



## APPENDIX 13-5

LEMANAGHAN MONASTIC  
COMPLEX: HISTORICAL,  
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL  
CONTEXT

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# 1. LEMANAGHAN MONASTIC COMPLEX: BACKGROUND, CONTEXT AND VISUAL ANALYSIS

This appendix provides detailed context and analysis of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex to support the impact assessments reported in Chapter 13 Cultural Heritage and Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual. This appendix includes a variety of visualisations and descriptions from GIS mapping, photographic imagery gathered during site visits and aerial imagery captured from a drone. The analysis and discussion are also supported by excerpts from photomontage and photowire visualisations included in the Volume 2 Photomontage Booklet.

## 1.1 Baseline Context

### 1.1.1 Historical and Archaeological Context

A monastery at Lemanaghan, *Liath Manchán*, was founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Manchán (of Clonmacnoise) whose feast day is celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. Manchán founded the monastery here at the request of the abbots of Clonmacnoise following the granting of the lands of ‘Tuaim-nEirc’ to the monastery of Clonmacnoise by Diarmait, King of Ireland. Tuaim-nEirc or is thought to refer to the island of dry land on which the monastery is located and which was then surrounded by bogs. The placename Lemanaghan comes from the Irish *Liath Manchain* and which translates as the grey place or lands of Manchán.

The selection of the site at Lemanaghan for the establishment of the monastery may have been multifactorial. Its isolation or seclusion on the dry island surrounded by bogs is likely to have been a factor and would have provided a place of quiet for the monks’ work and prayers. Another reason may have been the presence of a natural spring well which would have provided a source of clean drinking water. Additionally, the well may also have been a focus of pagan veneration prior to the establishment of the monastery. In such circumstances places of pagan worship were converted to Christianity to enable the local community to accept the new religion without completely abandoning long established places or symbols of worship.

The monastic complex at Lemanaghan primarily comprises a number of archaeological monuments which are located to the south and east of the R436 regional road. The surviving upstanding monastic monuments are spread out over an area measuring c. 500m E/W x c. 90m N/S and include a church (OF015-004003-) (aka St Manchán’s Church), surrounding graveyard (OF015-004004-), building (OF015-004009-) (aka the House of Manchán), bullaun stones (OF015-004012- and OF015-004013-), holy well (OF015-004007-) (aka St Manchán’s Well), and a road (OF015-004011-) which leads from the church and graveyard to a hermitage (OF015-004006-) (aka St Mella’s Cell) and surrounding ecclesiastical enclosure (OF015-004014-) located c. 340m to the east. Additional associated monuments include several early Christian cross-slabs and architectural fragments (OF015-004005- to OF015-044032-) which are located both within the church and graveyard at Lemanaghan and also within the disused primary school a short distance to the north-west, on the north side of the public road. Other related monuments include the sub-surface remains of a surrounding ecclesiastical enclosure (OF015-004008-) which was detected as a result of geophysical survey carried out at the site in 2004 (Gibson and George, 2004 unpublished report). The possible remains of the enclosure comprising a curvilinear ditch or fosse were noted in the fields to the north-east and south-west of the church and graveyard but do not have any upstanding remains.

A deserted medieval settlement (OF015-004—) associated with the monastic complex is also included in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) at Lemanaghan. It pertains to a settlement which is likely to

have grown up around the monastic site during the medieval period but of which there is no surviving above-ground remains. The poorly preserved remnants of a tower house (OF015-004001-) located c. 60m to the north-west of the church and graveyard further demonstrates the continuity of settlement at Lemanaghan into the later medieval period. The connection between the tower house and the monastic complex is underscored by its use for the translation of the Annals of Clonmacnoise in 1627 (See Chapter 13 Section 13.3.2.1.6 for further detail). The tower house was largely demolished in 1959.

The earliest cartographic depiction of the monastery at Lemanaghan is in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Down Survey barony map of Garrycastle (1657) which shows the church and glebe lands as well as an adjacent house or tower. The 18<sup>th</sup> century Taylor and Skinner Road Maps of 1777 (Map no. 81 – Road from Dublin to Loughrea by Shannon Bridge) also indicate and name the church and castle which were then in ruins (<https://www.swilson.info/>, accessed 19th December 2025). No further detail is shown on these early maps, however, additional buildings at the site are indicated and named by the first edition (1829-41) OS map. Roads or routeways leading to or from Lemanaghan Monastic Complex across the adjacent bogs are not shown on any of the aforementioned maps.

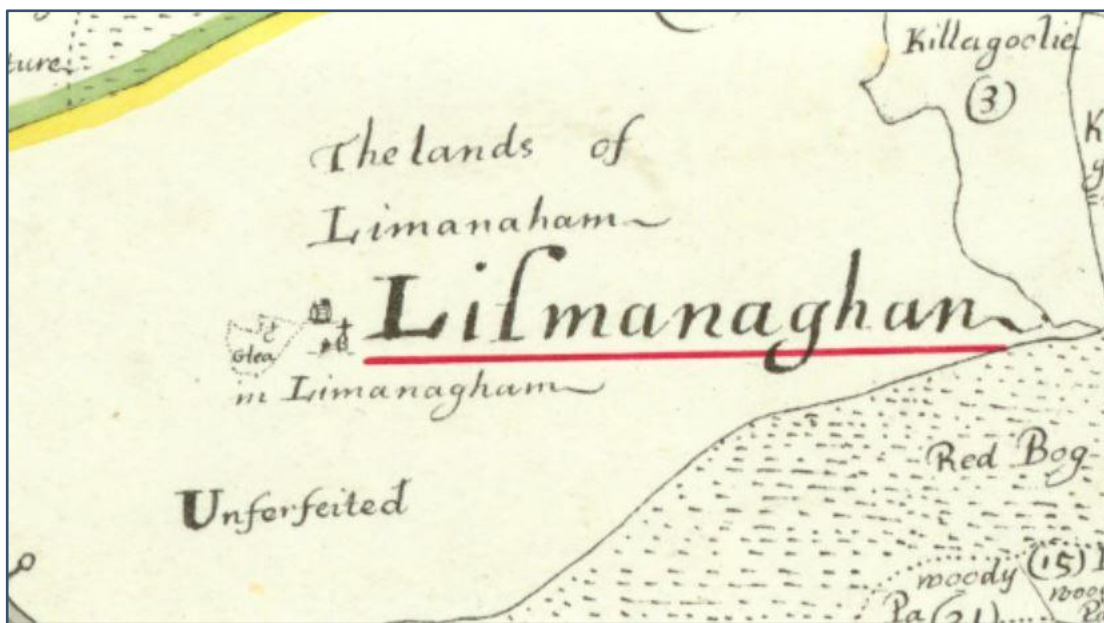


Plate 1 Extract from Down Survey barony map of Garrycastle (1657) showing the church, glebe and castle at Lemanaghan (<https://downsurvey.tchpc.tcd.ie/>, accessed 19th December 2025). Note no roads to the site are shown on the map.



Plate 2 Extract from Taylor and Skinner 1777 Map no. 81 showing church and castle at Lemanaghan (<https://www.swilson.info/>, accessed 19th December 2025). Note no roads leading to the monastic site or castle are shown.

