 and 2.37 years of operation.

This chapter provides a cumulative assessment of the proposal and informs that there will be no cumulative effects on climate and greenhouse gas emission or air quality during the construction and operational phase of the development.

It is considered that this chapter is comprehensive and well presented. Based on the evidence provided it is considered that these findings would appear logical and reasonable. However, it is suggested that a final Restoration Plan should have informed proposal as opposed to its proposed updating and completion in the event of permission being granted.

13.11 Chapter 11 – Noise and Vibration

This chapter of the EIAR describes the assessment undertaken of the potential noise and vibration impacts associated with the proposed Ballivor Wind Farm Development. Noise and vibration impact assessments have been prepared for both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development to the nearest noise sensitive locations (NSLs). To inform this assessment background noise levels have been measured at several locations, representative of the nearest NSLs in the vicinity of the site to assess the potential impacts associated with the operation of the Proposed Development.

The EIAR informs that there are 272 (no.) noise-sensitive locations (NSLs) within 3.5 km of the proposed turbine locations. The nearest NSL to the northern cluster is H057 being 815 m from turbine T17 and the nearest to the southern cluster is H179 being 825m from turbine T03. Existing, under construction, permitted and proposed wind farm developments have been identified in the wider study area and the approved Windfarm Development Bracklyn Wind Farm located adjacent to the site was identified as necessary for inclusion in a cumulative assessment.

The EIAR considers that the peer reviewed research outlined in this chapter supports that there are no negative health effects on people with long term exposure to wind turbine noise. The EIAR also considers that having regard to the distances from nearest NSL's to any of the turbines in the proposed development (>800m) the level of vibration will be significantly below any thresholds for perceptibility. Therefore, vibration criteria have not been specified for the operational phase of the proposed development.

An environmental noise survey was undertaken to determine typical background noise levels at representative NSLs surrounding the development site. The background noise survey was conducted through the installation of unattended sound level meters at seven representative locations in the surrounding area. The predicted cumulative turbine noise level from the proposed development is compared against the derived turbine noise limits and any exceedances of the limits are identified and assessed. Where necessary, appropriate mitigation measures are detailed in this chapter.

Likely significant effects and associated mitigation measures are considered in this Chapter. Regarding the "Do-Nothing Scenario", the EIAR states that if the proposed development were not to proceed, the existing noise environment will remain largely unchanged notwithstanding other possible wind turbine developments in the area. In areas where traffic noise is a significant source in the environment, increases in traffic volumes on the local road network would be expected to result in slight increases in overall ambient and background noise in the area over time. In respect of vibration, there would continue to be no source of significant vibration in the area.

The EIAR states that during the construction phase of the project there will be some effect on nearby noise sensitive properties due to noise emissions from site traffic and other construction activities. However, it is stated that given the distances between the main construction works and nearby noise sensitive properties, and the fact that the various element construction phase of the development are temporary in nature, it is likely that the combination of the various noise sources will not be excessively intrusive at any single noise-sensitive location. Further, the EIAR considers that the application of binding noise limits and hours of operation, along with implementation of appropriate noise and vibration control measures, will ensure that noise and vibration effect is kept within the guidance limits.

The EIAR informs that there is potential that Bracklyn and Ballivor wind farms will be constructed at the same time. However, due to the distance between the elements of each development, the EIAR does not consider that a significant cumulative effect is likely. Further, it is noted that the Ballivor turbine delivery route runs to the east of the proposed development whereas the route for Bracklyn runs to the west of Bracklyn Wind Farm, thus different roads are used and there a significant cumulative effect is unlikely.

The EIAR states that during the operational phase of the project, the predicted noise levels associated with the proposed development will be within best practice noise criteria curves recommended in Irish guidance 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities'. The EIAR does not therefore consider that a significant effect is associated with the proposed development. It is stated that whilst noise levels at low wind speeds will increase due to the development and specifically the operation of the turbines, the predicted levels will remain low, albeit new sources of noise will be introduced into the soundscape. The EIAR considers that noise emissions from the operation of the substation will be negligible, the noise from the substation will be inaudible at the nearest NSL and will have no impact on the operation noise emissions from the proposed development. There are no expected sources of vibration associated with the operational phase of the proposed development.

The operational noise assessment has considered the potential cumulative impacts of the proposed development in combination with other wind energy developments in the area. The EIAR considers that the predicted noise levels associated with the proposed development, which takes into account the Bracklyn wind farm, will be within best practice noise criteria curves recommended in Irish

guidance 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities'. It is therefore considered that a significant effect is not associated with the proposed development in combination with other wind farm developments.

The EIAR states that during the decommissioning phase of the proposed development, there will be some effect on nearby noise sensitive properties due to noise emissions from site traffic and other on-site activities. Similar overall noise levels as those calculated for the construction phase would be expected, as similar tools and equipment will be used. The noise and vibration impacts associated with any decommissioning of the site are considered to be comparable to those outlined in relation to the construction of the proposed development.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.12 Chapter 12 – Archeology and Cultural Heritage

This Chapter was prepared by Tobar Archaeological Services. It presents the results of an archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage impact assessment for the proposed wind farm. The EIAR informs that the purpose of this chapter is to identify, describe and assess the potential direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the surrounding archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage landscape. The assessment is based on both a desktop review of the available cultural heritage and archaeological data and a comprehensive programme of field walking of the study area. The report amalgamates desk-based research and the results of field walking to identify areas of archaeological/architectural/cultural significance or potential, likely to be impacted either directly or indirectly by the proposed development. An assessment of potential effects, including cumulative effects, is presented, and a number of mitigation measures are recommended where appropriate. The visual effect of the proposed development on any newly discovered monuments/sites of significance as well as known recorded monuments is also assessed.

The EIAR informs that the assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on the Cultural Heritage resource was based on GIS based mapping, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and Viewshed analysis to assist with the assessment of impacts on setting followed by a desktop analysis of all baseline data and a comprehensive programme of field inspection of the proposed infrastructure within the wind farm site boundary.

The assessment concludes that no direct effects to Trim Castle or setting from the grounds of Trim Castle will occur. The potential effects on setting of Trim Castle when viewed from the upper floor are Slight/Moderate. Cumulative effects will occur and will be moderate when considering Ballivor, Yellow River, Milltown Pass and Bracklyn together. Effects on the setting of Frewin Hill were also assessed. The theoretical viewshed analysis show that all turbines have some potential degree of visibility from the monument (requiring clear weather conditions).

The Photomontage (Appendix 13-4, Viewpoint 08) also shows that all turbines will be visible at a distance at various turbine heights. The potential impact is considered in this assessment to be slight given the separation distance between the monument and the proposed turbines.

National Monuments within 10km of the nearest proposed turbine were assessed. The effects on setting are considered to be slight (from viewshed analysis and ZTV analysis).

No recorded monuments are located within the Wind Farm Site Boundary and the chapter concludes that no direct impacts to this resource will take place.

Indirect effects on Sites and Monuments Records (SMRs) / Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) within 5km of the nearest proposed turbine were assessed. Effects are considered in this chapter to be slight-Moderate since the ZTV shows that 21-26 turbines may be visible from all locations where the SMRs are located. However, the EIAR notes that this is a worst case scenario since natural screening is not taken into consideration in this ZTV model and in reality natural screening may reduce the effects on setting considerably.

One structure listed in the Record of Protected Structures is located within the EIAR boundary (NIAH Reg. No. 15402102 and RPS 021-008 Permanent narrow gauge Bord na Mona railway line). The proposed 'roads will interact the rails at 7 locations'. The Chapter concludes that since the roads will be floated, there is no requirement to remove any of the tracks and in this regard no direct effects will occur. Further, no level crossings will be negatively impacted. An extensive railway network will remain on the site however for future generations. Mitigation measures to include the provision of information signage will be required and implemented and will be erected at various locations along the amenity trails. The EIAR considers that this will result in a positive impact.

