
PL - DM - NISA Offshore Wind Farm-ACP-319866-24

From John McGearty <John.McGearty@meathcoco.ie>

Date Wed 10/21/2026 5:31 PM

To 'marineobs@pleanala.ie' <marineobs@pleanala.ie>; SIDS <sids@pleanala.ie>

Cc Chris Rourke <chris.rourke@meathcoco.ie>; Jane Reilly <jreilly@meathcoco.ie>

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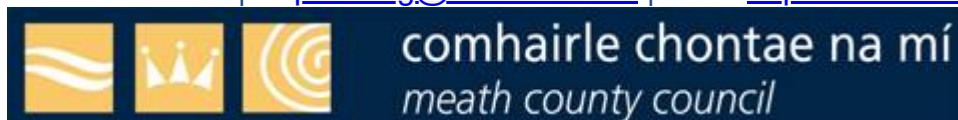
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Please find attached on behalf of Meath County Council in relation to the above-mentioned application.

Kind regards,

John

John McGearty | Staff Officer | Planning & Development
Meath County Council, Buvinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath
T: 046 9097500 | E: planning@meathcoco.ie | Web: <http://www.meath.ie>



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MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

on

FURTHER INFORMATION RESPONSE

relating to

STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA REF: ACP-319866-24

for

PROPOSED NISA WINDFARM
(35-49 Offshore Wind Turbines)

off the coast of Counties Meath, Louth & Dublin City

Date: 20/10/2026

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Appendix 1 – Meath County Council Chief Executive Report dated 21/06/2024

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The following report is a submission from the Planning Authority (Meath County Council) relating to a Further Information Response submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála by North Irish Sea Array Offshore (NISA) Windfarm Ltd. whereby permission is being sought under **Section 291** of the Planning & Development Act (PDA) 2000-2023. File Ref. ABP-319866-24 was originally lodged with An Coimisiún Pleanála on 07/06/2024 and was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

Based on an examination carried out by the Executive of Meath County Council (MCC), in the context of National, Regional and Local planning policy, of reports and comments from internal departments of MCC, a review of the planning application, its plans, particulars and supporting reports, MCC recommended in its report dated 21/06/2024, in accordance with **Section 292(1)(a)** and without prejudice, that Further Information be requested by the Commission on its behalf to ensure a complete and comprehensive assessment of the proposed development.

A request for Further Information was made by the Commission on 10th April 2025, in accordance with Sc. 292(1)(a) of the 2000 Act. The request for further information was issued in the context of requirements and considerations explicitly set out under Section 4 of this report, and in addition, the applicant was invited pursuant to section 292(1)(c) of the 2000 Act, to respond to the issues raised in the submissions and observations received by the Commission from members of the public and prescribed bodies, and the reports received from the coastal planning authorities.

On 6th October 2025, the applicant requested in writing an extension of time to submit the requested further information, which was acceded by the Commission on 16th October 2026, revising the submission date to 14th August 2026. A formal response to the request was lodged on 29th June 2026.

It is noted that submissions to An Coimisiún Pleanála in relation to the response to the submitted further information must be made by **21st October 2026**.

MCC is a Prescribed Body and a Coastal Authority¹ directly affected by the proposed development. This Report is prepared in accordance with Section 292 (3) of the PDA 2000-2023, which requires a report prepared by the Chief Executive to set out the views of the Coastal Authority, having regard to matters specified in Section 34(2), 281 (3) and 282 (2).

This Report provides comments specifically pertaining to the items raised via a request for Further Information within the Chief Executive's Report dated 21/06/2024 (please refer to Appendix 1) and is required to provide an assessment of the submitted further information and to suggest appropriate conditions to be attached in the event of

¹ Meath County Council is a 'Coastal Planning Authority (CPA)' as per the definition in the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

planning permission being granted subsequent to the Applicant's response to the formal further information request received by the Commission.

SECTION TWO: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Background

NISA Windfarm Ltd. (a joint venture between Statkraft Ireland Ltd. and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners P/S) is seeking to construct 35 - 49 no. offshore wind turbines with a maximum export capacity of 700 MW of renewable energy off the coast of Co. Louth, Meath and Dublin with associated onshore works in Co. Dublin. The site is partly situated within the functional area of Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council as the Coastal Authorities.

The area within the red-line boundary of the wind farm encompasses **126.5km²**. It includes:

- Offshore Windfarm Array Area (89 km²) in the Irish Sea;
- Offshore Cable Corridor Area (36 km²) in Co. Dublin; and
- Onshore Infrastructure Area (a new 220kV Substation and a Compensation Substation c.0.03 km² and 33-35km Grid connection cable to Belcamp in Co. Dublin.

A wind power installation with a total output greater than 50 MW is considered a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) and this development is proposed in the Irish Sea, coastal area and onshore.

The proposed development requires a **Marine Area Consent (MAC)** from the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) (refer to Schedule 6 of the 'Planning Particulars' (part of the application documentation)). Under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, a MAC (a seabed lease), enables development consent, or planning permission, with one environmental assessment. The new processes provided for within the Act will apply to foreshore licences and leases, as well as planning permissions for marine projects, from seaweed harvesting to offshore renewable energy infrastructure.

The MAC (Ref. No. 2022-MAC-005) was granted by the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications on 23/12/2022 for a period of 45 years in the Array and Infrastructure Corridor and a subsidiary area. The permitted use is for "*the construction and operation of an Offshore Wind Farm and associated infrastructure (including decommissioning and other works required on foot of any Development Permission for such Offshore Wind Farm)*".

To-date, no Marine Planning Guidelines (akin to terrestrial Section 28 Guidelines under the Planning & Development Act 2000-2023) have been prepared.

2.2 Site Location & Description

The application site extends across land and sea and represents 36% of the entire MAC boundary. The project is partially in the outer maritime area off the coast of Louth, Meath and Dublin and partly in the nearshore area of Fingal Co. Council and partly onshore in the rural and urban parts of Fingal Co. Council and Dublin City Council.