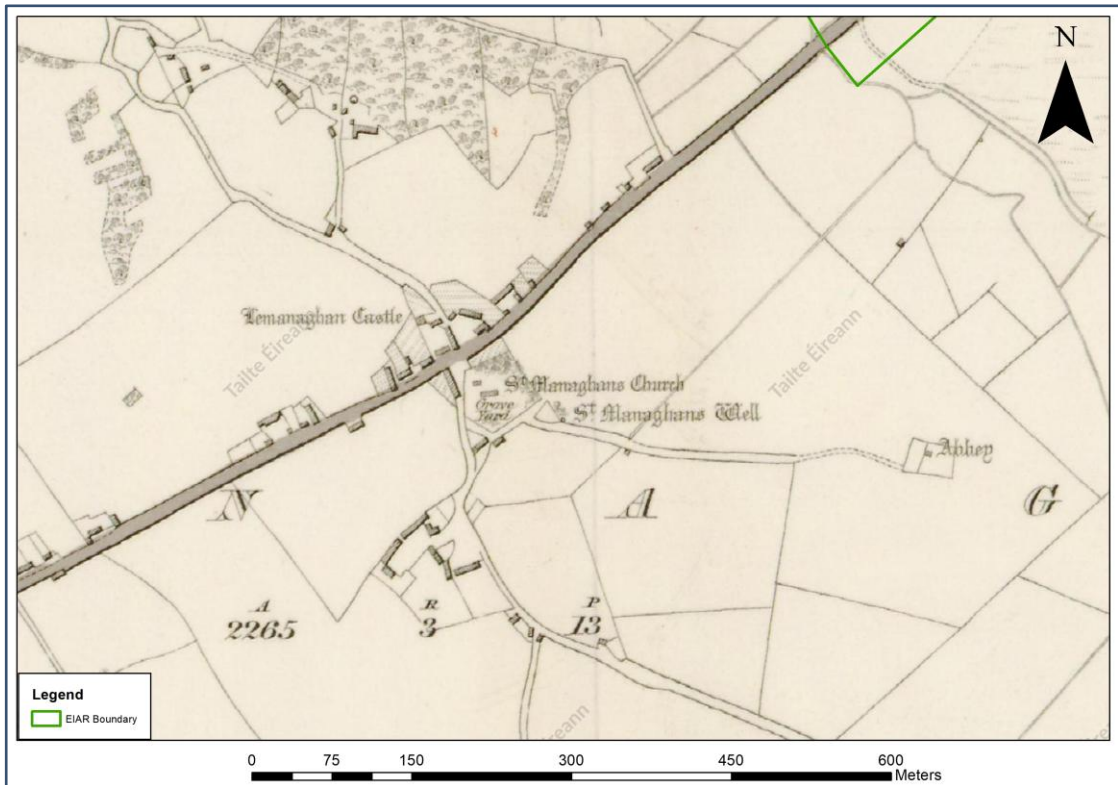


Plate 3 Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and Lemanaghan Castle as depicted on first edition (1829-41) OS map (Tailte Éireann).

1.1.2

## Current Geographic Context

The figures below include annotated drone imagery showing the various components and geographic arrangement of relevant recorded monuments within and surrounding the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex.



Figure 1-1 Aerial view and geographic context of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and the Proposed Project Site

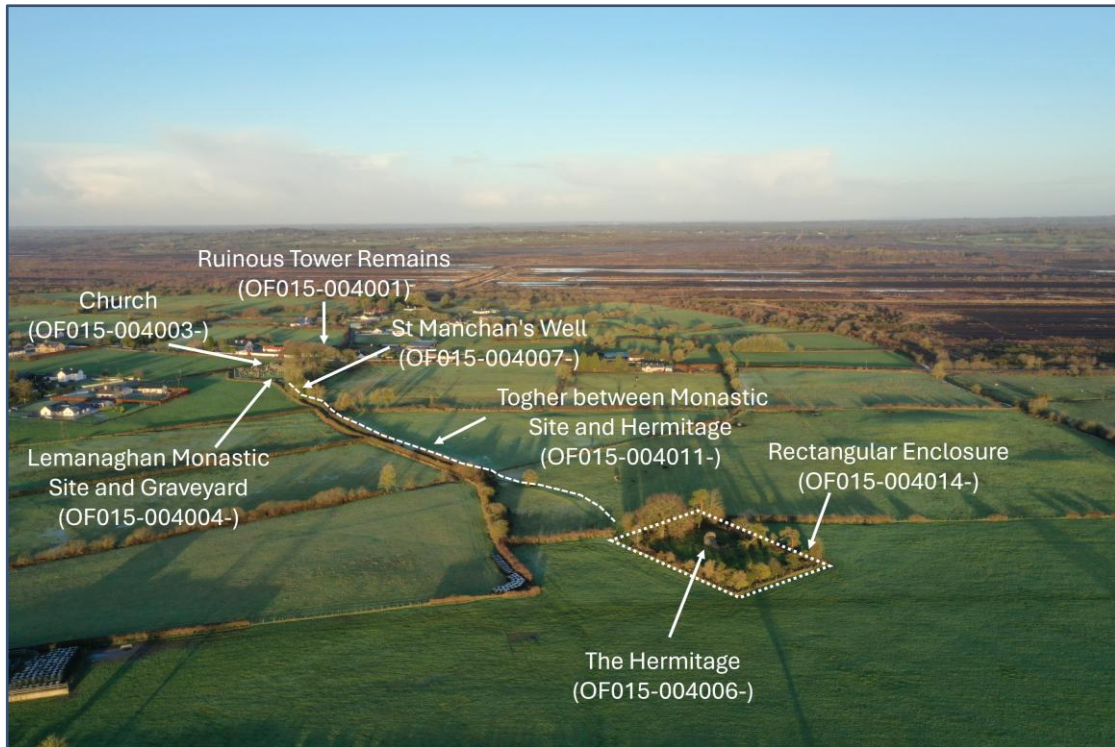


Plate 4 View north-west captured from a drone to the south-east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex: Annotations have been added to the aerial image to identify the location of the monuments in the area

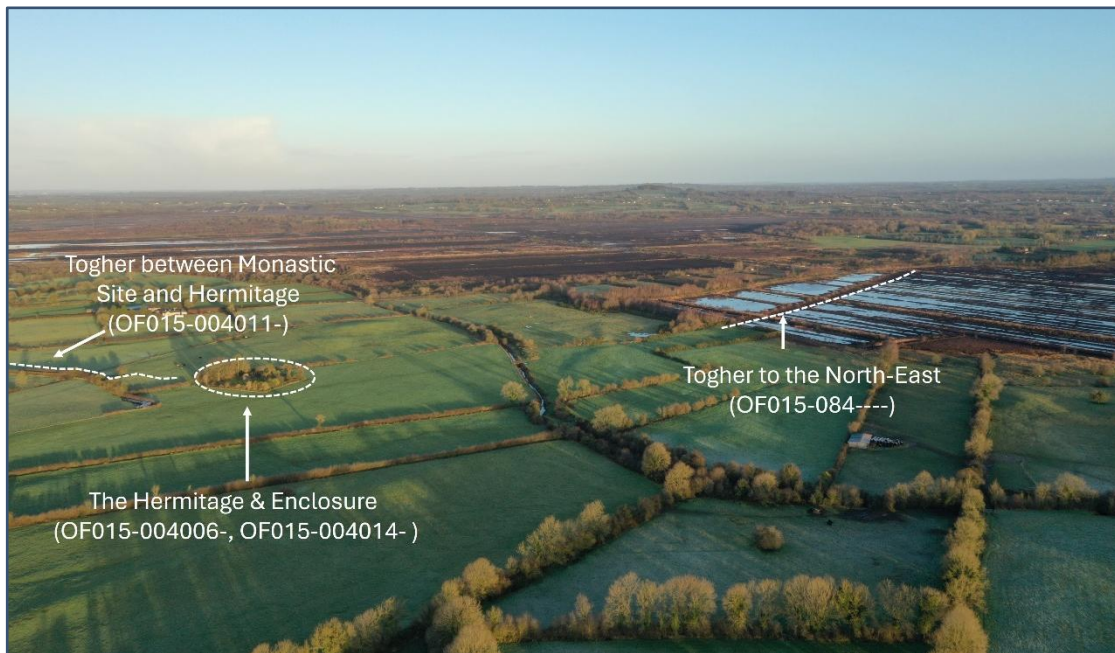


Plate 5 View north captured from a drone to the south-east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex: Annotations have been added to the aerial image to identify the location of the monuments in the area

The map and the drone imagery above show the current geography of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and nearby toghers which are still extant and clearly visible in the landscape from an aerial perspective. The recorded monuments of the Monastic Complex are set within a landscape of farmland comprising open fields of grassland delineated by mature boundary vegetation. The maps and imagery show a small cluster of residential buildings and farms enclosing the Monastic site and graveyard to the north, west and south, as well as the local road network, which all form part of the current landscape setting.

The cutover peatlands of Lemanaghan Bog are visible as darker areas in the background of the aerial imagery above. The bog encloses the island of agricultural land where the Monastic Complex is located from the west, to the north and then to the east. The Proposed Wind Farm is located in the westerly, northerly and north-easterly portions of Lemanaghan Bog, comprising areas to the northern side of the R436 Regional Road. The Proposed Wind Farm is not located in the peatlands immediately east of the Monastic Complex. Further information and visuals showing the specific location of the infrastructure of the Proposed Wind Farm relative to the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is set out in Section 1.2 below.