Two structures listed in the Record of Protected Structures are located along the Haul Route including Scarriff Bridge NIAH Reg number 14403601 RPS 91254 and Ballivor Water Pump (NIAH Reg 14327002 and RPS ID 91156). The haul route extends through Ballivor at the western end which contains a number of NIAH structures which are also listed in the RPS. The EIAR considers that the water pump at the roadside may be deemed to be more at risk from damage from the movement of large abnormal loads and a potential direct negative effect to the structure is possible although is considered to be slight. It is stated that the structure will be fenced off temporarily with high-visibility fencing during the movement of the abnormal loads through Ballivor.

The EIAR informs that the sub-surface archaeological potential of the bog is considered to be high taking into consideration the RMPs in the surrounding landscape, the presence of a bog-body discovered in the peat sorting plant as well as the numerous stray finds detected within the Wind Farm Site Boundary. The EIAR considers that the excavation of peat during all elements of the proposed development has the potential to impact on any new sites, if present. All elements of the proposed development include turbine and meteorological mast bases, hardstands, roads, cable trenches, amenity car park, amenity trails, construction compounds, substation site, grid connection loop-ins, angle towers, borrow pits, security cabins and gates, drainage, junction accommodation areas along the haul route and any other peat extraction activities. Mitigation measures will include construction stage monitoring. It is stated that should new sites, features or artefacts be present within the site the impact is likely to be significant negative and permanent. It is further stated that sites/features, if detected, during monitoring will be preserved by record or preserved in-situ and therefore a full record made of same. In this regard, the EIAR considers that the potential impact after the mitigation measures is likely to be slight.

In terms of cumulative effects, since all projects have been assessed from a cultural heritage perspective through the EIAR process, all potential negative effects are deemed to have been dealt with through the use of effective mitigation measures and planning conditions issued through the Planning Authorities. It is stated that if the mitigation measures prescribed in this EIAR are implemented then cumulative direct effects to unknown sub-surface archaeology will not occur, regardless of the other projects within 20km of the proposed development.

A review of the historic OS mapping and the walkover survey has shown that a derelict ruined structure ('Tonduff') is located within an overgrown section of the bog. The EIAR informs that this is a possible famine settlement. It is stated that the remains of the structure will be preserved in situ and the impacts are considered to be imperceptible. The EIAR further states that licensed archaeological monitoring of the proposed road to the west will be undertaken during construction and in this regard preventing any accidental damage to the structure.

It is considered that this chapter is comprehensive and well presented. Based on the evidence provided it is considered that these findings would appear logical and reasonable.

13.13 Chapter 13 – Landscape and Visual

This chapter addresses the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed Ballivor Wind Farm. The emphasis in this chapter is on the likely significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development. It covers the assessment methodology, a description of the proposed development and the existing landscape based on relevant guidance. It also includes a description of the landscape policy with specific reference to wind energy and the study area in which the proposed development is located.

The landscape of the area is described in terms of its existing character, which includes a description of landscape values and the landscape's sensitivity to change. The landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed wind farm uses visibility mapping, representative viewpoints and photomontages. The potential impacts in both landscape and visual terms are then assessed, including cumulative impacts.

The EIAR states that although all elements of the proposed development are assessed, the chapter focuses on the proposed turbines, as they are deemed to be the essential aspects of the proposal under assessment from a landscape and visual perspective. The Chapter describes the baseline landscape and assesses the direct effects on the landscape of the Wind Farm Site, as well as effects on landscape character and the impact on sensitive landscape receptors and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The EIAR states that visibility of the proposed turbines was assessed from receptors within a study area extending 25km (and 26.1km for the Hill of Tara) from the proposed turbines; and visual effects were determined from information gathered during multiple site visits as well as other tools such as ZTV mapping and photomontages.

The EIAR informs that the proposed development site is located in a flat lowland landscape with an expansive network of open peatlands. The EIAR considers that the character of these peatlands is now strongly influenced by the industrial peat extraction practices historically conducted at the site.

It is stated that on-site visibility appraisals, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping, a Route Screening Analysis and assessment viewpoint locations determined that visibility of the proposed

turbines will be very limited from locations beyond 5km from the Wind Farm Site. The EIAR considers that siting of the proposed turbines at low base elevation in a flat landscape with highly vegetated working fields surrounding the site, largely restricts visual exposure in the wider landscape. It is further considered that visibility of the proposed turbines beyond the immediate landscape setting of the site is limited to localised areas of high elevation where open views across the flat and highly vegetated landscape are available from elevated vantage points, which is in general not a common occurrence in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) Study Area.

This chapter concludes that the landscape value of the Wind Farm Site is deemed to be of 'Low' value and the sensitivity of the landscape to wind farm development is deemed to be 'Medium'. The EIAR notes that the introduction of vertical man-made structures and ancillary infrastructure will substantially alter the landscape comprising the proposed infrastructure footprint at the Wind Farm Site. In terms of landscape character, the EIAR states that the only Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) to experience 'Moderate' landscape effects will be Westmeath LCA 3 (River Deel Lowlands) and Meath LCA 15 (South-west Lowlands) in which the proposed site is located. These LCAs will experience direct effects on landscape character as a result of the project. The EIAR considers that any other effects on other LCAs are indirect, as the proposed development will be visible from within these LCAs but located outside of them. The EIAR further states that the site is not located within or close to any designated High Amenity Areas or any areas of High Landscape Sensitivity and has not had any significant effect on these areas.

Photomontages were used to assess the visual effects arising as a result of the proposed development from 19 No. viewpoint locations. The assessment concluded that no 'Profound' or 'Very Significant' effects occurred at any of the 19 viewpoints. Residual effects of 'Significant' occurred at one viewpoint location (VP03) as the turbines are in close proximity <1km. However, the EIAR notes that the proposed development adheres to the recommended 500m set back distance as per the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and also the 4 times tip height set-back distance set out for residential visual amenity as per the draft Guidelines (DOHPLG, 2019). The EIAR considers that no significant effects occurred from any other residencies or settlements within 5km of the site.

The assessments determined that no significant cumulative landscape and visual effects will occur with any other existing or permitted or proposed wind farm development. It is noted that the proposed turbines will be seen in combination with turbines of the permitted Bracklyn wind farm. However, the EIAR considers that due to the proximity of the two developments, the proposed development and the permitted Bracklyn Wind Farm Development will appear as one coherent wind farm development.

The chapter concludes that from a landscape and visual perspective, the proposed development is considered appropriate with regards to the scale and layout from sensitive visual receptors in the study area. Although the spatial extent is increased with the addition of the proposed development from several viewpoints, the EIAR considers that the visual separation between permitted and proposed turbines and the difference in scale is considered Low-Medium visual effects respectfully.

The chapter further concludes that the turbine locations, spacing and heights have been appropriately selected for the Ballivor site. This appropriate siting and uniform spacing is considered to allow for the two turbine clusters to be read visually as one contiguous development in the landscape. The EIAR

considers that the distance between the nearest turbines in the clusters is sufficient to ensure that the potential for cumulative visual effects for receptors located between the clusters is limited. It is further considered that the strategic siting ensures that the wind farm will be viewed as a spatially coherent development, with minimal occurrence of visual confusion and overlapping, significantly mitigating the impact of likely visual effects.

Having reviewed this chapter, it is considered that visual impact of the proposed turbines will vary depending on the location. The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.14 Chapter 14 – Material Assets

This chapter addresses the likely significant effects of the proposed development on transportation infrastructure, and other material assets including Telecommunications & Aviation, Utilities, and Waste Management. A Telecommunications Impact Study was undertaken to determine the potential for impacts from the proposed turbine wind farm on telecommunication assets in the area. Waste Management pertaining to the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development is summarised in Chapter 4 of the EIAR. A Waste Management Plan is included in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan which is included as Appendix 4-3 of this EIAR. Traffic volumes generated by the removal of waste from the site of the proposed development to fully authorised waste facilities is considered in this chapter.