The array area lies at distances ranging between approximately 12.3km (southern end) to 17km (northern end) from the nearest sections of the coastline. The proposed offshore windfarm is set out in roughly 'C' shaped area in the Irish Sea. The Ireland-NI/ UK border is located 13.6km north and 36.5km east of the offshore development area. The applicant states that the location was chosen as it is located within close proximity to areas of high population density and adjacent to the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor (Planning Report). There has been no previous development in the maritime area.

Two no. options are proposed in this project, namely Option 1: 49 wind turbines with 250m rotor diameter and Project Option 2: 35 wind turbines with 276m rotor diameter. Accounting for the proposed 500m limit of deviation in the final siting of the wind turbines, in Option 1 the nearest turbine from shore is **13km** and **12.3km** for Option 2.

A total of 6 sub-sea cables and pipelines pass through the study area, but none intersect the proposed development boundary. The array area is 0.5km from Interconnector 2 Scotland to Ireland (IC2) with the nearest wind turbine located 750m from IC2. The onshore cable will cross IC2 twice and Interconnector 1 (IC1) once. The proposal includes the need to cross a gas pipeline onshore also.

The nearest onshore landscape character area (LCA)² in Co. Meath is the Coastal Plains (Coastal Landscape) and this is dissected by the Nanny Valley (River Corridors and Estuaries) as per the LCA for Co. Meath.

There are a range of Protected Views within the coastal vicinity of Co. Meath including no. 65 and 75³ (Laytown Strand and Boyne Estuary) which are close to the coastline. Inland viewpoints may also be relevant to the proposed development, including Brú na Bóinne, World Heritage Site.

² <https://consult.meath.ie/en/consultation/meath-adopted-county-development-plan/chapter/a05-landscape-character-assessment>

³ https://consult.meath.ie/en/system/files/materials/7447/Map%208.6_Views%20%26%20Prospects.pdf

SECTION THREE: EU, NATIONAL, REGIONAL & LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

3.1 European & National Policy

The following policy documents are applicable in the assessment of this planning application, though the list is not exhaustive, and Section 6 and 7 of the applicant's Planning Report covers relevant policy documents.

European Level

- EU Directive 2009/28/EC, 2018/2001/EU⁴ & EU/2023/2413⁵ (Renewable Energy)
- Renewable Energy Directive EU/2023/2413
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/EC
- Marine Spatial Planning Framework Directive 2014/89/EU.

National Level

- Other Jurisdiction – Relevant policies in Northern Ireland (NI) include the Strategy Planning Policy Statement for NI and a Draft Marine Plan for NI.
- Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2021
- National Maritime Area Planning Act (2021) – This requires two no. separate consent processes for the development of offshore renewable energy projects, with a Marine Area Consent (MAC) for the maritime area and a development consent for projects in the area. This application has the benefit of MAC and is seeking development permission.
- Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy 2024
- Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy 2024
- Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework National Marine Planning Framework 2021 – Project Ireland 2040
- Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA)
- Strategy for Renewable Energy: 2012-2020
- National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (NCCAF) (2012)
- National Mitigation Plan 2017
- National Adaptation Framework 2018
- National Renewable Energy Action Plan Ireland 2020
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2015), Amendment (2021)
- National Climate Action Plan (NCAP) 2024
- Wind Energy Guidelines (DEHLG, 2006) & Revised Draft Guidelines (2019) -.
- Other Relevant Guidelines/ Guidance - Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment, Flood Risk Management and other guidance documents on Appropriate Assessment are relevant in the context of this application.
- Other - Sectoral Strategy – ESB - The ESB (2023) Networks for Net Zero Strategy

4 https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/renewable-energy/directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en#directive-2018-2001-eu.

5 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202302413

3.2 Regional Policy

Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES), 2019 to 2031 - Renewable Energy is one of the five primary areas of transition/ key challenges which are at the core of the Strategy. The RSES recognises the need to facilitate the provision of sufficient electricity to meet increasing demand in the region.

3.3 Local Policy

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 - Several sections of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 are relevant to this application. The Meath County Development Plan (MCDP) 2021-2027 aligns with the Eastern and Midlands Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and it has a stated objective (10.24) to support 'the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resources in accordance with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources 'Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan' and any successor thereof including any associated domestic and international grid connection enhancements'. This is set within the context of a range of renewable energy options of bioenergy, biomass, geothermal, hydro energy, solar, waste and wave.

Section 6.15.3 'Renewable Energy' identifies a range of renewable energy types and of relevance in the context of the capacity of the electricity transmission network and wind energy development. The National Planning Framework refers to sustainability, security of supply and competitiveness. Section 6.15.3.2 'Wind Energy' of the MCDP 2021-2027 relates to Wind Energy and support for its generation including the modernisation and expansion of electricity infrastructure. It states the Planning Authority *'will continue to support and encourage the principle of development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the provisions of the Landscape Characterisation Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof'*.

The following policies and objectives are set out within the MCDP;

- **INF POL 34:** To promote sustainable energy sources, locally based renewable energy alternatives, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity, natural and built heritage, residential or local amenities.
- **INF POL 35:** To seek a reduction in greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources utilising the natural resources of the County in an environmentally acceptable manner consistent with best practice and planning principles.
- **INF POL 36:** To support the implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy and to facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- **INF POL 41:** To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof.
- **INF POL 42:** To support the identification, in conjunction with EMRA, of Strategic Energy Zones, areas suitable to accommodate large energy generating projects within the Eastern and Midlands Regional area.