### Togher OF015-084----: Geographic and Landscape Context

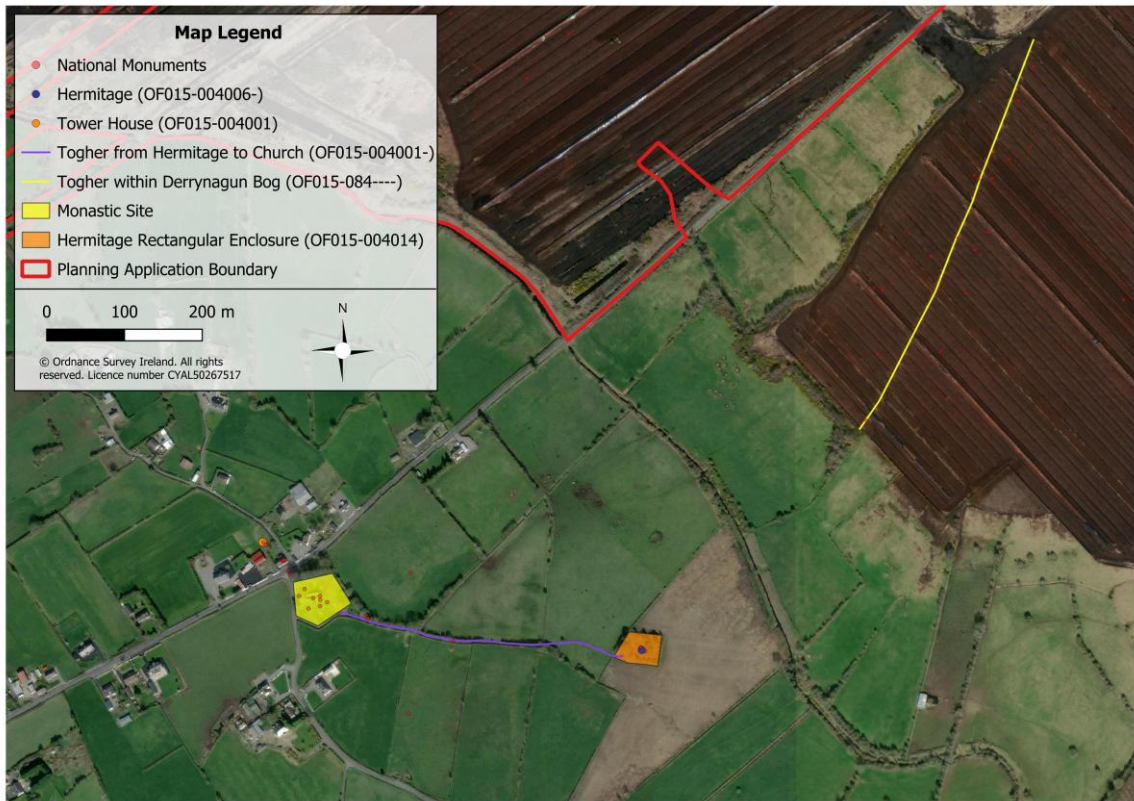


Figure 1-2 Aerial View and Geographic Context of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex with Togher OF015-084—

Plate 6 (below) shows an aerial image of Togher OF015-084—, this is currently one of the more prominent toghers in the area which is still physically extant and visible as a pathway through the landscape, particularly from the aerial perspective shown below. This togher is located in Derrynagun Bog east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex where it extends in a north-easterly direction. Both the bog and the togher pictured below are located south of the R346 Regional Road and are not located within the Proposed Wind Farm.

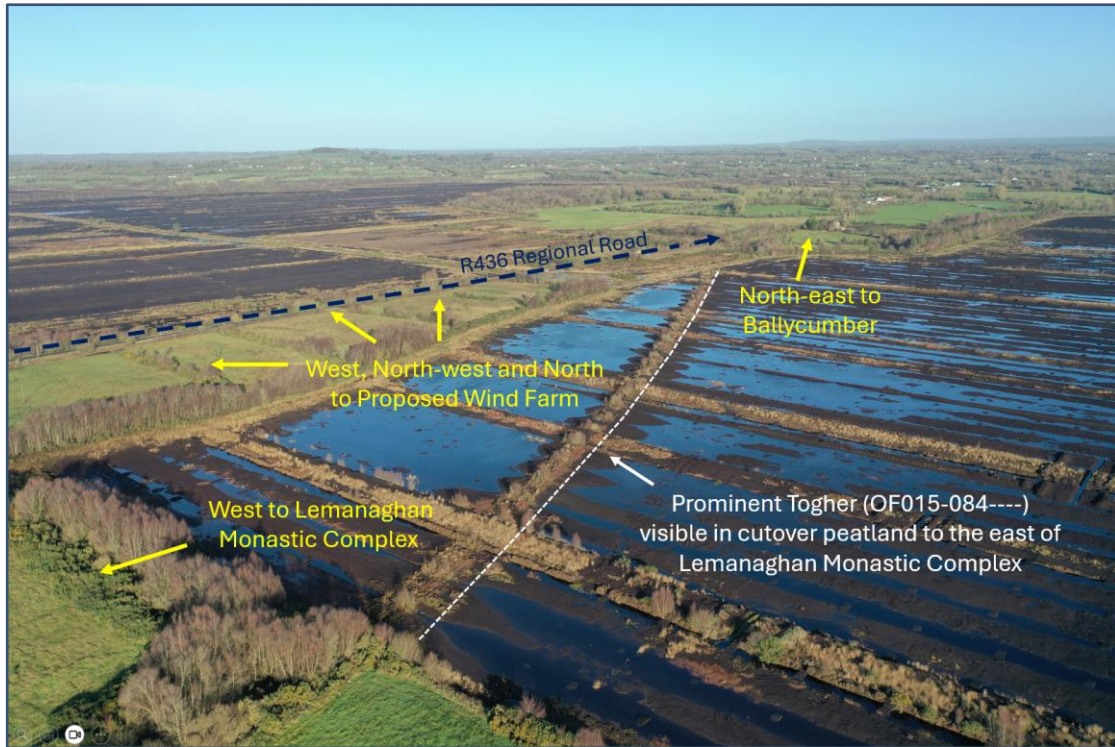


Plate 6 View north-east along Togher OF015-084— within the Derrynagun Bog captured from a drone to the east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex: Annotations have been added to the aerial image to identify the togher and direction of other relevant features

Togher OF015-084— (above) is identified as the most prominent togher in the current landscape demonstrating a potential physical link between the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, Lemanaghan Bog and the wider landscape. As discussed in Section 1.3 below, the route along Togher OF015-084— likely formed part of the ancient pathways connecting Lemanaghan Monastic Complex with the wider cultural landscape to the north-east and beyond. Other toghers and potential connections with the bogs in this area relevant to the assessment are addressed in Section 1.3 below.

1.2

## Location of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex Relative to the Proposed Wind Farm

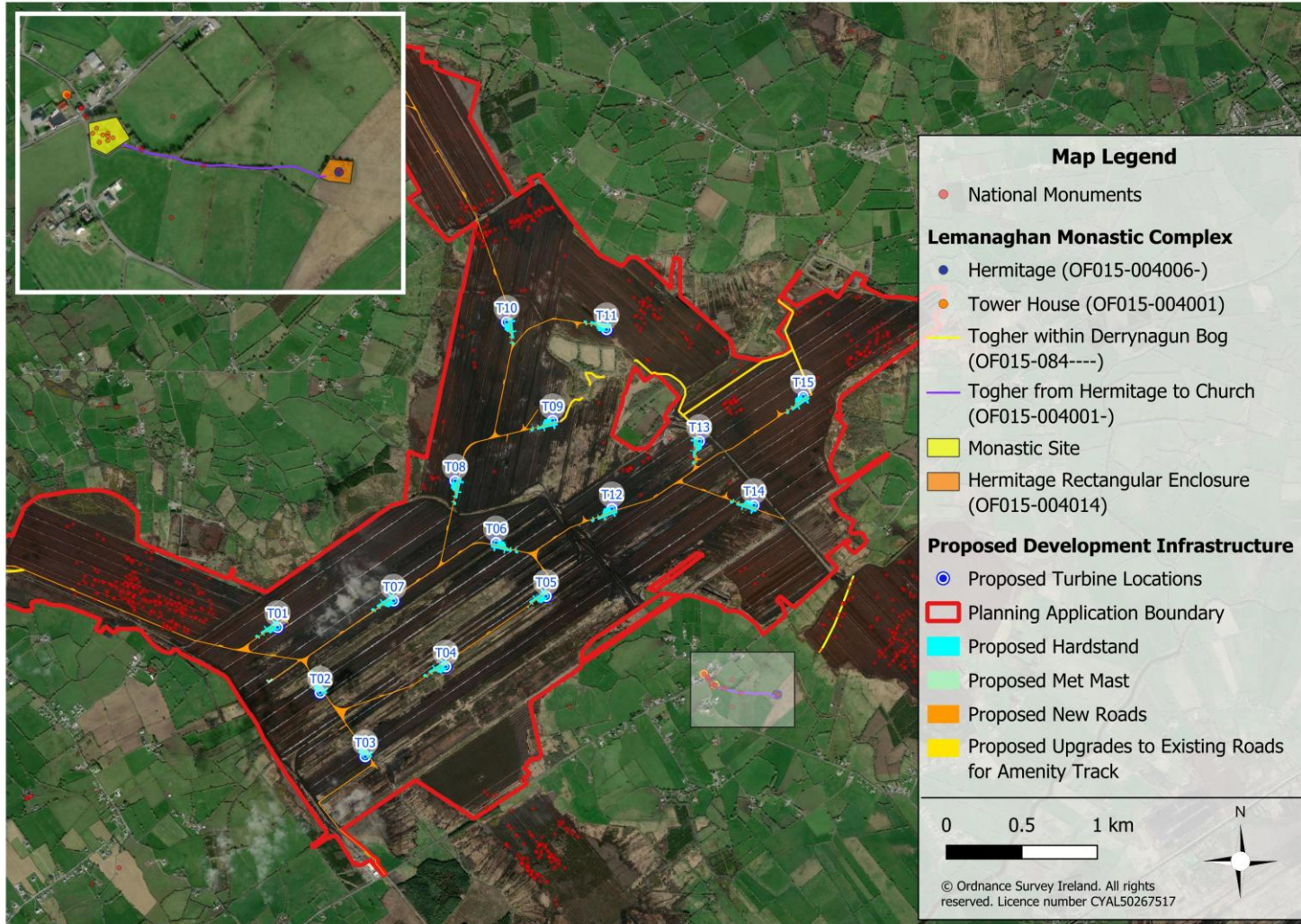


Figure 1-3 Geographic Context of the Proposed Wind Farm Site in relation to the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex

The following sections detail the geographic location of the Proposed Wind Farm relative to the features of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex. The annotated drone visualisations in Plate 7, Plate 8, and Plate 9 below are intended to be informative visualisations to provide geographic and landscape context of the relationship between the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and the infrastructure of the Proposed Wind Farm. Within the figures below, the Planning Application Boundary is illustrated in red and areas likely to undergo substantial change on account of new proposed infrastructure are illustrated in Blue. It is highlighted that these boundaries (Red and Blue) are ‘indicative’. A degree of care was taken to ensure these were made to be as accurate as possible by cross referencing the aerial imagery with GIS data. However, there is a slight margin of error to be accounted for with respect to exact positioning of the information within the imagery. Reference should therefore also be made to the images below, which were created in GIS to a very high degree of accuracy and scale. The areas annotated in Blue include infrastructure such as the proposed turbines, hardstands, and new roads which are set back at least 240m from the Planning Application Boundary.



Plate 7 View north-west captured from a drone to the south-east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex: Annotations have been added to the aerial image to show the location of the Proposed Wind Farm Relative to the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, Please Note: Lines are 'indicative', please consult mapping figures for high accuracy representation.

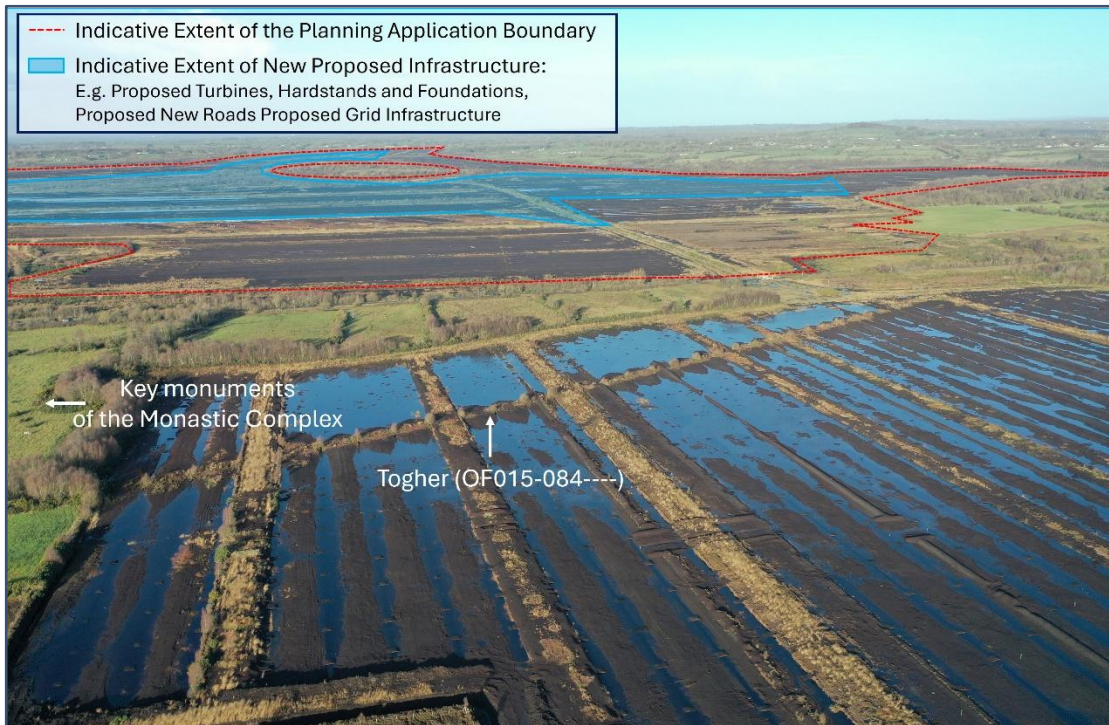


Plate 8 View north captured from a drone to the south-east of the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex: Annotations have been added to the aerial image to show the location of the Proposed Wind Farm Relative to Togher OF015-084, Please Note: Lines are 'indicative', please consult mapping figures for high accuracy representation.

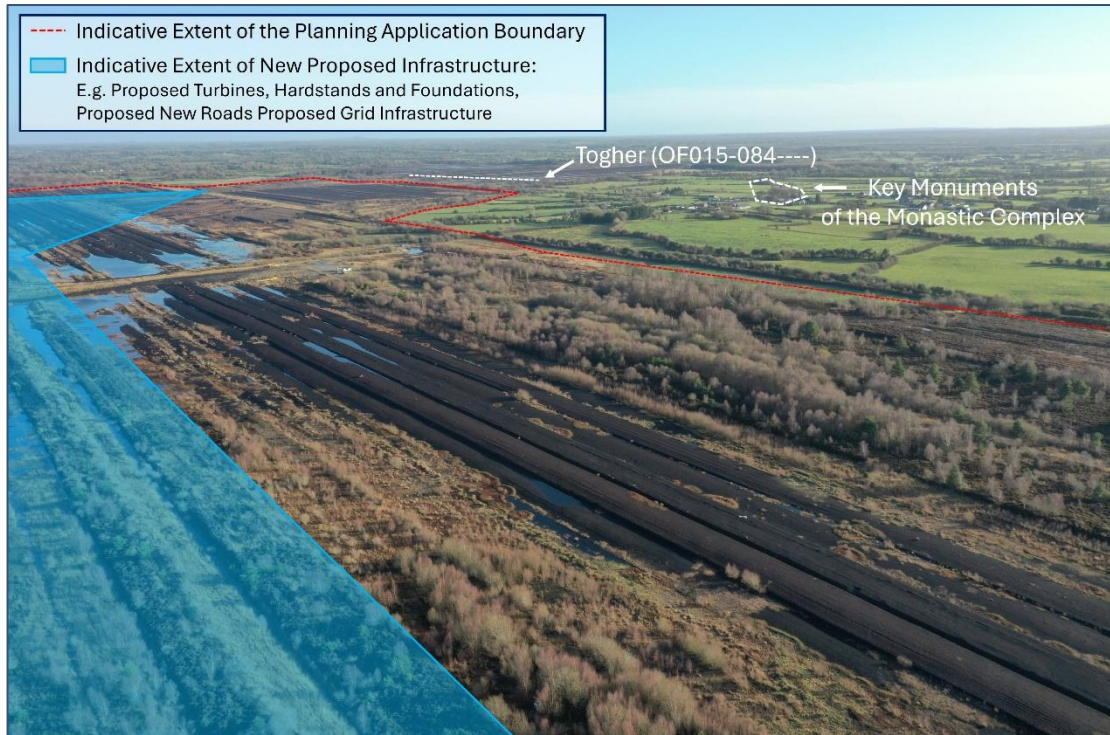


Plate 9 View south-east captured from a drone above the Proposed Wind Farm (Near Turbine T05): Annotations have been added to the aerial image to show the location of the Proposed Wind Farm Relative The Lemanaghan Monastic Complex Please Note: Lines are 'indicative', please consult mapping figures for high accuracy representation.