The EIAR states that for developments of this nature, the construction phase is the critical period with respect to the traffic effects experienced on the surrounding road network in terms of both the additional traffic volumes that will be generated on the road network, and the geometric requirements of the abnormally large loads associated with the wind turbine plant. The requirements of the additional traffic and abnormal sized loads generated during the construction stage were assessed on both the external highway network and at the proposed junctions that will provide access to the site.

The EIAR informs that all construction and delivery vehicles for the proposed development will be subject to the standard axle weight requirements set out under Road Traffic Regulations and therefore the loadings from construction traffic will not exceed the relevant standards. Notwithstanding the need to use some specialist vehicles to facilitate turbine delivery, the EIAR notes that the number of load-bearing axles for any specialist vehicles carrying large loads are designed to ensure that the load on any one axle does not exceed acceptable load bearing statutory limits. The magnitude of the increase in traffic volumes experienced on the surrounding network is identified during the various construction stages of the proposed development. Preliminary traffic management measures are also provided in this chapter aimed at minimising the traffic impact on the local highway network.

Traffic effect during construction and operation is considered in this chapter. The EIAR informs that transportation of large turbine components will be carried out at night when traffic is at its lightest and in consultation with the relevant Roads Authority and An Garda Síochána with deliveries likely accompanied by Garda escort. It is not anticipated in this chapter that any sections of the local road network will be closed, although there may be delays to local traffic at various locations if the deliveries

are made during daylight hours. It is stated that during these periods, it may be appropriate to operate local diversions for through traffic. The EIAR considers that the effect of this stage may be minimised by the deliveries of the abnormally sized large loads taking place during the night. It is noted that it is proposed that all deliveries of abnormally sized loads will be made during night time hours.

The EIAR considers that the most significant traffic impact on Link Flows during construction may be experienced during the delivery of large equipment using extended articulated vehicles primarily due to the slow speeds, size and geometric requirements of these vehicles. It is stated that the provision of traffic management measures, including ensuring that these deliveries are made at night, will be required to minimise the impact of development traffic on the study network on these days.

In the assessment of links flows during construction compared to link capacity, the EIAR states that whilst the background link flows on sections of the regional road network on the delivery route are high, it is considered that the forecast increases due to the construction of the proposed development are manageable and short term.

It is stated that whilst other junctions and links on the network will experience an increase in traffic volumes passing through them, the worst-case effect will be experienced during peak hours when, during peak construction periods, up to 120 workers (60 cars) will pass through it. It is noted that deliveries of materials to the site will take place during the day after the workers have arrived on site, and before they leave at the end of the day, and will therefore not occur at the same time.

Once the wind farm is operational it is estimated that approx. two maintenance staff will access the site at any particular time with a similar number of vehicle trips. The EIAR considers that the traffic impact during this phase will be negative and long term but will be imperceptible.

The EIAR considers that during the 24-month construction stage of the proposed development, it is forecast that the additional traffic that will appear on the delivery route will have a slight, negative and temporary impact on existing road users, which will be minimised with the implementation of the mitigation measures included in the proposed traffic management plan.

It is stated that whilst there will be recreational trips to and from the site during the operational stage, they are relatively low in volume, and many trips already take place at present. It is stated that as the traffic impact of the optimised development will be imperceptible during the operational stage, there will be no residual impacts during this stage.

The EIAR informs that there will be no significant direct or indirect effect on utilities (electric and water supply) from the proposed development during the construction and operational phase. It is noted that the EIAR considers the proposed development will have a slight positive effect on national electricity supply during the operational phase.

It is stated that there will be no significant effects on waste management services from the proposed development during the construction and operational phase.

This chapter informs that there are no potential impacts on telecommunications and aviation associated with the construction phase of the proposed development. It is stated that the proposed development will have no residual impact on the telecommunications signals due to the achieved setbacks from links

in the area, and there will consequently be no significant effects on telecommunications during the operational phase. Having reviewed the content, it is suggested that reference should have been made to existing airstrip for model planes which is sited within proximity to the development site.

It is noted that the submitted scoping responses include recommendations from the Irish Aviation Authority that the applicant should be conditioned to contact IAA to agree an aeronautical obstacle warning light scheme for the wind farm development, provide as-constructed coordinates in WGS84 format together with ground and tip height elevations at each wind turbine location, and notify the Authority of intention to commence crane operations with at least 30 days prior notification of their erection.

In the event that the wind farm is decommissioned, it is stated that a decommissioning plan will be prepared and implemented in order to minimise the residual impacts.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.15 Chapter 15 – Vulnerability of the Project to Major Accidents and Natural Disasters

This chapter describes the likely significant effects on the environment arising from the vulnerability of the proposed development to major accidents and natural disasters. It is stated that this chapter has been completed in accordance with the guidance set out by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 'Guidelines on Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements' (EPA, 2022) and the European Commission in relation to Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects (Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EU), namely 'Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report'.

The assessment of the vulnerability of the proposed development to major accidents and natural disasters, as well as the risk of the proposed development itself causing accidents or disasters is carried out in compliance with the EIA Directive (2014/52/EU). The EIAR informs that the objective of this assessment is to ensure that appropriate precautionary actions are taken for those projects.

Based on the requirements of the EIA Directive, this chapter seeks to determine the relevant major accidents and/or natural disasters, if any, that the proposed development could be vulnerable to, the potential for these major accidents and/or natural disasters to result in likely significant adverse environmental effects, and the measures that are in place, or need to be in place, to prevent or mitigate the likely significant adverse effects of such events on the environment.

This chapter considers that the risk of a major accident and/or disaster during the construction of the Proposed Development is considered 'low' in accordance with the 'Guide to Risk Assessment in Major Emergency Management'(DoEHLG, 2010). The EIAR considers that when the mitigation and monitoring measures outlined in the CEMP are implemented and adhered to there will not be significant residual effects associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development.

An assessment of cumulative effects has been carried out in this chapter. It is stated that a wind farm including all of its various components is not a recognised source of pollution. It is not subject to Industrial Emissions Directive regulation or any other Environmental Protection Agency environmental regulatory consent. The EIAR informs that should a major accident or natural disaster occur the potential sources of pollution onsite during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases are limited and of low environmental risk. Sources of pollution with the potential to cause significant environmental pollution and associated negative effects such as bulk storage of hydrocarbons or chemicals, storage of wastes, management of flammable materials etc. are limited and so there is an inherent low level of environmental risk associated with major accident or natural disaster impacting the proposed development and causing environmental damage.

The EIAR considers that there is low potential for significant natural disasters to occur at the proposed site. It is stated that Ireland is a geologically stable country with a mild temperate climate. The potential natural disasters that may occur are therefore limited and these have been assessed in the context of the whole project, cumulatively in this chapter and in the wider EIAR.

The EIAR informs that the Wind Farm site is not regulated or connected to or close to any site regulated under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Involving Dangerous Substances Regulations and so there are no potential effects from this source. It is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant environmental effects cumulatively associated with major accidents.

The EIAR considers that the proposed development has low potential to cause natural disasters or major accidents. The site is relatively flat so there is low/no potential for peat slides or landslides.

It is stated that bog fires are a rare occurrence but can occur on peatlands due to spread, human interference and autoignition. The EIAR considers that the implementation of peatland rehabilitation under IPC and PCAS schemes can reduce the potential for this to occur due to the rewetting measures which raise the water table and encourage a bog skin reformation on the site. As the proposed development only takes up approximately 1.8% of the wind farm site, there is a reduced potential for a fire outbreak as over 98% of the site will undergo bog rewetting measures.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive and the conclusions appear reasonable.