- **INF OBJ 39:** To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.
- **INF POL 48:** To ensure that energy transmission infrastructure follows best practice with regard to siting, design and least environmental impact in the interest of landscape protection.
- **INF OBJ 50:** To seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.
- Section 6.15.4 includes an objective in the Section on 'Electricity Networks Infrastructure', as follows:
- **INF OBJ 50:** To seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.
- **Section 11.8.1 Energy Development** - The Council encourages and facilitates early pre-application discussions on these projects. Refer to Chapter, 6 Infrastructure which contains the grounding policies and objectives relevant to energy related development.
- **DM POL 27:** To encourage renewable development proposals which contribute positively to reducing energy consumption and carbon footprint.
- **DM OBJ 76:** In the assessment of individual energy development proposals, the Council will take the following criteria into account:
 - The proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
 - The environmental and social impacts of the proposed development;
 - Traffic impacts including details of haul routes;
 - Impact of the development on the landscape, (please refer to Appendix 5 Landscape Character Assessment);
 - Impact on protected Views and Prospects, (please refer to Appendix 10 Protected Views and Prospects);
 - Impact on public rights of way and walking routes, (please refer to Appendix 12 Public Rights of Way);
 - Connection to the National Grid (where applicable);
 - Mitigation features, where impacts are inevitable;
 - Protection of designated areas - NHAs, SPAs and SACs, areas of archaeological potential and scenic importance;
 - proximity to structures that are listed for protection, national monuments, etc. (Please refer to Chapter 8 Cultural Heritage, Natural Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and Appendices 6-9 inclusive for further details);
 - Cumulative Impact of proposal.
 - In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will take the criteria outlined above into account.
- **Section 11.8.3 Wind Energy** exclusively addresses Wind Energy Developments. It states that the Council require that any pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal for wind farm development sets out how the project complies with DM POL 27 and DM OBJ 76. The Council will support appropriate innovative designs for wind farms. Topographical enclosures and extensive areas of degraded or previously developed lands should be identified for wind farm development to

help minimise visual impacts and to harmonise wind turbines with the landscape. In general, matt finishes and neutral colours for turbines and structures are required. All planning applications shall be accompanied by detailed proposals for the restoration of the site after removal of the turbines and associated infrastructure including access roads. Adequate financial security will be required to ensure site restoration and removal of the wind farm.

- **DM POL 28:** To require compliance with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, (2006) and Circular PL20-13, and any updates thereof. Any proposal shall be supported by both a technical and an environmental statement prepared to an acceptable standard which sets out how the proposal complies with the Guidelines.
 - **DM OBJ 78:** To require that any pre-application discussion and/or planning application proposal for wind farm development sets out how the project complies with DM POL 28.
 - **DM OBJ 79:** Topographical enclosures and extensive areas of degraded or previously developed lands should be identified for wind farm development to help minimise visual impacts and to harmonise wind turbines with the landscape.
 - **DM OBJ 80:** In general, matt finishes and neutral colours for turbines and structures are required.
 - **DM OBJ 81:** The Council will support appropriate innovative designs for wind farms.
 - **DM OBJ 82:** All planning applications shall be accompanied by detailed proposals for the restoration of the site after removal of the turbines and associated infrastructure including access roads. Adequate financial security will be required to ensure site restoration and removal of the wind farm.
-
- Chapter 11 contains the Council's '**Development Management Guidelines & Standards**', with Section 11.8.1 Energy Development and Section 11.8.3 of particular note in this regard.

3.3.1 Cultural & Natural Heritage Strategy

Having particular regard to the request for Further Information raised by Meath County Council in the CE Report of 21/06/2024, the following policies and objectives are noted which pertain to *Landscape Character Assessment* and *Protected Views & Prospects*. These are set out in detail within Appendix A.05 and A.10 of the MCDP.

Chapter 8 Cultural & Natural Heritage Strategy, Appendices (A.05, A.06, A.09, A.10) and Volume 3 Book of Maps which are associated with the Appendices (including Map 8.6 Views and Prospects, etc.).

- Chapter 8 'Cultural and Natural Heritage Strategy' and Sections 8.8 on 'Natural Heritage' and Sections 8.17 – 8.19 on 'Landscape', 'Landscape Character Assessment' 'Views and Prospects' and 'Green Infrastructure' of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 are also relevant in the context of the proposed development.
- The Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix 5 of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027) for the County provides guidance in relation to physical landscape character, visual character and history and archaeology.

- County Meath Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 – 2020
- County Meath Heritage Plan 2024
- Meath Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

SECTION FOUR: FURTHER INFORMATION REQUEST

4.1 An Coimisiún Pleanála

Following a review of the application documentation, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), and all observations received by An Coimisiún Pleanála (herein referred to as the Commission), a request for Further Information was issued by the Commission on 10th April 2025, in accordance with Sc. 292(1)(a) of the 2000 Act with the provision of a 9 month timeframe from the date of said request. whilst having regard to;

- the requirement under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended) for the Board as a relevant body, in so far as is practicable, to perform its functions in a manner consistent with, inter alia, the most recently approved Climate Action Plan and the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State,
- the matters to which the Board is required to have regard in the making of its decision as set out in section 293 (3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Marine Spatial Planning Directive,
- the provisions of the National Marine Planning Framework, • the application of an ecosystems based approach,
- the ongoing development of national policy guidance relating to offshore renewable energy, as well as relevant international guidance and practice,
- Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/14/EC (Birds Directive) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union,
- Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, •
- the submission of concurrent applications for offshore wind energy development within the Irish Sea and the need to ensure a comprehensive assessment of potential cumulative impacts arising,
- submissions/observations received including those from prescribed bodies with specific areas of expertise, and

- the input of specialist consultants engaged by the Board to advise on the application.

The applicant was duly referred to NMPF Protected Marine Site Policy 1 in considering the response to the further information request:

- 'Proposals must demonstrate that they can be implemented without adverse effects on the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Where adverse effects from proposals remain following mitigation, in line with Habitats Directive Article 6(3), consent for the proposals cannot be granted unless the prerequisites set by Article 6(4) are met'.

The request for further information was issued in the context of all the above listed requirements and considerations and in addition, the applicant was invited pursuant to section 292(1)(c) of the 2000 Act, to respond to the issues raised in the submissions and observations received by the Commission from members of the public and prescribed bodies, and the reports received from the coastal planning authorities. The applicant was also requested to respond to the issues on a thematic basis given the multiplicity of same having been raised.

It shall be noted that in consideration of the further information response submitted by North Irish Sea Array Offshore (NISA) Windfarm Ltd, MCC has undertaken a review of same in its totality to inform a consolidated and holistic assessment of the specific matters raised in conjunction with those raised specifically by MCC.

In the interests of clarity, this report will refer solely to the matters as raised by MCC in the CE report dated 21/06/2024.

4.2 Meath County Council

Based on an examination carried out by the Executive of Meath County Council (MCC), in the context of National, Regional and Local planning policy, of reports and comments from internal departments of MCC, a review of the planning application, its plans, particulars and supporting reports, MCC recommended without prejudice that the following Further Information be requested by the Commission to ensure a complete and comprehensive assessment of the proposed development.