## 1.3 Relationships and Connection with Lemanaghan Bog

### Historic and Archaeological Connection

As noted in Section 1.1.1 above, the connection between Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and the surrounding areas (i.e., Lemanaghan Bog and Derrynagun Bog) is one which is primarily rooted in the foundation of the monastery in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The presence of bog surrounding the dryland on which the monastery is located is likely to have been a factor in the selection of this location for the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, providing a place of seclusion and quiet contemplation for the monks. It was not, however, a place that remained inaccessible and routeways to the monastery would have been established soon after its foundation, particularly as it grew in importance. Those routeways, while now largely lost to the passage of time, would have served to connect the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex with the outside world and the wider surrounding landscape. While the routes of any original pathways or toghers which definitively led to the monastic complex have not been identified, the presence of toghers dating to the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> century AD within the Lemanaghan Bog and surrounding areas, as well as within the Proposed Project site has been established through excavations carried out therein (see below). One such togher is located outside the Proposed Project site, in Derrynagun Bog, and may be a more likely example of a togher which originally served as a routeway to the monastery.

Apart from the monuments which directly pertain to the monastic site itself (see Section 1.1.1 above), additional monuments in the surrounding locale demonstrate potential connectivity with Lemanaghan Monastic Complex. One such monument type is toghers or roadways which may have led to the monastic complex from various locations over its long period of use. The term togher is used for such routeways which are located in a peatland context, while the term road or trackway is used for a way which has been deliberately constructed between places. Toghers are relatively commonplace features found within the peatlands of Ireland. There are remnants of many toghers throughout Lemanaghan Bog, including several located within the Proposed Project site. These toghers are identified and

assessed in Chapter 13, with the majority having no visible surface expression. One such togher OF007-350— which has a visible surface expression is located towards the north side of the Proposed Wind Farm (near proposed turbines T10 and T11). As detailed below, this togher does not have any perceived connection to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and is likely to be much later in date.

### Togher OF015-084----

It has been suggested that a togher (OF015-084—) located in Derrynagun bog c. 360m north-east of St Mella's Cell may have originally provided access to the monastic site. A portion of the togher was excavated in 1996 (O'Carroll 1996 unpublished report) and a date range of approximately 600 years for the use of the road from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD was established. While a direct connection to the monastic complex is unproven the excavator has suggested that the earliest phase of the togher may have been associated with the establishment of the monastic foundation in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The togher was noted for a length of c. 750m in the townland of Lemanaghan outside of the Proposed Project site and is still visible on aerial imagery today (see Figure 1-5 below). At its south-western extent it was traced as far as where the boundary of Bord na Mona (BnM) property met 'reclaimed farmland on Lemanaghan dry island' (ibid.). Its possible continuation further to the south-west towards the monastic complex is suggested by the visible remains of the togher in section along the line of a field boundary on the dry island (ibid.), however, it has not been definitively traced beyond the aforementioned boundary.

### Other Toghers

Possible connections between toghers located within the Proposed Project site to the north of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex have also been suggested. Two Class 1 toghers (OF007-329— and OF007-279— ) were subject to partial excavation as part of an assessment and mitigation programme in 1998 and the Peatlands Excavation Programme 1999-2000, respectively. Togher OF007-329— is located in the townland of Lemanaghan and was traced for a length of c. 870m N/S from a dry island within the Proposed Project site to north of the dry island on which Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is located further to the south. While a direct connection to the monastic complex has not been inferred, the date of the togher, which ranges from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, demonstrates the construction of the trackway during the time period just prior to the establishment of the monastery. Its location and date may suggest its use by the occupants of the monastery or by visitors to same, however, this cannot be stated with certainty. The second togher (OF007-279—) was located further to the north within the Proposed Project site in Castlearmstrong townland and was subject to partial excavation in 1999. The togher was identified over a length of c. 450m, with four cuttings placed along same (Whitaker and O'Carroll 2009, p. 53). A date of late 6<sup>th</sup>/early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD was returned for this structure, and a wooden crozier was also recovered driven into the peat adjacent to the trackway. The date of the togher is somewhat earlier than the reputed establishment of St Manchán's monastery but is direct evidence for the construction of plank trackways crossing the bog in the early medieval period. The presence of the crozier adjacent to same may be suggestive of the use of the trackway by an ecclesiastic or perhaps the purposeful deposition of the object during the lifetime of the use of the track.

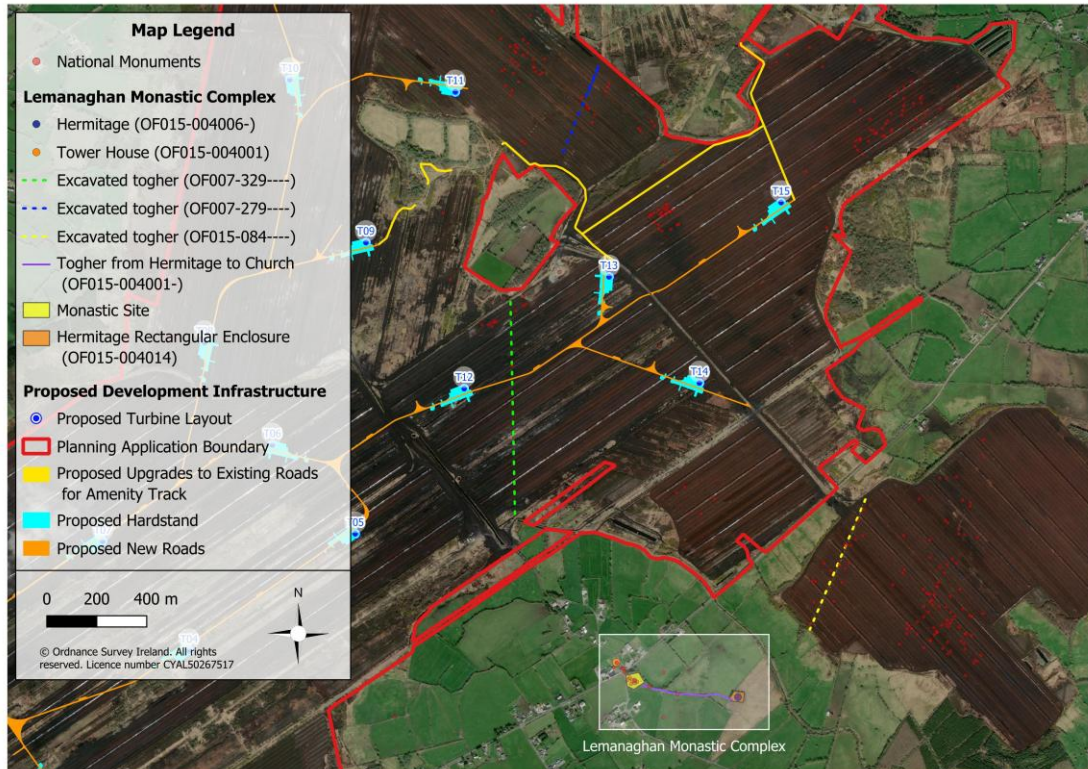


Figure 1-4 Indicative location of early medieval toghers excavated in Lemanaghan and Derrynagun Bogs in relation to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex and the Proposed Wind Farm infrastructure.

While the date of the aforementioned toghers provides evidence for the use of the bog within the Proposed Project site during the early medieval period around the time of the establishment of St Manchán's monastery at Lemanaghan, it does not automatically infer a direct connection between such sites and the Monastic Complex. Both peatland surveys and excavations carried out within the Lemanaghan group of bogs has clearly demonstrated the construction and use of trackways to access and cross the vast tracks of bog in this area since the Bronze Age period. Indeed, it is noted by the excavators that the 'excavated and material evidence [ from Lemanaghan Bog] points to continuous occupation in the area from c. 3000 BC up to the present time.' (ibid., p. 161). The peoples and communities that occupied both the dryland and wetland environments within and surrounding the area of the Proposed Project site down through the millennia clearly interacted with the bog on a regular basis, utilising it for its resources as well as establishing routeways across it from the adjacent dryland. This use of the bog continued in the early medieval period and represents a continuation of the same or similar activity at this time by the occupants of the surrounding landscape, both secular and ecclesiastical. Similarly, continuity of use of the bog into the later medieval period and post-medieval period is also evidenced by toghers dating to these time periods, some of which are also located within the Proposed Project site such as the gravel/stone trackway OF007-350— in Tumbleagh townland (see Figure 15 below ).

It is also clear from the archaeological record that the bogs surrounding Lemanaghan Monastic Complex comprised an ever-evolving environment which has changed significantly in appearance since its formation 10,000 years ago. The variety of monuments located within the bog demonstrates how 'different site types were constructed in response to a variety of factors and environmental indicators' (ibid., p. 164). Environmental evidence from the bog also indicates the presence of oak and ash forests in the area, in particular during the Bronze Age and early medieval periods (ibid., 165), and which are no longer extant. The later use of the site for the industrial production of peat from the 1960s until 2020 comprised a further evolution of the site and resulted in much physical alteration to same. Indeed, the Conservation Plan (2007, p. 51) for the monastic site at Lemanaghan notes the following in relation to the landscape setting of the complex: 'The landscape setting of Lemanaghan has changed beyond recognition from the period when the first monastery was established. Changing agricultural practices,

*the commercial working of the bog, and drainage work to the River Brosna are just some of the factors that have had perhaps the most profound effect, altering the very island nature of the site.'*

As can be the case with evolving landscapes which continued to be used over prolonged periods of time, any physical link which may once have existed between early medieval trackways within the Proposed Project site and Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is no longer apparent. The early medieval toghers subject to partial excavation as discussed above, do not have any above-ground expression and are not visible at ground level within the Proposed Project site. There is not therefore any visible physical connectivity between these monuments and the monastic site at Lemanaghan. The Conservation Plan (ibid., p. 52) also acknowledges this lack of physical connection stating 'There are no established walking routes across the bogs'.