13.16 Chapter 16 – Interaction of Effects

This chapter identifies potential interactions between the various aspects of the environment already assessed in this EIAR to include Population and Human Health, Biodiversity, Ornithology, Land, Soils and Geology, Air and Climate, and Landscape and Visual. The EIAR highlights the occurrence of potential positive or negative effects during both the construction and operational phases. The EIAR considers that the potential effects during the decommissioning phase will be similar to the construction phase effects but of a lesser magnitude.

This chapter concludes that where any potential interactive negative impacts have been identified, a full suite of appropriate mitigation measures has already been included in the relevant sections (Chapters 5-14) of the EIAR and are detailed in the CEMP. It is stated that the implementation of these

mitigation measures will reduce or remove the potential for these effects. Information on potential residual impacts and the significance of effects, is also presented in each relevant chapter.

Having reviewed the details provided this conclusion appears reasonable.

13.17 Chapter 17 – Schedule of Mitigation and Monitoring

All mitigation which will be implemented during the various phases of the project are presented in this chapter. The mitigation measures have been grouped together according to their EIAR Chapter and project phases as follows: Pre-Construction Phase (Prior to the implementation of any groundworks), Construction Phase, Operational Phase, Decommissioning Phase.

All monitoring measures which will be implemented during the pre-commencement, construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the project are also outlined in this chapter. The monitoring measures are presented in terms of the monitoring requirement, frequency of monitoring and the mechanism for reporting results where applicable.

It is intended that the CEMP will be updated, where required, prior to the commencement of the construction phase of the proposed development to include all mitigation and monitoring, conditions and or alterations to the EIAR and application documents should they emerge during the course of the planning process and would be submitted to the Planning Authority for written approval.

The contents of this chapter are considered comprehensive.

14. CARRYING CAPACITY AND SAFETY OF ROAD NETWORK.

Please refer to the details contained in Chapter 14 Material Assets and District Engineer reports under Section 16.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL CARRYING CAPACITY OF THE SUBJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA:

It is considered that previous comments on the EIAR as set out under Section 14 address this matter.

16. REPORTS OF RELEVANT LOCAL AUTHORITY SECTIONS:

16.1 District Engineers:

The District Engineer report dated 10/05/2023 has no objection to the proposed development from an engineering perspective, subject to the following conditions:

A. Development

The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the plans and details received by the Planning Authority on April 2023 and comply with the following conditions.

Reason: In the interests of orderly development and clarity.

B. Roads

- 2.4m x 90m sightlines shall be achieved and maintained at proposed site entrances to construction site
- Prior to commencement the developer shall undertake a detailed condition survey of the proposed haul routes (R 156, L-5508, L1504 and L5513) any any other local or regional roads used as haul routes for construction materials. The developer shall submit a Pavement Strength Analysis and Culvert/Bridge Bearing Capacity Analysis Report for roads identified as the construction material haul routes. The report should include the proposed ongoing maintenance programme to be implanted during the construction stage to avoid deterioration of the regional and local roads.
- The condition survey of the roads and bridges along the haul routes shall be carried out by a qualified engineer both before and after construction of the windfarm development at the developer's expense. This shall include a schedule of required works to enable the haul routes and in particular regional and local roads in the Westmeath County Council area to cater for construction related traffic. The extent and scope of the survey and the schedule of works shall be agreed with the planning authority before development commences
- Within three months of the cessation of the use of each public road haul route to transport material to and from the site, the developer shall undertake a detailed condition survey of the road network serving the development and submit a scheme of works detailing the works required to repair any damage done to these routes.
- Post construction & installation stage developer shall undertake, under licence from Planning Authority, to carry out all necessary improvement works required in condition survey carried out post construction & installation stage.
- All traffic management on public roads to be carried out in accordance with 'Chapter 8 – temporary Traffic Measures & Signs for Roadwork's'
- All works in the aforementioned scheme shall be completed at the Developer's expense, within 12 months of each road's cessation as a haul route for the proposed development.
- Abnormal load haul routes shall be restricted to the identified haul route and no other local roads shall be used for these elements of the development.

C. Roads (Cable route crossings and road widening)

1. All works on the public shall be carried out under road opening license from the LA. Prior to commencement the applicant shall apply to Westmeath County Council for a road opening license and pay associated fees / bonds.
2. A defects liability period of 2 years shall apply. This shall commence when written notification has been given that the permanent reinstatement/overlay has been completed.
3. The applicant shall be conditioned to provide a detailed Construction Traffic Management plan dealing with the following issues as a minimum:

- A competent traffic management co-ordinator shall be appointed by the applicant for the duration of the construction phase.
- Where road closures are required, an application must be submitted to Westmeath County Council at least 8 weeks in advance.

- Where road works speed limits are required, an application shall be submitted to Westmeath County Council at least 8 weeks in advance. Signs to be erected by the developer.
- Diversion routes to be maintained whilst the diversion is in place.
- Traffic management plans to be submitted for each stage of the works.
- The applicant shall provide details of relevant temporary traffic management plans including signage to Westmeath Co. Council in advance of implementation.
- No parking shall be permitted on public roads surrounding the site.
- No queuing of deliveries on public roads shall be permitted.
- Public roads to be kept clean of mud and debris from the site during construction. A road sweeper shall be provided and wheel washes to be provided inside site.
- The applicant shall provide a noise management plan and a dust management plan.
- All traffic management on public roads to be carried out in accordance with 'Chapter 8 – temporary Traffic Measures & Signs for Roadwork's'

Reason: In the interests of traffic safety and to ensure the proposal integrates appropriately with its setting.

D. Surface Water

- The surface water system shall be designed to mimic existing green field runoff from the proposed site during a hundred year rainfall event and a restricted discharge rate of no greater than 5l/s/ha (min 5l/s)
- All surface water from all hard standing areas for vehicular refuelling, maintenance, waiting and parking shall be passed through adequately sized and located petrol/oil bypass interceptors before any discharge to waters. Prior to commencement the developer shall submit to the planning authority for agreement full details of the petrol/oil interceptors and hardstand area. All fuel, lubricants or other chemical storage tanks shall be adequately bunded to protect against spillage. Bunding shall be impermeable and capable of retaining a volume equal to 1.5 times the capacity of the largest tank. The developer shall take precautions to ensure that oils and fuels used in the operations are stored in a secure place. All waste oil shall be removed from the site and disposed of in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996-2003 and to the satisfaction of the planning authority.
- Where the development land is higher than the public road a linear drainage channel or gully shall be placed at the entrance to the development, connected back to an additional dedicated soakaway.

Reason: In the interests of public health and orderly development.

E. Sewage treatment and disposal system

- All foul sewerage & effluent associated with Wastewater Storage tank shall be removed from site by licensed waste contractor in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996-2003. Prior to commencement developer to submit to the planning authority for agreement full details of maintenance contract with a licensed waste contractor in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996-2003.

Reason: In the interests of public health, environmental protection and orderly development

F. Bond for Long term damage on Local and Regional Roads

The planning authority is of the view that the construction of this development will lead to long term damage to the road network used as a haul routes for the development. The applicant shall be required to contribute to the cost of repairing this damage and a cash bond shall be paid to the Planning Authority, shall be payable prior to commencement. The amount of the cash bond shall be determined when material sources are known.

Reason: It is considered reasonable that the developer should contribute to the repair of public infrastructure as a result of the proposed development.

G. General Requirements

- A Construction Management Plan shall be submitted to WCC. Contents to include implementation of planning conditions and EIS requirements.
- WCC to be advised of details of PSDP, PSCS and contractors.
- Developer to consult with An Garda Siochana, emergency services and bus operators in relation to each stage of the works
- Liaison with the public, residents, businesses and schools.
- Allow for briefing of Elected Members in affected Municipal Districts
- The developer shall allow in his programme for accommodation of local events, such as charity walks and cycles.