It should be noted for the purposes of this report that the items as set below are a direct quotation and thereby reference the Commission as "*An Bord Pleanála*" as was at the time of writing on 10th April 2025.

Meath County Council – Further Information Request

1. Cumulative Impacts on Seascape and Landscape, Archaeological, Architectural, Cultural Heritage, EIAR & NIS

- (a) *The Planning Authority requests that the cumulative impact of the proposed development, onshore operating windfarms, onshore permitted windfarms (not yet constructed or operational) and other large on and offshore infrastructure projects in the area are addressed in the landscape assessment within the EIAR.*

Based on the theoretical visibility imagery, it is the opinion of the Planning Authority that the proposed development (and other proposed wind energy developments) could have a significant impact on the protected views from the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage List (as part of the Royal Sites of Ireland). It is also noted that the scenic designation shown in the Zone of Theoretical Visibility only includes the proposed 290m turbines and no 316m turbines are illustrated (see Fig. 29.1 in the EIAR). It is recommended that An Bord Pleanála seek the advice of an independent World Heritage Expert, with specific expertise and experience in protecting World Heritage Sites (WHS) on behalf of UNESCO, to assess whether the development could impact (either alone or in-combination with other developments) on the WHS using established international best practice.

- (b) *It is recommended that An Bord Pleanála considers the need for a revised Seascape and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) (including photomontages), taking account of the cumulative impact of the proposed development, other permitted and proposed developments including solar farms in the vicinity of the proposed development. The following Protected Views, National Monuments and Recorded Protected Structures (RPS) in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, etc. in the immediate visibility context of the site and associated with the World Heritage Site and Tentative World Heritage Site should be included in the assessment.*

**Protected Views / World Heritage Site
Viewpoint ID's**

- 65 Laytown Strand
- 75 Boyne Estuary
- All viewpoints within the World Heritage Site, Brú na Bóinne, including:
 - 59 – Panoramic views in all directions from top of Knowth tumulus. Extensive view across a working countryside (south-east of Slane village)
 - 87 a, b, c, d – Newgrange Passage Tomb – Panorama (south-east of Slane village)
 - 88 – Dowth Passage Tomb – Panorama (south-east of Slane village)
 - 30 – Hill of Slane – Panorama (north of Slane village)
 - 43 and 44 - Views at Tara - Panorama

- 47 – Skryne Church – Panorama – of National Significance (east of the Hill of Tara)

National Monuments All National Monuments in/ vicinity of Brú na Bóinne

Protected Structures/ Industrial Heritage All Protected Structures in/ vicinity of Brú na Bóinne

- Gormanston Castle (a nationally significant Recorded Protected Structure), an important feature is the long vista to the sea, known as Cromwell's Avenue. RPS: 91040 and NIAH: 14322005.

An Bord Pleanála are advised of relevant sections of the Brú Na Bóinne World Heritage Site Management Plan (January 2017) including:

- Appendix 4: Brú na Bóinne National Monuments,
- Appendix 5: Natural Heritage Designations,
- Appendix 6: Record of Protected Structures,
- Appendix 7: Meath Industrial Heritage Survey,
- Appendix 8: Protected Views in the Meath County Development Plan; and
- Appendix 9: Retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value:
https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Bru_na_Boinne_Mgt_Plan_2017.pdf
- A Progress Tracker Report (securing the objectives of the Management Plan) published in December 2023:
<https://www.worldheritageireland.ie/category/publications/?page=1&filter=bru-na-boinne>

2. Visual Impact

An Bord Pleanála is invited to clarify whether the likely alternative turbine height (due to Dublin Airport Zone) will have a visual impact when viewed from onshore locations”.

SECTION FIVE: FURTHER INFORMATION ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 Further Information Response Assessment

MCC Item: 13(b) (as per An Coimisiún Pleanála Request)

13. Seascape, Landscape, and Visual

b) Meath County Council raises concerns in relation to the submitted assessment of the visual impact of the proposal on views from historic sites

within Meath, in particular from Brú na Bóinne (located circa 30km inland and west of the array area). Having regard to the sites UNESCO World Heritage designation, the applicant is requested to assess the proposed development having regard to the World Heritage Convention UNESCO Guidance Notes as they relate to visual impact assessment and wind energy projects, including the documents 'Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context' (UNESCO, 2022), 'Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context' (UNESCO, 2023), and available UNESCO case studies relating to the assessment of offshore projects on World Heritage sites".

North Irish Sea Array Offshore (NISA) Windfarm Ltd Response

"Consultation on the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) of Brú na Bóinne was completed with Meath County Council (April 2026) and National Monuments Service (May 2026). Volume 4 Chapter 25 Onshore Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage and Volume 5 Chapter 29 - Seascape, Landscape and Visual have been revised to include further detail and assessment of Brú na Bóinne. The assessment of the potential impact on the UNESCO sites, arising from the offshore infrastructure, has been carried out with the use of the World Heritage Convention UNESCO Guidance Notes, including the documents 'Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context' (UNESCO, 2022) and 'Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context' (UNESCO, 2025). Updated photomontages have been produced for Chapter 29 and include new viewpoints from within the UNESCO WHS (VP18 Dowth Passage Tomb, VP18a Newgrange Passage Tomb and VP18b Knowth Passage Tomb). In relation to the core area of the Brú na Bóinne WHS, there will be overall very limited visibility of the proposed offshore infrastructure.

This is due to the distance of the proposed infrastructure, the intervening topography and existing screening. From the principal monuments within the Brú na Bóinne WHS, there are either no visible turbines or, at most, imperceptible blade tips which will be screened by landform and vegetation. In summary there will be no magnitude of change to the Outstanding Universal Value and as such there will be no impacts on the UNESCO Brú na Bóinne WHS".

MCC Assessment of Further Information Item 13(b)

Updated photomontages including VP18, VP18a and VP18b have been prepared which are contained within Volume 7C1: 2026 SLVIA. Additional data and particulars have also been provided within Volume 4, Chapter 25 Onshore Archaeology, Architectural and Cultural Heritage, Sections 25.2 and 25.5. Volume 5, Chapter 29 Seascape, Landscape and Visual, Sections 29.2, 29.3 and 29.5.