The togher (OF015-084—) located in the bog c. 360m north-east of St Mella's Cell does, however, have a visible surface expression and while a direct physical link to the monastic complex no longer endures, its use as a routeway to the site in the past is likely. As both the togher in question and the monastic complex are located outside the Proposed Project site any such connectivity which exists between the togher and the monastic complex will continue despite the introduction of the Proposed Project.

Many other toghers located within the Proposed Project site, be they extant or not, which are of different date to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex would not have any perceived connection to the monastic site. One such example is OF007-350— which comprises a gravel/stone trackway with visible remains is located in Tumbeagh townland within the Proposed Project site. It extends from the dry island within same in a north-west and then westerly direction towards a 17<sup>th</sup> century house OF007-065— located outside the Proposed Project site, and may have been used as a routeway into and out of the bog during that time. It serves as another example of the continuity of use of the site into the post-medieval period. The potential direct and indirect effects to this monument as a result of the Proposed Project are detailed in Chapter 13 with proposed mitigation measures to include floating proposed new roads and cabling over the monument.

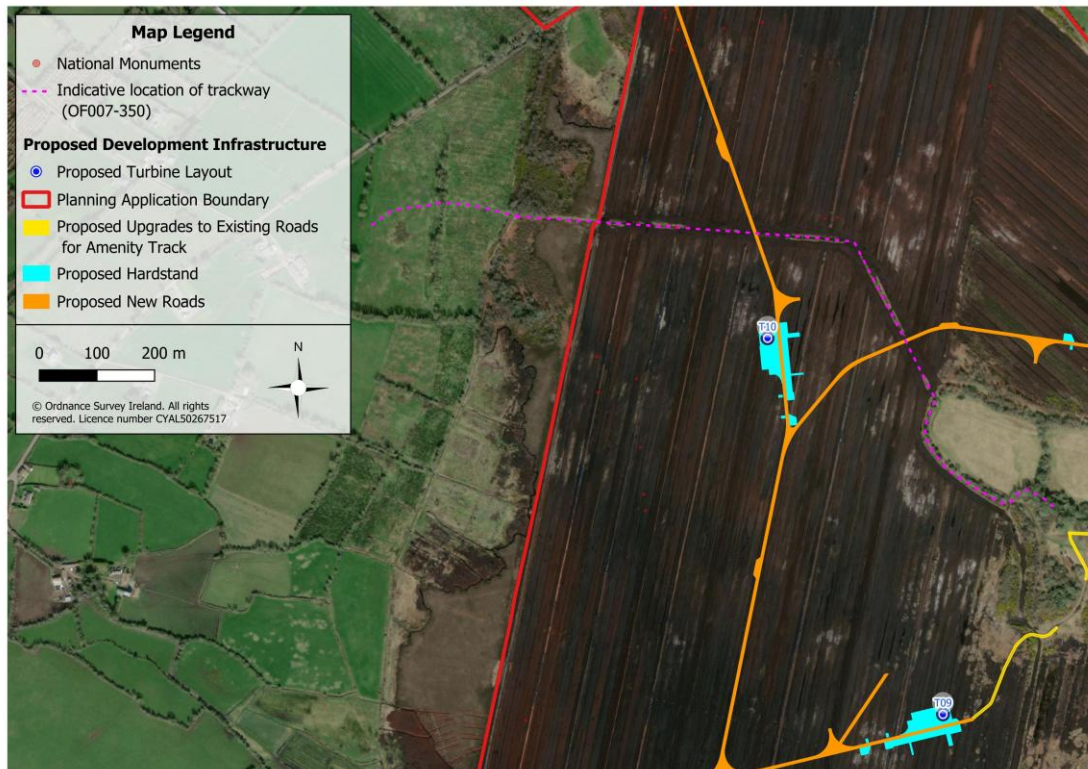


Figure 1-5 Indicative location of gravel/stone trackway OF007-350— within and extending outside the Proposed Project site.



Plate 10 View southeast captured from a drone above the Proposed Wind Farm (Near Turbine T10): Annotations have been added to the aerial image to show the location of the Togher within the site at Tumbeagh (OF007-350) and the indicative Planning Application Boundary, delineated in red.

### An tSlí Mhór - 'The Great Way'

The Slí Mhór or 'Great Way' comprised a major east-west route in early medieval Ireland and was one of five great roads which are thought to have led to the Hill of Tara. The Slí Mhór itself is considered by some to have followed the Esker Riada, the long gravel ridge deposited by glaciers at the end of the last ice age, through the centre of Ireland and is thought to have functioned as a trade and pilgrimage route. It is also known as the 'Pilgrim's Way' given that it may have functioned as a routeway for pilgrimage to important ecclesiastical centres including Clonmacnoise. It is suggested to start in Dublin, continuing westwards through Kildare and Offaly before ending at the mouth of the Clarin River on Galway Bay (An tSlí Mhór (The Great Way) and the Esker Riada <https://turtlebunbury.com/document/esker-riada/>, accessed 8th January 2026).

The precise route of the Slí Mhór is uncertain and much research has been conducted in an attempt to ascertain same. Research by Hermann Geissel entitled '*A Road on the Long Ridge In Search of the Ancient Highway on the Esker Riada*' makes reference to Colm O'Lochlainn's 1940 essay, '*Roadways in Ancient Ireland*', which mapped the five great roads including the Slí Mhór. This map shows a clear convergence of four of these highways on Dublin ([https://www.tarataratara.net/resources/Tara\\_roads/East\\_West/Tara\\_Slige\\_Mhor.htm](https://www.tarataratara.net/resources/Tara_roads/East_West/Tara_Slige_Mhor.htm) accessed 22nd October 2025). In the twelfth-century Book of Leinster it is stated that the Slí Mhór passed through Clonard, while other sources favour a route passing through north Kildare and Offaly, crossing the Shannon at Clonmacnoise. For the Slí Mhór O'Lochlainn suggested the following main locations along its route to Clarinbridge in Galway; Dublin, Celbridge, Timahoe, Clonmacnoise and Ballinasloe (ibid.). While O'Lochlainn considered that the Slí Mhór largely coincided with the Esker Riada, Geissel notes that the latter '*as a geological feature was physically discontinuous*' with no known '*documentary account of its exact course*' (ibid.). According to Geissel (ibid.) the Slí Mhór '*is recognised as being primarily a road for students and pilgrims travelling between....monastic centres and the seaports of Dublin/Howth and Clarinbridge/Kilcolgan*' in the time frame of the early medieval period with Clonmacnoise and Durrow at their peak.

Other sources suggest that the Sli Mhór passed through Lemanaghan and that the monastic site here served as an important place of ‘cultural and spiritual significance’ along its route (<http://www.saint-manchans-shrine.com/sl-mh-r-pilgrims-path.html>, accessed 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026). The route as suggested above with the important monastic centres of Durrow and Clonmacnoise along same would place the Sli Mhór to the north of the Proposed Project site and north of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex. It is possible, however, that smaller local roads were constructed off the Sli Mhór to provide pilgrim and trade access to sites such as the Monastic Complex at Lemanaghan. In any case, the precise route of the Sli Mhór or any associated local roads is not known and cannot be mapped with any certainty. As has been noted above, evolving and ever-changing landscapes frequently obscure or remove the traces of such ancient features. In this regard, while an association between Lemanaghan and the Sli Mhór may exist, the physical manifestation of that connection has been lost. The modern iteration of the Pilgrim’s Way to Clonmacnoise comprises a Pilgrim’s Road from Ballycumber to Clonmacnoise which utilises the public road network.