16.2 Environmental Section:

The Environment report dated 09/05/2023 has no objection to the proposed development from an environmental perspective, subject to the following conditions:

1. It is recommended that the CEMP is to remain a live document throughout the project, to be monitored and updated as required. It is noted that updated versions, including updated drawings and identification of key personnel are to be supplied in advance of commencement and as the project progresses. Westmeath County Council are to be notified of any updates to the CEMP or changes to personnel within 10 working days.

2. All mitigation and monitoring measures relating to the pre-commencement, construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development as set out in the relevant chapters of the Natura Impact Statement, the EIAR and the Construction Environmental Plan are to be implemented fully.

3.

   a. Shadow Flicker arising from the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other existing or permitted wind energy developments in the vicinity, shall not exceed 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day at existing or permitted dwellings or other sensitive receptors.

b. The proposed development shall be fitted with appropriate equipment and software to control shadow flicker in accordance with the above requirement. Details of these control measures shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to the commencement of the development.

c. A report shall be prepared by a suitably qualified person in accordance with the requirements of the planning authority, indicating compliance with the above shadow flicker requirements at dwellings and other nearby sensitive receptors. Within 12 months of the commissioning of the proposed wind farm, this report shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority. The Developer shall outline proposed measures to address any recorded non compliances. A similar report may be requested at reasonable intervals thereafter by the planning authority.

4. A suitably qualified and experienced Ecological Clerk of Works shall be employed to oversee the implementation of mitigation measures relating to Biodiversity and Ecology. The Ecological Clerk of Works should 'sign off' on the delivery of any mitigation measures and provide a report on their completion to Westmeath County Council documenting their implementation, any failure of implementation and any necessary remediation measures.

5. The developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced bird specialist to undertake appropriate annual bird surveys of this site. Details of the surveys to be undertaken and associated reporting requirements shall be developed following consultation with and agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of the development. These reports shall be submitted on an agreed date annually for five years, with prior written agreement of the planning authority. Copies of the reports shall be sent to the Department of Housing, local Government and Heritage.

6. All oils and hydrocarbons are to be stored in a bunded area. The bund shall be designed in accordance with BS: 8007: 1987 a code of practice for the design of concrete for retaining aqueous liquids.

7. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer or any agent acting on its behalf shall prepare a Construction and Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) as set out in the Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for C&D Projects (2021) including demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The RWMP shall include specific proposals as to how the RWMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness; these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record. The RWMP must be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement

prior to the commencement of development. All records (including for waste and all resources) pursuant to the agreed RWMP shall be made available for inspection at the site office at all times.

8. Dust deposition from the construction works shall not exceed 350mg/sq.m/day (based on a 30-day composite sample) as measured using the Bergerhoff Method, or 130mg/sq.m/day as measured on a "Frisbee" type dust gauge beyond the boundary of the site. Dust monitoring location shall be agreed with Westmeath County Council.

9. All fuelling of plant on site shall be carried out in a nominated location within the confines of the site. An oil/fuel "Spill Kit" or similar shall always be maintained on site.

10. There shall be no discharge of contaminated water to any surface water drainage system or surface water course.

11. During the construction phase, the developer shall make arrangements for the collection, storage and disposal of all foul sewage effluent arising from the development. The name of any private waste disposal contractor employed, together with the destination of the disposed waste shall be advised to and agreed with the Planning Authority before development commences.

12. During the operational phase of the development, all foul sewage and effluent from toilets, wash-hand basins etc shall be discharged to a sealed storage tank, which will be emptied as required and the contents tankered off site by an authorised waste collector to a wastewater treatment plant. The storage tank shall be fitted with a monitored automated alarm system that will provide sufficient notice that the tank requires emptying.

13. The applicant shall ensure that activities at the site, during the construction stage shall not give rise to noise levels off site which exceed the following sound pressure limits (Leq: 30 minutes) beyond the site boundary.

    Day-time (8.00am to 8.00pm) 55dB(A)
    Night-time (8.00pm to 8.00am) 45dB(A)

    In addition, noise levels measured at noise sensitive locations in the vicinity of the site shall not exceed a level of 10 dB(A) above existing noise levels during core working hours, and 5 dB(A) at any other time. All noise measurements shall be carried and assessed in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency Guidance Note for Noise: Licence Applications, Surveys and Assessments in Relation to Scheduled Activities (NG4). Noise sensitive locations shall be agreed with Westmeath County Council. Noise monitoring shall be carried out an independent noise and vibration assessor at the developer's expense on request by Westmeath County Council.

14. During the operational phase of the development, noise generated by the wind turbines shall not give rise to noise levels off-site, at noise sensitive locations, which exceed the following sound pressure limits ($L_{A90,10mins}$):
    (i) 40dB for quiet daytime (7am to 7pm) environments of less than 30dB
    (ii) 45dB for daytime (7am to 7pm) environments greater than 30dB or a maximum increase of 5dB(A) above background noise (whichever is higher)
    (iii) 43dB or a maximum increase of 5dB(A) above background noise (whichever is higher) for nighttime (7pm to 7am) periods.

16.3 Chief Fire Officer:

No comments received to date.

16.4 National Roads Office (NRO):

No comments received to date.

16.5 Heritage Officer:

No comments received to date.

17. THIRD PARTY OBSERVATIONS/SUBMISSION SUBMITTED TO AN BORD PLEANALA

The closing date for submissions to An Bord Pleanála is 2nd June 2023 and at the time of writing, the number and content of submissions is unknown.

18. PLANNING AUTHORITY'S ASSESSMENT.

18.1 Principle of Proposed Development:

The proposed development is located within the "River Deel Lowlands' as identified by the Landscape Character Assessment contained within the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (WCDP). Development wind farm site is located largely in a flat lowland landscape with an expansive network of open cutover peatlands located at the Westmeath-Meath County boundary. Supporting policy for onshore industrial wind farms can be found in national and regional policy.

The proposed wind farm development is considered to comply with national and regional energy and climate action policies, as detailed in Section 4 above. The proposed development is considered generally compliant with the Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 (and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development

Guidelines 2019) in terms of siting and landscape suitability for large wind farm developments. In terms of appropriate location for Wind farm developments Council's Policy Objective 10.146 refers as follows:

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, or*
- *Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW*

Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been considered:

- *Peatland stability; and*
- *Carbon emissions balance.*

Having regard to the foregoing, it is considered that 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. As the proposal is predominantly located on cutover/cutaway peatlands it is considered that the proposal complies with CPO 10.146 of the WCDP and therefore the principle of the proposal is supported by Development Plan policy, as outlined above.

18.2 Residential Amenity:

When considering the amenity of residents in the context of a proposed wind farm, there are three main potential impacts of relevance- Shadow Flicker, Noise and Visual Amenity.

There are no dwellings located within 500m (standard within Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019) of a proposed wind turbine. 217 sensitive receptors are identified within 10 rotor diameters (1.7km) of the proposed turbine locations.

The closest occupied dwelling is situated approx. 815m from the nearest proposed turbine (i.e. T17).

Shadow Flicker:

Wind Turbines, like other tall structures, can cast long shadows when the sun is low in the sky. The effect known as 'shadow flicker' occurs where the blades of a wind turbine cast a shadow over a window in a nearby house and the rotation of the blades causes the shadow to flick on and off. Generally only properties within 130 degrees either side of north, relative to the turbines, can be affected at these latitudes in Ireland, turbines do not cast long shadows on their southern side.

The DoEHLG Wind Energy Guidelines (2006) state that shadow flicker lasts only for a short period of time and occurs only during certain specific combined circumstances, as follows:

- the sun is shining and is at a low angle in the sky, i.e. just after dawn and before sunset, and
- the turbine is located directly between the sun and the affected property, and
- there is enough wind energy to ensure that the turbine blades are moving, and
- the turbine blades are positioned so as to cast a shadow on the receptor.