CHVP55 has been removed from Table 25.17 of the 2024 EIAR (reflected in Table A25.4) for a standalone assessment on this aspect.

It is noted that the Protected Sites and Views as recommended for inclusion have been incorporated into the Chapter.

A total of 63 archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage sites were identified within the 60km study area, where it interacts with the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Figures A29.5a (ZTV for Project Option 1) and A29.5 b (ZTV of Project Option 2), as produced in Volume 5, Chapter 29: *Seascape, Landscape and Visual* (hereafter referred to as the 'Seascape, Landscape and Visual Chapter') were utilised to identify the locations inland where there may be visibility between the sites and the offshore turbines (Project Option 1 maximum tip height of 290m and Project Option 2, maximum tip height of 316m).

The assessment of potential negative impacts on the setting of the 63 archaeological, architectural, or cultural heritage sites was undertaken by reviewing the photomontages presented in the *Seascape, Landscape and Visual* Chapter and additional wireframe modelling (Macroworks).

The results of the assessment for 61 of the sites are presented in Table A25.4. The assessment of CHVP59 (Rockabill lighthouse) is dealt with separately due to its offshore location and proximity with the array area.

The assessment of potential impacts on the UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) at Brú na Bóinne has also been dealt with separately, as requested by MCC.

Impacts of significant significance or higher are considered as significant in EIAR terms. "Setting" with regards to archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage site/structures, can be defined as follows:

- (Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas (ICOMOS 2005, 2):

"The setting of a heritage structure, site or area is defined as the immediate and extended environment that is part of, or contributes to, its significance and distinctive character".

The updated information submitted relates specifically to "Table A25.4 Potential Impacts arising from the operation of the WTGs and OSP" which replaces Table 25.17 of Chapter 25 of the 2024 EIAR. The assessment has returned the following;

Ref.:	Description	Distance from Array	Sensitivity of Receptor	Array Layout	Impact Type	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect
CHVP01	A group of five Megalithic Passage Tombs	17km	Very High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Moderate

CHVP02	Drogheda East and West Lighthouse complex	17km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP03	Lady's Finger, Maiden Tower and Boat House	17.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP04	Ruined watch house	16.7km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP05	Oriel Harbour	16.8km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP06	Cliff-edge fort	28.6km	Very High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Slight
CHVP07	Fortification (Viking settlement)	29.7km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a

CHVP08	Boat House	35km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP09	Coastguard Cottages	38.3km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a

CHVP10	Giles Quay	32.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP11	Promontory Fort	31.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP12	Earthwork (possible Promontory Fort)	28.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP13	Lighthouse and keeper's cottage	34.1km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP56	Carlingford Castle	36.3km	Very High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP14	Carlingford Harbour	36.3km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP15	Memorial cairn	16.7km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP16	Martello Tower and Boat House	16.4km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight

CHVP17	Balbriggan Harbour and Lighthouse	15.5km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP34	Ardgillan Castle and demesne	14.7km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP18	Martello Tower	11.5km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP57	Skerries Harbour	11.5km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP58	Martello Tower and promontory fort	11.1km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP19	Loughshinny Harbour	12.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP20	Promontory Fort and Martello Tower	13.1km	Very High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Moderate
CHVP21	Promontory Fort	14.1km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight

CHVP22	Rush Harbour	14.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP23	Martello Tower	14.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP24	Rogerstown Pier	18.9km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP25	Martello Tower	18.7km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP26	Martello Tower	20.7km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP44	Promontory Fort	15.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
CHVP45	Lambay Harbour	16.4km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP27	Martello Tower	24.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative,	Very low	Not significant

CHVP28	Martello Tower	25km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP43	Martello Tower and Promontory Fort	25.9km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP29	Howth Harbour and Lighthouse	27.3km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP30	Martello Tower	27.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Low	Slight
CHVP31	Baily Lighthouse	30.2km	High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP33	Eastern section of St Ann's demesne landscape	32.4km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP32	Coastguard Station	33.2km	Medium	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP35	Great South Wall and Poolbeg Lighthouse	35km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant

CHVP36	Martello Tower	39.6km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP37	Sea Baths	39.6km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
CHVP38	Martello Tower	39.6km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP39	Dun Laoghaire Harbour	38.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP40	Martello Tower	39.5km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP41	Colliemore Harbour	40.1km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP42	Martello Tower	40.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant

CHVP46	Signal Tower	40.9km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP47	Bray Harbour	47km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
CHVP55	UNESCO World Heritage Site: Brú na Bóinne VP from eastern passage tomb at Douth (RMP ME020-017)	30.5km	Very High	Project Option 1	Neutral	N/a	N/a
				Project Option 2	Neutral	N/a	N/a
CHVP61	Artillery Fort	31.9km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP62	Haulbowline Lighthouse	31.9km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
CHVP48	Boat House, Coastguard House, Pier	34.2km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP49	Lightkeeper's House	31.9km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible

CHVP60	Church	40.2km	Very High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Slight
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Slight

CHVP63	Coastwatching Station (World War II)	33km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
CHVP50	Coastguard House and Harbour	35.3km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP51	Coastguard Station	36.1km	Medium	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Imperceptible
CHVP52	Harbour	39.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP53	Coastguard Station	55.8km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
CHVP54	Lighthouse	54.6km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Very low	Not significant

With regards to the predicted impacts on the above 61 cultural heritage sites, the assessment concludes that there is very little difference in effects between Project Options 1 or 2 of the proposed layouts.

The only site where a difference has been identified is at CHVP57 Skerries Harbour, where Project Option 1 will result is a slightly lesser impact than Option 2 as it will be less visible. The significance of effects at eight sites will be neutral.

Where indirect negative impacts have been identified, the significance of effect is imperceptible at six sites; not significant at a further 19 sites; slight at 19 sites and moderate at nine sites.