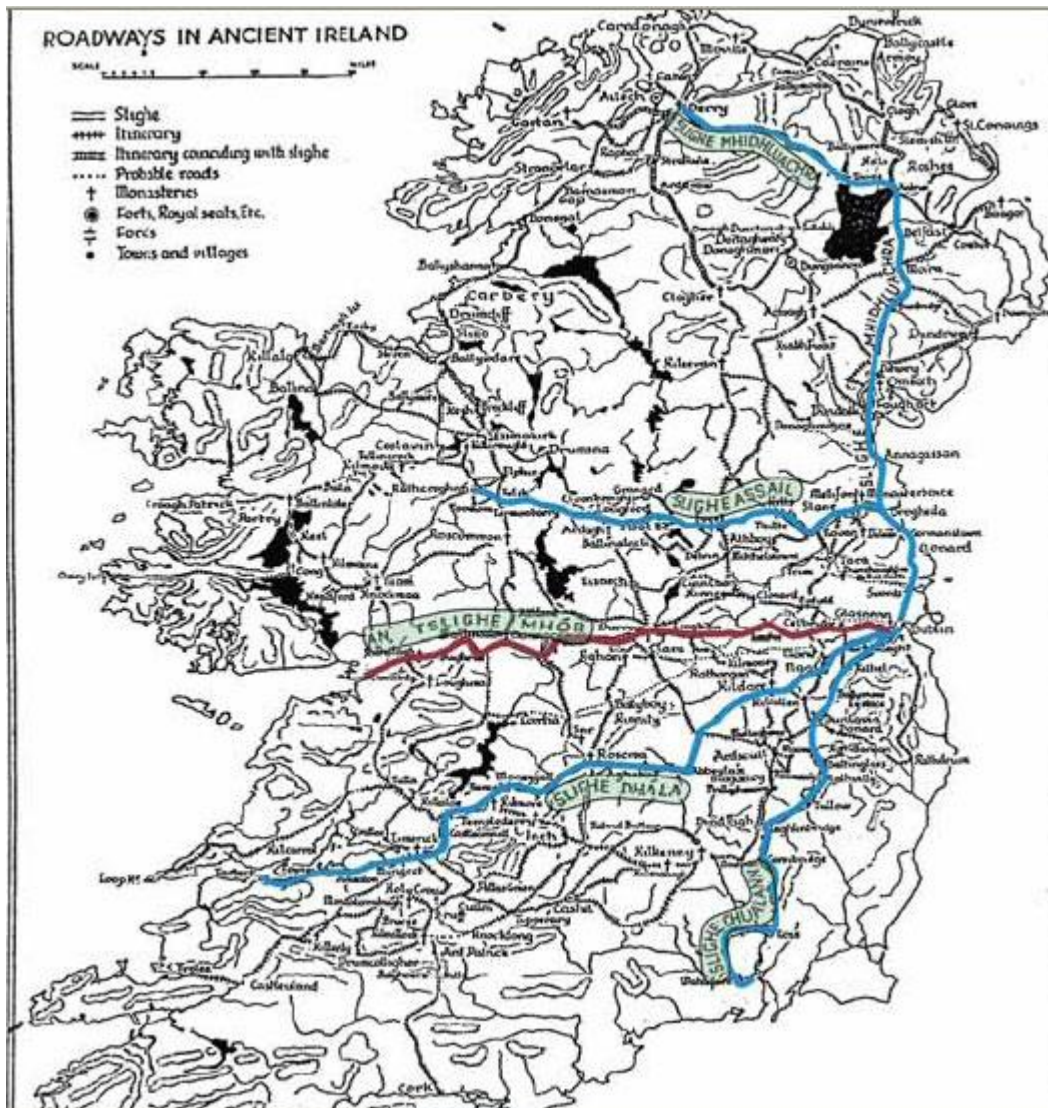


Plate 11 Map of Roadways in Ancient Ireland after O’Lochlainn showing the perceived routes of the five great roads.



Plate 12 Extract from Colm O'Lochlainn's map of the five great roads showing 'An tSlighe Mhór'.

As noted above, there is no known physical manifestation of the Sli Mhór or designated walking route along same which currently leads to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, or which extends through Lemanaghan Bog to the Monastic Site. A possible route for the establishment of the 'Pilgrim's Path' to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex was proposed in 1999 and incorporated the togher OF015-084—through Derrynagun Bog as discussed in the preceding section. A number of significant difficulties associated with this potential route were identified in the Conservation Plan for Lemanaghan (2007, 48) including the vulnerability of the togher and its susceptibility to damage. This coupled with other identified issues led to an alternative route being proposed which did not incorporate the trackway or St Mella's Cell. Subsequently, the Pilgrim's Path to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex has not been formally established and no walking route to the monastic site either through Lemanaghan Bog or through Derrynagun Bog currently exists.

1.4

## Current Visitor Experience of the Monastic Complex

This section analyses the journey scenario of a visual receptor visiting the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex from the Offaly Way waymarked walking trail. The experience of the impacts arising from the proposed turbines are demonstrated by various visualisations below and descriptions of the likely scenarios where they will occur.

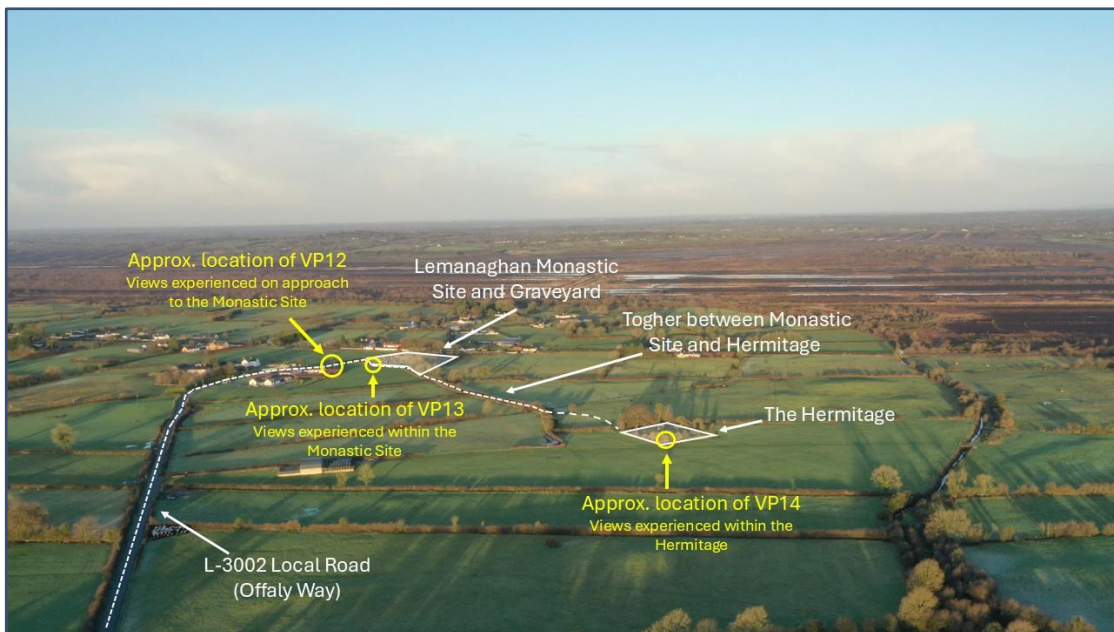


Plate 13 Drone Image of a Journey Scenario from the south (From the Offaly Way) of the Monastic Complex



Plate 14 Views towards proposed turbines (VP12, VP13, VP14)

A journey scenario of a visitor to the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex from the south begins along the L3002 Local Road, approaching from the south, at the end of the Offaly Way way-marked walking route. VP12 was captured along this road, comprising views northwards towards the monastic site to represent views a receptor would experience. The proposed turbines would be seen in the background, visually and physically set-back from the monastic site (see Plate 14 above). Visual effects arising at this viewpoint are discussed in Chapter 14. Views along this section of the route comprise of a working agricultural landscape. Utility poles supporting overhead lines, residential dwellings and agricultural buildings are seen within the view, forming part of the working, rural landscape.

In a typical journey scenario, a receptor would then proceed towards the monastic site and graveyard, where a visitor would stop to access the ruins and the graveyard. VP13 was captured from within the Monastic Site (see Plate 14 above). From this location, the proposed turbines would be seen beyond the immediate visual context setting of the Monastic Site. Visual effects arising at this viewpoint are discussed in Chapter 14.

The journey would then continue in a south-easterly direction along OF015-004011- Road, travelling towards the hermitage. Along this section of the route, the proposed turbines would be located behind the direction of travel – see Plate 16 below.



*Plate 15 Road OF015-004011- between the church and graveyard and the hermitage at Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, looking SE away from the Proposed Project site.*



Plate 16 Typical Journey Scenario within the Monastic Complex: View towards the Hermitage along the OF015-004011- Road

At the hermitage, the mature vegetation provides a sense of enclosure, and partially screens views of the proposed turbines, as illustrated in VP14 shown in Volume 2 Photomontage booklet (see Plate 14 above). Visual effects arising at this viewpoint are discussed in detail in Chapter 14.