The DoEHLG 2006 wind energy guidelines recommend that shadow flicker at dwellings within 500 metres of a proposed turbine location should not exceed a total of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day. There are no occupied dwellings within 500 metres of any proposed turbine location with the nearest occupied dwelling. The DoEHLG Guidelines recommend that shadow flicker at neighbouring dwellings within 10 x rotor diameter of a proposed turbine should not exceed a total of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day. The applicant has set the shadow flicker study area at 1.7km (10 x rotor diameter). There are 217 no. dwellings located within the 1.7km Shadow Flicker Study Area of the proposed development turbines, with the nearest dwelling being 815m from the proposed nearest turbine.

Determination of the potential for shadow flicker at houses located within the area surrounding the proposed development was calculated using the windfarm software package. Of the 217 No. properties modelled by the consultant; it is predicted that 80 properties may experience daily shadow flicker levels in excess of the Guidelines threshold of 30 minutes per day. The annual threshold of over 30 hours for shadow flicker is predicted to be exceeded at 12 properties

The applicant notes that the above results does not consider wind direction or screening provided by intervening vegetation and topography.

The submitted documents state that where daily or annual shadow flicker exceedances are predicted, a site visit will be undertaken firstly to determine the existing screening and window orientation. This will determine if the receptor has an actual line of sight to any turbine. Once this is completed and all of the potential receptors identified, the following measures will be employed, Screening measures and Wind Turbine control measures.

- Screening Measures - In the event of an occurrence of shadow flicker exceeding guideline threshold values of 30 minutes per day at residential receptor locations, Proposed mitigation options will be discussed with the affected homeowner, which will include proposals such as Installation of appropriate window blinds, and Planting of screening vegetation.

- Wind Turbine Control Measures - If it is not possible to mitigate any identified shadow flicker limit exceedance locally using the measures detailed above, the applicant has noted that wind turbine control measures will be implemented. If required, the applicant proposed to fit the wind turbines with shadow flicker control units to allow the turbines to be controlled to prevent the occurrence of shadow flicker at properties surrounding the wind farm. The shadow flicker control units will be added to any required turbines. The purpose of the shadow flicker control is to allow a wind turbine to be programmed and controlled using the wind farm's SCADA control system to change a particular

turbine's operating mode during certain conditions or times and even turn the turbine off if necessary.

A cumulative assessment of shadow flicker generated by the proposed development and other existing and permitted wind farms with potential to cause cumulative shadow flicker effects was carried out by the applicant.

Of the 217 (No.) residential properties modelled, it is outlined that 71 properties will experience zero shadow flicker minutes while it is predicted that 146 properties may experience some daily shadow flicker. Based on the 2006 DoEHLG guidelines, the daily threshold of over 30 minutes shadow flicker may potentially be exceeded at 83 properties, with three of these properties being impacted by an adjoining permitted wind farm (i.e. Bracklyn Wind Farm) alone (if constructed). The annual threshold of over 30 hours for shadow flicker is predicted to be exceeded at 15 properties, with Bracklyn Wind Farm alone causing exceedances at three of these properties.

WCC Environment Section have reviewed the above documentation and recommend that a condition should be imposed to ensure that Shadow Flicker at sensitive receptors within 10 x rotor diameter of the proposed wind turbine locations shall be less than the level set out in the current Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities. In this regard, it is considered that subject to attachment of an appropriate condition, that the proposed development will not detrimentally impact on the amenities of properties in the vicinity of the development site due to shadow flicker,

Noise:

There are two quite distinct types of noise source within a wind turbine. Mechanical noise is currently less of a concern for amenity due to modern designs with additional acoustic enclosure of components to minimise noise emissions. Some manufacturers have eliminated the requirement for a gearbox, which in the past could generate significant tonal noise. Tonal noise may still arise, but the dominant source of wind turbine noise is currently aerodynamic noise.

A noise assessment was undertaken to determine the likely significant noise effects from the construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the proposed development. The documents submitted note that predicted construction noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors during all phases of construction are below the threshold values within BS 5228 and are therefore deemed to be not significant.

The applicant carried out a background noise survey at seven noise monitoring locations. The data was analysed in conjunction with on-site measured wind speed data and operational noise limits have been derived in accordance with the current 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006'

Predictions of wind turbine noise from the proposed development have been made in accordance with good practice. The noise survey report confirms that predicted operational noise levels from the proposed development indicate that for noise sensitive receptors neighbouring the proposed development, wind

turbine noise will meet the Guidelines Noise Limits at all assessed Noise Sensitive Receptors and are therefore deemed to be not significant.

The noise report concludes that *"Based on detailed information on the site layout, the likely turbine noise emissions and turbine hub height for the Proposed Development, a series of cumulative turbine noise prediction models were prepared. The assessment has confirmed that the residual turbine noise levels associated with the Proposed Development, and the permitted Bracklyn wind energy development will be within the best practice noise criteria and therefore, it is not considered that a significant effect is associated with the Proposed Development"*

WCC Environment Section have reviewed the Noise chapter of the EIAR and have no concerns with the proposal subject to all mitigation measures being implemented fully and the Planning Authority concurs with same.

Visual Amenity:

The Wind Energy Development Guidelines set out guidance for the siting and design of wind energy developments in various landscape contexts by defining six landscape character types that represent most situations where wind turbines may be proposed. The guidance is intended to be indicative and general, and notes that it, represents the 'best fit' solutions to likely situations. However, regarding these six landscape character types, the Guidelines also note that it is common for a wind energy development to be located in one landscape but visible from another and recommends that the entire visual unit should be taken into consideration.

As noted in the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) and in the WCDP (Section 10.23.2), there is a need to balance the preservation and enhancement of nature conservation and habitat protection against the need to develop key strategic infrastructure in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.

The landcover within the application site boundary is a mixture of bare cutaway peat, re-vegetated bare peat, degraded blanket bog, scrub, low woodland and remnants of high bog. The site mainly comprises flat lowland landscape with extensive areas of predominantly cutover peatlands that have been industrially extracted by Bord Na Mona for fuel and horticulture purposes. It is noted that the siting of the proposed turbines at low base elevation in a flat landscape with highly vegetated working fields surrounding the site, would help to restrict visual exposure in the wider landscape. Notwithstanding this, the proposal would still have a visual impact from roads in the immediate vicinity and from residential properties therein, in locations where screening is not available or maintained. However, it is not considered that the proposal would constitute such a material alteration of visual intrusion as to warrant an unsupportive recommendation from a visual assessment.

The DoHPLG 'Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (December 2019) indicate a setback distance for visual amenity purposes of four times the tip height between a wind turbine and the nearest point of the curtilage of any residential property in the vicinity of the proposed development, subject to a minimum mandatory setback distance of 500 metres. The nearest dwelling is located c. 815m from the

nearest proposed turbine T17, which is in excess of the Draft Guidelines requirement. The visual impact of the proposed turbines will vary depending on the location. It should be noted that the Wind Energy Development Guidelines do not specify a minimum distance for the location of an industrial wind turbine from a residential property having regard to preservation of residential amenity. It is considered that direct effects on landscape character are highly localised and visual impacts within the county are not deemed to be significant as to warrant an unsupportive recommendation from a visual assessment.

The application states that no world heritage sites or those on a tentative list are located within 20km of the proposed windfarm site. Bru na Boinne is situated approx 39km, Durrow Abbey is located 38.6km, Clonmacnoise is located 66.5km, Tara is located 25.8km, and Hill of Uisneach is located approx. 30km from the subject site. Having regard to the significant distance between the above sites and the proposed development site, it is considered that no significant effects on the visual amenity of world heritage sites would occur.

18.3 Grid Connection & Haulage Route:

The grid connection from the proposed onsite substation to the national grid will occur within the vicinity of the proposed substation, via a new overhead line which will connect into the existing Mullingar-Corduff 110 kV transmission line, located approximately 35m north of the proposed substation within the development site boundary. WCC Environment Department and the District Engineer have reviewed the proposed grid connection and raise no concern in this regard, subject to conditions.