CHVP59 Rockabill Lighthouse Rockabill Lighthouse, has been assessed in a different context, as the structure occupies a small island c. 6.4km off the coast of mainland. Photomontages produced for the Seascope, Landscape and Visual Chapter, VP25 illustrate Rockabill Lighthouse in the background, when viewed from Loughshinny from the southwest, with the proposed offshore infrastructure visible either side of the structure and extending along the horizon. Due to its distance offshore, the report asserts that weather conditions dictate how visible the structure is to the coastline. VP25 represents a clear view in good conditions. When viewed at closer proximity, the proposed offshore infrastructure will be visible behind Rockabill Lighthouse when

approached from the west and southwest. However, immediate views from the south, southeast, east, northeast, north and northwest will remain unaffected by the offshore infrastructure. Whilst the change to the structure will be noticeable, the integrity of the site is not anticipated to be compromised.

When the above analysis is taken into consideration, it is determined that Project Option 1 and Project Option 2 will result in indirect, negative, long-term impacts that are considered medium in magnitude. The receptor sensitivity of the lighthouse is high, and this will result in a moderate negative significance of effect.

Table A25.5 Potential Impacts on Rockabill Lighthouse arising from the operation of the WTGs and OSP (replaces Table 25.18 of Chapter 25 of the 2024 EIAR)

Ref.:	Description	Distance from Array	Sensitivity of Receptor	Array Layout	Impact Type	Magnitude of Impact	Significance of Effect
CHVP59	Rockabill Lighthouse	5.3km	High	Project Option 1	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate
				Project Option 2	Indirect, negative, long term	Medium	Moderate

CHVP55: UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS): Brú na Bóinne Medium Moderate

The UNESCO WHS of Brú na Bóinne is one of three sites which are inscribed within this category. The eastern edge of the core zone surrounding the site is located 28.4km west of the proposed offshore infrastructure, with the principal monuments at Dowth located c. 30.5km to the west; Newgrange 32.4km to the west and Knowth 33.3km to the west.

The assessment of the potential impact on the UNESCO sites, arising from the offshore infrastructure, has been carried out with the use of the World Heritage Convention UNESCO Guidance Notes, including evaluation of impact (see Table A25.6) and 'Guidance for Wind and Solar Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context (UNESCO, 2025).

Attributes that express the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Brú na Bóinne Landscape are as follows

- An extensive funerary landscape of great ritual significance in a bend of the River Boyne with a concentration of social, economic and funerary monuments including 40+ passage graves; and
- Views into and out of the property. Archaeological features
- The time depth of Brú na Bóinne from the Neolithic to late medieval periods;
- The finest expression of passage graves in prehistoric Europe;
- Largest and most important expression of prehistoric megalithic plastic art in Europe;
- The design of the passage graves in relation to the skies and astronomy;
- The three great burial mounds of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth and the sites surrounding them;
- Knowth group with use spanning from the Neolithic to the late medieval periods, including passage graves, enclosures, occupation sites and field systems;
- Newgrange group of prehistoric sites including passage graves, henge, cursus, and stone circle;

- Dowth group of prehistoric and Iron Age, early Christian and late medieval sites including the great burial mound, megalithic tombs, many smaller burial mounds, henge, standing stone, and medieval church and tower house; and
- Other prehistoric, Iron Age, early Christian and medieval sites spread across the landscape.

It is noted that the majority of the WHS Landscape at Brú na Bóinne, will have no theoretical visibility with either Option 1 or Option 2 of the proposed offshore infrastructure. Photomontages have been produced for Chapter 29 Seascape, Landscape and Visual and include viewpoints from within the UNESCO WHS (VP18 Dowth Passage Tomb, VP18a Newgrange Passage Tomb and VP18b) Knowth Passage Tomb. Table A25.6 below provides an assessment of the potential impacts in relation to the WHS and its OUV.

Table A25.6 Assessment of potential impacts on Brú na Bóinne WHS and its OUV

VP Ref. & location:	Distance from nearest turbine	Existing view description	Relevance to OUV ('Views into and out of the Property')	LVA Visibility/ Potential Impact	Assessment of Effect on OUV	Evaluation of Impact
VP18 Dowth Henge	30.5km	Elevated view to the east, at the eastern side of the core WHS area. The view is partially restricted by existing mature trees although some distant horizons are present. Coastal landscapes and views of the sea not visible due to screening.	Dowth Henge is one of the principal monuments in the WHS and located on a summit within the eastern part of the core area to the north of the River Boyne. It has an elevated outward view that contributes to the appreciation of the wider Boyne Valley setting with Newgrange located 1.86km to the west-southwest.	Options 1 and 2 of the proposed offshore infrastructure is theoretically visible with seven hubs and upper blade sweeps visible above the horizon line. VP18 shows that the Options will not be visible due to screening effects of vegetation and attenuation by distance. The character of the existing view will remain unaltered.	No impact – OUV attribute unchanged.	Neutral

VP Ref. & location:	Distance from nearest turbine	Existing view description	Relevance to OUV ('Views into and out of the Property')	LVIA Visibility/ Potential Impact	Assessment of Effect on OUV	Evaluation of Impact
VP18a Newgrange	32.4km	Elevated view to the east, in the central part of the core WHS area. The view is restricted by existing vegetation although some distant horizons are present. Coastal landscapes and views of the sea not visible due to topography and screening.	Newgrange Passage Tomb is a significant ritual centre, located in an elevated position above the River Boyne. Dowth is 1.86km to the east-northeast and Knowth 1.18km to the northwest. The views between and monuments and the Boyne Valley landscape clearly illustrate the relationship of the monuments and landscape, which forms part of the OUV.	Options 1 and 2 of the proposed offshore infrastructure are not theoretically visible from this location. This is illustrated within VP18a. The character of the existing view will remain unaltered.	No impact – OUV attribute unchanged.	Neutral
VP18b	33.3km	Elevated view to the east, in the western part of the core WHS area. The view is restricted by existing vegetation although some distant horizons are present. Coastal landscapes and views of the sea not visible due to topography and screening.	Knowth is one of the principal monuments in the WHS and located on a summit within the western part of the core area to the northeast of the River Boyne. It has an elevated outward view that contributes to the appreciation of the wider Boyne Valley setting with Newgrange located 1.18km to the southeast.	Options 1 and 2 of the proposed offshore infrastructure is theoretically visible with five upper blade sweeps visible above the horizon line. VP18b shows that neither option will be visible due to screening effects of vegetation and attenuation by distance. The character of the existing view will remain unaltered.	No impact – OUV attribute unchanged.	Neutral

In relation to the core area of the Brú na Bóinne WHS, the proposed offshore infrastructure will have overall limited visibility due to the distance of the proposed infrastructure and the intervening topography and existing screening.