The construction phase is the critical period with respect to the traffic effects experienced on the surrounding road network in terms of both the additional traffic volumes that will be generated on the network, and the geometric requirements of the abnormally large loads associated with the wind turbine plant. The requirements of the additional traffic and abnormal loads generated during the construction stage were assessed. Locations where remedial measures are required to accommodate the abnormal loads are identified. It is considered that the preparation of a Transport Management Plan including full details of road network/ haulage routes and the vehicle types to be used to transport materials on and off site, is necessary. In addition, a condition survey of the roads and bridges along the haul routes to be carried out by a qualified engineer both before and after construction of the windfarm development at the developer's expense, is also recommended.

Adequate sightlines should be provided at entrances to the construction site. In terms of site construction works, a detailed precondition survey of the proposed haul routes and a Pavement Strength Analysis and Culvert/Bridge Bearing Capacity Analysis Report for roads identified as the construction material haul routes should also be provided. A pre and post-condition survey of local roads and proposals for ongoing maintenance programme to be agreed and applied during the construction stage to avoid deterioration of the local roads is recommended. The developer should have a security bond in place and at post construction the developer should undertake to carry out any / all necessary improvement works. It should be noted that the District Engineer has no objection to the proposed development from an engineering evaluation, subject to specified conditions.

18.4 Property Values

Chapter 5 of the EIAR considers the potential impact that the proposed wind farm will have on property valuations within the immediate vicinity. In the absence of any Irish studies on the effect of wind farms on property values, this section provides a summary of the largest and most recent studies from the United States and Scotland. The EIAR considers that although there have been no empirical studies carried out in Ireland on the impacts of wind farms on property prices, the studies referenced in this chapter demonstrates that at an international level, wind farms have not impacted property values in areas near wind farms. The EIAR therefore considers that based on the available international literature, that the provision of a wind farm at the proposed location would not impact on the property values in the area.

It is noted that the DoECLG Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 do not refer to impact on property value but set standards in relation to minimum setback distance from and maximum noise impacts at residential properties. Therefore, if property values are not to be adversely affected, it would be necessary to ensure that the Wind Energy Development Guidelines standards are achieved and that noise and shadow flicker levels are controlled, in order to protect residential amenities.

Having regard to the aforementioned matters, it is considered that the applicant has demonstrated a satisfactory assessment on the impacts on property values and no concerns are raised in this regard.

18.5 Turbine Design

The principal dimensions of the proposed wind turbines are as follows:

- Maximum Tip height of 200m
- Maximum Rotor Diameter of 170m
- Hub height 115m

The Planning Authority consider that no stripes whatsoever should be painted or attached to the turbines in order to keep them as visually clean as possible and allow their effective assimilation into their surroundings.

18.6 Amenity Provision

The proposed development includes the provision of proposed amenity pathways and carparks throughout the site. Approx. 28km of internal road network is proposed for amenity use (walkways and cycleways), along with amenity links in the form of new and upgraded tracks along in Ballivor Bog and at existing entrances into Lisclogher and Bracklin Bogs to provide a greater variety of walking loops, and three new public car parks with bicycle rack facilities for recreational use. The proposal to include approx. €14 million Community Funding for the local area over the lifetime of the project is also noted.

It is considered that the addition of dedicated recreational and amenity routes for locals and tourists will have a significant positive effect on tourism and recreation in the local area. These amenity pathways and facilities would largely tie-in with and complement objectives in policy CPO 12.83 of the CDP which seeks to support the delivery of sustainable strategic greenways, blueways and peatways projects in the County

in accordance with the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways. This element of the proposal is therefore welcomed and considered acceptable, subject to agreement with respect to community gain. The matter of Community Gain can be appropriately addressed by way of condition in the event of a grant of planning permission.

18.7 Development Contributions & Bonds:

Development Contributions:

In the event of a grant of planning permission the levy as set out under the applicable Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 should apply subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment.

Special Development Contribution:

The Councils' preference is for a very specific condition in the event of a grant of permission requiring pre-surveying of affected roads, proposals for rendering the routes fit for purpose, ongoing monitoring and repair during the project, post construction survey and remedial works (District Engineers report refers).

Bonds

The DECLG Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006 recommend that Planning Authorities do not to attach a bond for the decommissioning of the turbines, because the scrap value is likely to cover this cost. The District Engineers considers that the construction of this development will lead to long term damage to the road network used as a haul routes for the development. Accordingly, it is recommended that, in the event of a grant of permission, the applicant be required to contribute to the cost of repairing this damage and as such a cash bond should be paid to the Planning Authority and prior to commencement. The amount of the cash bond to be determined when material sources are known.

18.8 Conclusion and Recommendation:

Having regard to:

- the location of the proposed wind farm site
- the planning history of the site
- the character of the landscape in the area and of the general vicinity
- the pattern of existing and permitted development in the area and
- the distance to dwellings and other sensitive receptors from the proposed development

It is considered that the proposal either by itself or in cumulation with other projects, would be in accordance with European energy policy, relevant Section 28 Guidelines (including the provisions of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines – Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Department of

the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in June, 2006), national and regional policy. The proposed development would, if permitted:

- make a positive contribution to Ireland's national strategic policy on renewable energy and its move to a low energy carbon future
- be capable of being integrated successfully at the subject site without undue adverse impact on the amenity of the area
- not seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area
- have an acceptable impact on the landscape
- not be likely have a significant adverse impact on any designated site or the conservation objectives pertaining to same
- not be likely to adversely affect archaeological or natural heritage in the area
- be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience

The current Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out, under CPO 10.146, *"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, or*
- *Output: Having a total output of greater than 5MW*

Developments sited on peatlands have the potential to increase overall carbon losses. Proposals for such development should demonstrate that the following has been considered:

- *Peatland stability; and*
- *Carbon emissions balance".*

As such, having regard to the location of the proposal on predominately cutover cutaway peatlands and the provision of supporting documentation, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy Objective CPO 10.146 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

19. PLANNING AUTHORITY'S RECOMMENDATION:

Subject to relevant environmental determinations (for which An Bord Pleanála is the Competent Authority) and insofar as the development works relate to the administrative boundary of Co. Westmeath, it is recommended that permission be granted for the above development subject to conditions. Recommendations for conditions include:

- Timescale for completion, operation and decommissioning
- Turbines not to be replaced without consent

- Construction and Environmental Management Plan
- Construction and Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan
- Construction Traffic Management Plan
- Noise levels during construction and operation, including monitoring
- Dust monitoring and management
- Archaeological recording, reporting and any further mitigation arising from same
- Navigation lighting
- Mitigation and monitoring measures in the NIS, EIAR, and CEMP to be applied
- Shadow flicker regulation
- Ecological Clerk of Works
- Bird monitoring & kill record
- Surface water management
- Wastewater management
- Development contributions & Bond
- Community Benefit Scheme
- Wind Farm Amenity provision consisting walkway/cycle way and linkage
- No Signage/Livery
- Pavement Strength Analysis and Culvert/Bridge Bearing Capacity Analysis Report for haulage roads
- Pre and post construction works

30/05/23

Lisa McCann
Executive Planner

Date

31/5/2023

Paula Hanlon
Senior Executive Planner

Date

Cathaldus Hartin
Senior Planner

01/06/2023
Date

Barry Kehoe
Director of Services

2 June 2023
Date

Pat Gallagher
Chief Executive

2/6/2023
Date

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
Comhairle Chontae na hIarmhí

Special Meeting to seek and record (following the circulation by the Chief Executive of the Report of the Planning Authority in respect of a Strategic Infrastructure Development lodged with An Bord Pleanála on behalf of Bord Na Mona Powergen Ltd, for 26 No. wind turbines and all associated works (16 (no.) Turbines proposed in Co. Westmeath and 10 (no.) Turbines proposed in Co. Meath).