The verified viewpoints indicate that from the principal monuments within the Brú na Bóinne WHS, there are either no visible turbines or, at most, imperceptible blade tips which will be screened by landform and vegetation.

It is noted that the orientation of the WHS monuments and their sightlines are inward, across the Boyne Valley; they do not extend toward the eastern coastal plain or the Irish Sea.

The OUV attributes, including archaeological fabric, spatial layout and integrity of monuments are concluded within the assessment to be directly or indirectly unaffected by an offshore development located more than 28km away. The only relevant OUV attribute, “views into and out of the property”, was assessed and this has been indicated as being wholly unaffected. In summary the assessment concludes that there will be no magnitude of change to the OUV and as such there will be no impacts on the UNESCO Brú na Bóinne WHS.



Figure 1:0 Photomontage - Hill of Tara



Figure 2:0 Photomontage – Knowth Tomb



Figure 3:0 Photomontage – Dowth Tomb



Figure 4:0 Gormanstown Castle



Figure 5:0 Photomontage – Laytown Strand

MCC Item 13(d) (as per An Coimisiún Pleanála Request)

d) Meath County Council raise concerns in relation to the lack of consideration of permitted onshore windfarm and other large onshore developments in the cumulative impact assessment within Chapter 29 of the EIAR. The applicant is requested to address this issue. The cumulative impact of projects in the Irish Sea should also be considered in terms of cultural heritage and the cultural ecosystem services provided by the coastline and seascape.

North Irish Sea Array Offshore (NISA) Windfarm Ltd Response

Chapter 29 Seascape, Landscape and Visual provided a summary of the cumulative effects; however, this was addressed in more detail in Chapter 38 the Cumulative and Inter-related Effects of the 2024 EIAR, which presented the overall CEA of the screened in projects and the proposed development and provided a comprehensive cumulative effects assessment. The Developer notes that in Section 38.2.1.2 of Chapter 38 of the 2024 EIAR states “Granted/permitted and pending applications older than ten years were excluded on the basis that they would likely already have been built (and so would form part of the existing baseline) or are now unlikely to be progressed. Applications which have been refused or cancelled were discounted from the list on the basis that they are unlikely to progress, unless through successful appeal.” Therefore, any permitted onshore windfarm or other large onshore developments that were not included in the 2024 cumulative effect assessment were considered as part of the baseline environment, where relevant.

The Developer also notes that Chapter 38: Cumulative and Interrelated Effects has been updated to align with the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: Advice on Cumulative Effects Assessment Guidance in accordance with RFI Section 5. Furthermore, a review of the projects listed in the MCC submission was carried out. Those projects listed in the MCC submission which were included in the CEA long list (Table 1 of Appendix 38.1 (onshore projects) and in Table 4 of Appendix 38.2 (offshore projects)) of the 2024 EIAR. Those projects which were not included in the CEA long list are listed below, and the reasons why these projects were not included in the CEA is given.

MCC Assessment of Further Information Item 13(d)

The cumulative seascape and landscape effects of the Phase One projects in combination with the offshore infrastructure of the proposed development are assessed in detail in Volume 5, Chapter 29: Seascape, Landscape and Visual and in Appendix A29.2 and Volume 7B1 Photomontages (offshore wind farm) of this EIAR. Details on the screening of the Offshore projects in combination with the offshore infrastructure of the proposed development in terms of seascape and landscape are provided in Appendix A38.2 of the EIAR. Given the distance, location and terrestrial context of the Onshore projects in relation to the offshore infrastructure of the proposed development, no significant cumulative effects are predicted during construction or operation, and these projects are therefore screened out. Due to distance and relative scale, the Onshore projects that fall outside of the defined study areas for the proposed grid facility (3km radius) and onshore cable route (500m buffer) are not considered to have any potential to generate significant cumulative effects in combination with the proposed development during construction or operation and are screened out.

In relation to Onshore projects located within the study areas, the proposed onshore cable route will only give rise to temporary and transient landscape and visual effects during the construction phase, and these are predominantly within the road corridor and occasionally within adjacent fields at river and road crossings. There will be no material effects from the underground cable during the operational phase of the proposed development. Consequently, the only potential for any cumulative effects to occur in combination with the onshore cable route is where the timing / location of construction works for other projects within the onshore cable route study area overlaps directly with the construction works for the onshore cable route. In such instances, the combined effects of construction activities may result in a minor increase in temporary landscape and visual effects in a very localised context. Such temporary cumulative effects are not considered to be potentially significant; therefore, onshore cumulative developments that fall within the onshore cable route study area are screened out. Only Onshore projects that fall within the proposed grid facility 3km study area have been screened-in for further cumulative assessment for construction and operational phases.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the applicant has sufficiently addressed this further information item.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Conclusion

An Coimisiún Pleanála is respectfully requested to review the ‘Further Information Assessment’ set out at Section 5 above and in the event of a grant of permission, a series of recommended conditions are listed at Section 6.3 for the consideration of the Commission.

6.2 Recommendation

Offshore wind energy development is supported by national and regional policy in the context of climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Executive of MCC and local planning policy supports the principle of the construction of the proposed offshore wind energy development and supporting infrastructure.

MCC has examined the potential of the proposed development in conjunction with the landscape character areas and protected views as set out within the request for further information in tandem with the applicant’s response to same.

Accordingly, based on the examination of the documents accompanying this SID application, carried out by the Executive of MCC, in the context of National, Regional and Local planning policy, reports and comments from internal departments of MCC, a review of the planning application, its plans, particulars and supporting reports, this report respectfully recommends that in the event of a grant of permission, the conditions set out under Section 6.3 are applied.

Finally, in the event of a grant of permission, an ABP are requested to apply a condition in relation to a **Community Benefit Fund** through the **Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS)** process to make finance available for the local community. It is noted that the applicant’s proposed approach to community gain is addressed in the application documentation. The applicant has set up a Fund which will commence once the proposed development is in construction, providing €80 million/ €4 million p.a. for 20 years.