(Lisclogher Great, Cockstown, Clonmorrill, Clonleame, Bracklin, Craddanstown, Killagh, Grange More and Riverdale in Co. Westmeath; Clondalee More, Derryconor, Clonycavan, Robinstown, Coolronan, Doolystown and Moyfeagher in Co. Meath.)

- The views of the members on the proposed development

- Any resolution made by the Members to attach recommendations to the report of the planning authority to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála

Video Conferencing 07th June at 4.30 p.m.

Meetings Administrator's Record

Presiding	:	Cllr. Aoife Davitt
Members Present	:	Cllr. Frankie Keena, Cllr. John Dolan, Cllr. Tom Farrell, Cllr. Andrew Duncan, Cllr. John Shaw, Cllr. Hazel Smyth, Cllr. Ken Glynn, Cllr. Frank McDermott, Cllr. Johnny Penrose, Cllr Louise Heavin,
Apologies:		Cllr. Angus O'Rourke.
Officers Present	:	B. Kehoe, Director of Service C. Hartin, Senior Planner P. Hanlon, Senior Executive Planner E. Brennan, Administrative Officer P. Murtagh, Senior Executive Officer L. McGuinness, Staff Officer G. Bardon, Clerical Officer

(a) Roll Call and Declaration of Conflict of Interests.
(b) Presentation by Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner.
(c) Recording of the views of the Members on the proposed development; and to resolve, if necessary, to attach recommendations to the Report of the Planning Authority as circulated by the Chief Executive.

Conflict of Interest Declared:
No conflict of interests was recorded.

Meeting opened by Cllr Aoife Davitt who introduced the agenda item.

Barry Kehoe notified the apologies from Cllr A. O'Rourke and indicated that Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner would give a presentation on the report that was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Presentation to the Members:

Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner, made a presentation to the Members setting out the salient details of the development proposal including the SID process, obligations to consider in the assessment of the proposal and the role of the Elected Members.

Elected Members Views:

Cllr. Heavin raised a query with respect to how the existing bog reinstation plans prepared by Bord na Mona for this site were considered as part of the current application, noting that there are peat deposits remaining with a possibility of peatland remediation across the site. It was indicated that renewal energy is required, and wind developments have been identified for cut away bogs. If Bord na Mona proceed with this development, then it would be desirable that the peatland rehabilitation would be undertaken as well to ensure a biodiversity gain. It was considered that a landscaping remediation plan should form part of any conditions in the event of a grant of permission and that native species should be replanted on the site with the remaining areas of the bog protected.

Cllr. Shaw submitted that this application would have the same principals as previous SIDs and queried if the opinions of the Cllrs would be taken on board by An Bord Pleanála. It was considered that in general wind turbines cause public unrest but this has reduced in the last few years notwithstanding that a large cohort of people in the Raharney and Ballivor area opposed to this development.

Concerns were expressed about the potential noise impact during construction which may lead to massive upheaval as the drawings show the traffic using one route through surrounding villages. It was submitted that, with regard to any community financial scheme proposed, the funding should be distributed at an early stage rather than being just a tick box exercise to ensure permission is granted. Similarly, it was proposed that other mitigating factors should be introduced are done at an early stage.

Finally, it was indicated that given the nature and scale of the turbines, in the rural countryside, a financial contribution to the Local Authority for maintenance of roads and villages during the construction stage should be included as a condition in the event of a grant of permission.

Cllr. Davitt raised concerns regarding the location of houses numbered 83, 97 and 103 which it was submitted are sandwiched in between the proposed development. It was submitted that these houses will have turbines in front of them and also behind them, and as such the manner in which the impact to these homes is considered was queried.

Concerns were also raised about noise and dust impact due to proximity of the proposal having regard to the responsibility for the monitoring of potential impact. It was indicated that residents are close to the proposal and have grave concerns for their houses.

Cllr. Duncan noted from the consideration of alternatives as set out under the environmental report that solar was considered as being 'more damaging' and as such questioned this conclusion. It was submitted that solar would have been a simpler application.

Concerns were raised in association what was described as a 'monstrous development' which it was submitted represents industrialisation of a rural landscape.

Agreement with the views of Cllr Shaw were stated and it was felt that this application will go ahead anyway regardless of councillor's views.

It was submitted that a baseline noise study should be carried out by Westmeath County Council as this is an exceptionally quiet area and a 5db increase in sound is significant and that he believes that such rises in noise levels will be significantly higher.

The status of the bog as cutaway or cut over bog was queried as was the contents of the property valuation assessment.

Cllr. Glynn remind the members that they have 'been down this road many times' and that they should be consistent in their views. It was submitted that the Cllrs have no say in this as it carries very little weight with An Bord Pleanála. It was recognised that renewable energy is important and required but considered that Cllrs must protect the people of the area; they must come first and consequently a noise base line study must be carried out.

Cllr. Smyth indicated that she shares Cllr. Heavin concerns regarding the existing peatlands and that it was important to ensure Bord Na Mona take measures to protect the peatlands. A key concern would be ongoing peat preservation and restoration.

It was submitted that development is not in close proximity to homes, but concerns raised regarding shadow flicker/noise were recognised and she would like these concerns of the local community to be taken on board by Bord na Mona. It was further indicated that the road infrastructure will need to be improved during the construction phase.

It was expressed that the proposed 14 million community fund is very welcomed, that the people are a priority and should come first and should see direct benefits from this type of project with appropriate clear governance of the fund distribution. Recreational and amenity spaces are welcomed however it should be a requirement to hire local people and create employment.

The need for renewable energy projects was ststed with more domestic energy needed and to be produced to be net zero by 2050. It was submitted that wind energy in 2020 was providing 86% of renewable energy and over 40% of all domestic electricity demand.

Cllr McDermott expressed no difficulty with renewable energy if it complies with the law.

It was indicated that he would like to see a distribution of the 14 million community fund to the local villages before development commences.

Regarding the construction stage, it was his view that as many local people as possible should be employed.

Concerns were raised regarding road access, and it was expressed that he hopes it will be successful.

Resolution
The Members did not resolve to attach any recommendations to the report of the Planning Authority.

ABP-316212-23: Ballivor More Wind Farm SID							
Name	Position	Hours	Rate /Fortnight incl Er PRSI	Rate per Hour	Salary Claim	Expenses	Total
Pat Gallagher	CEO	4	6,949.29	198.55	794.20	€0.00	€794.20
Barry Kehoe	Director of Service	9	4,805.86	137.31	1,235.79	€0.00	€1,235.79
Cathaldus Hartin	Senior Planner	26	3,935.61	112.45	2,923.60	€0.00	€2,923.60
Paula Hanlon	Senior Executive Planner	50	3,513.63	100.39	5,019.47	€0.00	€5,019.47
Lisa McCann	Executive Planner	35	2,497.67	71.36	2,497.67	€0.00	€2,497.67
Connor Barry	Planning Technician	2	1,891.51	54.04	108.09	€0.00	€108.09
Melanie McQuade	Heritage Officer	5	2,752.12	78.63	393.16	€0.00	€393.16
Ciaran Jordan	Senior Engineer Environment	1	3,550.36	101.44	101.44	€0.00	€101.44
Fintan O'Reilly	Assistant Engineer Environment	21	1,825.69	52.16	1,095.41	€0.00	€1,095.41
Pat Kavanagh	District Area Engineer	4	3,061.52	87.47	349.89	€0.00	€349.89
Sean Reilly	District Assistant Engineer	10.5	2,634.61	75.27	790.38	€55.00	€845.38
Eamonn Brennan	Administrative Officer	16	2,806.05	80.17	1,282.77	€0.00	€1,282.77
Linda McGuinness	Staff Officer	16	2,266.46	64.76	1,036.10	€0.00	€1,036.10
Total Costs Incurred by Westmeath County Council in Determination of Ballivor Windfarm SID ABP-316212-23							**€17,682.97**