6.3. Schedule of Conditions

The comments from the various internal sections/ departments of Meath County Council have sought specific planning conditions in the event of a grant of permission, and An Coimisiún Pleanála is respectfully requested to **attach conditions as set out under Section 293 (7)** of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2023 and consider the conditions listed hereunder.

Schedule of Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application to An Coimisiún Pleanála on 07/06/2024 and 29th June 2026, except as may otherwise be required to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and proper planning and sustainable development

2. The Applicant shall appoint a Community Liaison Officer for all stages of the development and shall be the first point of contact for residents seeking information, making a complaint, etc. and shall be responsible for discharging information in relation to the project to residents.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and orderly development of the site

3. The period during which the development hereby permitted may be carried out shall be **ten years** from the date of this permission.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and having regard to the nature and extent of the proposed development, it is considered appropriate to specify a period of validity of this permission in excess of five years

4. The date of decommissioning of the wind turbines and ancillary wind farm infrastructure shall be notified to, and established in writing with, the relevant Planning Authorities. This permission shall be for a period of **35 years** from the said date of commissioning of the wind farm. The wind turbines and ancillary infrastructure shall be removed at the end of this period of **35 years** unless, prior to the end of the period, planning permission shall have been granted for their retention for a further period.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and proper planning and sustainable development

5. This permission shall not be construed as any form of consent or agreement to a connection to the national grid or to the routing or nature of any such connection.

Reason: In the interest of clarity

6. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, the 35-49 No. wind turbines hereby permitted shall have an overall ground to blade tip height of between 290m-316m above LAT inclusive, a rotor diameter of 250-276m above LAT and a hub height ranging from 165m to 178m above LAT inclusive. The maximum output of all wind turbine generators will be 700MW inclusive.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and to allow for design flexibility

7. The colour and finish of the proposed turbines and associated developments shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority/ An Bord Pleanála, prior to the commencement of development. The applicant shall submit drawings illustrating the final structure details (i.e. blade length) to be installed on site.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

8. (a) The mitigation measures and monitoring identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, Natura Impact Statement, Construction Environment Management Plan and other particulars submitted with the planning application, shall be implemented in full by the developer, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

(b) The developer shall appoint persons with appropriate ecological, hydrological and construction expertise such as Environmental Manager/ Ecological Clerk of Works and Hydrologist to ensure that the mitigation measures identified in the above documents are implemented in full during the pre-construction, construction stage and post construction phases to advise on, oversee and monitor mitigation measures. Monitoring shall be carried out for a minimum of 15 years post construction.

(c) The Environmental Manager/ ECOW shall be responsible for implementation of the Piling Strategy at all times during the offshore construction, operational or decommissioning phases.

(d) Onshore mitigation measures should be in line with the NRA *Best Practice Guidelines for the Conservation of Bats in the Planning of National Road Schemes* and the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats during the Construction of National Road Schemes* and any works relating to bats may only be carried out under a licence issued by the NPWS.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and the protection of the environment during construction and operational phases of development

9. Trees and hedgerows shall not be removed during the nesting season (i.e. March 1st to August 31st in accordance with the Wildlife Act (as amended)). Replacement hedgerows shall be of native species.

Reason: In the interest of avian ecology and visual amenity

10. The developer shall facilitate the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall:

- (a) Notify the planning authority in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of any site operation (including hydrological and geotechnical investigations) relating to the proposed development,
- (b) Employ a suitably qualified archaeologist in advance of construction works to complete an archaeological assessment of the project site to determine the location, date, nature and extent of any archaeological sites or features. This work will feed into an Archaeological Mitigation Strategy Document that will determine how any archaeological remains are either preserved in situ or preserved by record.

If the advance works show nothing of archaeological significance, construction works shall be monitored, as stray finds are always a possibility. All finds and reports shall be lodged with the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland.

- (c) The suitably qualified archaeologist shall monitor all site investigations and other excavation works and prepare a report on the results of such monitoring to be submitted to the Planning Authority and to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- (d) Results of the works outlined above shall be published in digital and/ or hard copy.
- (e) Provide arrangements, acceptable to the Planning Authority, for the recording and removal of any archaeological material which the authority considers appropriate to remove.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation in situ or by record of all archaeological and historical material, features or objects, to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site, it is considered reasonable that the developer should facilitate the preservation and protection or the preservation by record of any archaeological features or materials which may exist within it.

11. The Applicant shall, during the construction stage, maintain a Complaints Register to record any complaints regarding but not limited to noise, odour, dust, traffic or any other environmental nuisance. The Complaint Register shall include details of the complaint and measures taken to address the complaint and prevent repetition of the complaint.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection and orderly development

12. If the proposed development causes interference with telecommunications signals in the area, effective measures shall be implemented to minimise such interference. Details of these measures, which shall be at the developer's expense, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the relevant Planning Authority

prior to commissioning of the turbines, and following consultation with the relevant authorities.

Reason: In the interest of orderly planning and residential amenity

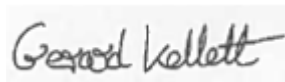
13. (a) The identification of environmental community projects and works shall be decided upon by a community liaison committee; the composition of the committee shall be based upon equal representation of personnel from the Planning Authorities, the developer, local residents and elected members of Meath, Louth, Fingal and Dublin City Councils; any variation in the composition of the committee shall be subject to the prior agreement of the Planning Authorities.

(b) The developer shall pay a sum of money to the Planning Authority, either annually or in such manner as may be agreed, towards the cost of the provision of environmental improvement and recreational or community amenities in the locality. The identification of such projects shall be decided by the relevant Planning Authority having consulted with the community liaison committee as provided for under (a) above. The amount of the contribution and the arrangements for payment shall be agreed between the developer and the planning authorities or, in default of such agreement shall be referred to the Board for determination. The amount shall be index linked in the case of phased payment. The developer shall consult with the planning authorities in this regard prior to the commencement of the development.

Reason: It is considered reasonable that the developer should contribute towards the cost of environmental, recreational or community amenities which would constitute a substantial gain to the local community



Lisa Carroll
A/ Senior Executive Planner



Gerard Kellett
Senior Executive Planner

Alan Russell

Alan Russell
Senior Planner



Brian Murphy
Senior Executive Officer



Des Foley
Deputy Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Chief Executive's Report dated 21/06/2024