On return from the hermitage, back towards the graveyard and monastic site, the receptor would experience views of the proposed turbines, where the proposed turbines would re-enter the field of view. The turbines would be seen visually set back from the receptor, beyond the deciduous trees and residential dwellings, for a short period of time as one is walking back along the OF015-004011- Road.



Plate 17 Road OF015-004011- between the Hermitage and the church and graveyard at Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, looking WNW towards the Proposed Project site.

In conclusion, the impact assessment detailed in Appendix 14-3 and Chapter 14 notes that the residual visual impact arising at VP12 is ‘Moderate’, ‘Moderate’ at VP13, and ‘Slight’ at VP14.

#### 1.4.1

## Other Relevant Visitor’s Experiences

### Pilgrim’s Road to Clonmacnoise

As described in Chapter 14, ‘Pilgrim’s Road to Clonmacnoise’ is a 24.4km walking route running from “Ballycumber to Clonmacnoise monastic site” running in “a linear route which runs along the crest of an esker” (DiscoverIreland.ie). This trail is located to the north of the Proposed Project site, located approx. 1.6km from the nearest proposed turbine (T10), where it follows the L7001 local road. This route is an established, publicly accessible way-marked walking trail, recognised within local tourism plans and is assessed in Chapter 14.

### ‘Pilgrim’s Path’ – Proposed Walking Route in the Lemanaghan Conservation Plan 2007

The ‘Pilgrim’s Path’ route is referenced within the Lemanaghan, County Offaly: Conservation Plan (2007) as a proposed route, with the document referring to both the ‘1999 route’ as well as a proposed alternative route alignment. The Conservation Plan notes that the 1999 route is understood as a known historic route that passes through “the graveyard of St Managhan’s Church, past the holy well, and up the medieval togher to St Mella’s Cell. It then progresses north-west to meet the line of the Derrynagun Bog trackway and proceeds on to Boher”. However, it is not considered suitable to function as a managed, walkable public trail. As a result, the Conservation Plan identifies an alternative route.

At the time of conducting the assessments for this ELAR, this route remains a proposal and is not an established, waymarked, or publicly accessible recreational walking route, as noted by the Conservation Plan which states “It is not intended to imply that, in its present state, the surface and terrain are

*necessarily suitable for visitors*”. The Conservation Plan 2007 further notes that the production of the document is only *“the first stage of the process”*, and a revised route for Pilgrim Path is yet to be agreed with the relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, at the time of writing this report, there is no public record confirming that the Lemanaghan Conversation Plan was formally implemented such that the Pilgrim Path became a managed, maintained waymarked walking trail, or a designated recreational route formally protected through local planning policy.

### Proposed Amenity Pathways (Part of the Proposed Project)

As part of the Proposed Project, approximately 0.8km of existing track within the site will be upgraded in order to provide approximately 17.7km of new roads to be used for maintenance and monitoring activity as well as for amenity purposes such as walkways and cycleways when the Proposed Wind Farm becomes operational. An additional 2.7km (approximately) of a new dedicated amenity link, along with the further upgrade of approximately 3.2km of existing track, for the purposes of amenity, is also proposed as part of the Proposed Project to provide a greater variety of walking loops. If planning permission is granted for the Proposed Wind Farm, the associated amenity pathways will connect into the permitted Offaly West portion of the Midlands Trail Network (MTN).

Once operational, these amenity tracks will contribute positively to the visitor experience for some users by providing improved safe access and recreational opportunities within Lemanaghan Bog, which is currently privately owned land.

## 1.5 Relevant Buffers and Set Back – Wind Energy Zoning

The Offaly Wind Energy Strategy 2021-2027 is addressed and discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of the EIAR, and also discussed in Section 14.4.1.1.4 of Chapter 14.

The zoning of the Offaly Wind Energy Strategy (WES) was updated and amended in 2021 to account for the Monastic Complex specifically, to *“protect the character of the monastic site”*.

### 1.5.1 WES - Suitability of the Proposed Project site

As detailed in Chapter 2, the Offaly County Council’s Chief Executive’s Report on the Material Alteration Consultation Stage of the OCDP (August 2021) confirmed that Lemanaghan Bog specifically, in which the majority of the Proposed Wind Farm is located in, is designated as ‘Open for consideration for Wind Energy Development’ as the area:

- has a viable wind speed and good access to the electricity grid;
- has fewer environmental and landscape constraints than other areas in the county;
- is characterised by dispersed or sparse patterns of rural housing;
- is of a sufficient size to accommodate commercial wind farms and associated infrastructure rather than a smaller remote and dispersed area.

This designation confirms that, at a strategic planning level, the Proposed Project site is considered an appropriate receiving landscape for wind energy development subject to detailed site-specific assessment, which is detailed in Section 3.2.3 of Chapter 3. Please see Section 2.6.4 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for further detail on the wind energy designations of the site.

1.5.2

## Specific Buffer from Lemanaghan Monastic Site in 2021 Chief Executive Report

As seen in Figure 1-6 the proposed turbines of the Proposed Wind Farm are located within an area designated as ‘Areas Deemed Open for Consideration’ for Wind Energy Developments, with the exception of T05 which is located on the boundary of the zoning with an area designated ‘Not Deemed Suitable for Wind Energy Developments’.

The area surrounding the Monastic Site, as noted in the OCC’s Chief Executive’s Report on the Material Alteration Consultation Stage of the OCDP (August 2021), was:

*“excluded from the designation ‘Open for Consideration for Wind Energy Development’ an area 500 metres north of the disused railway line known locally as “The Banagher Line” and 700 metres in each direction from Lemanaghan/Pollagh junction east towards Ballycumber and west towards Ferbane in order to protect the character of the monastic site”.*

The alteration to the Wind Energy Zoning was made specifically to account for and protect the character of the Monastic Site as per the extract above. A vast majority of the Proposed Wind Farm adheres to the buffer and setback from the Monastic Complex, as seen in Figure 1-6 below. The turbine layout reflects the intent of the amendment, with all but one of the proposed turbines set-back beyond the buffer introduced to protect the character of the Monastic Site.

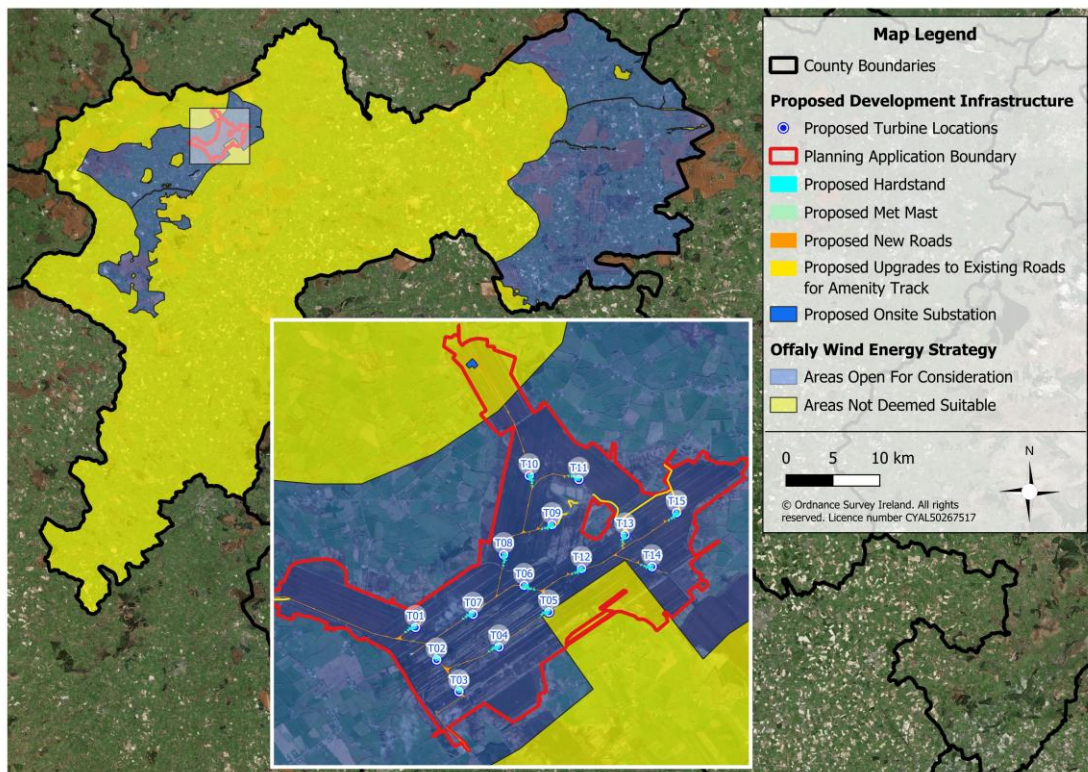


Figure 1-6 County Offaly 2021 Amended Wind Energy Zoning

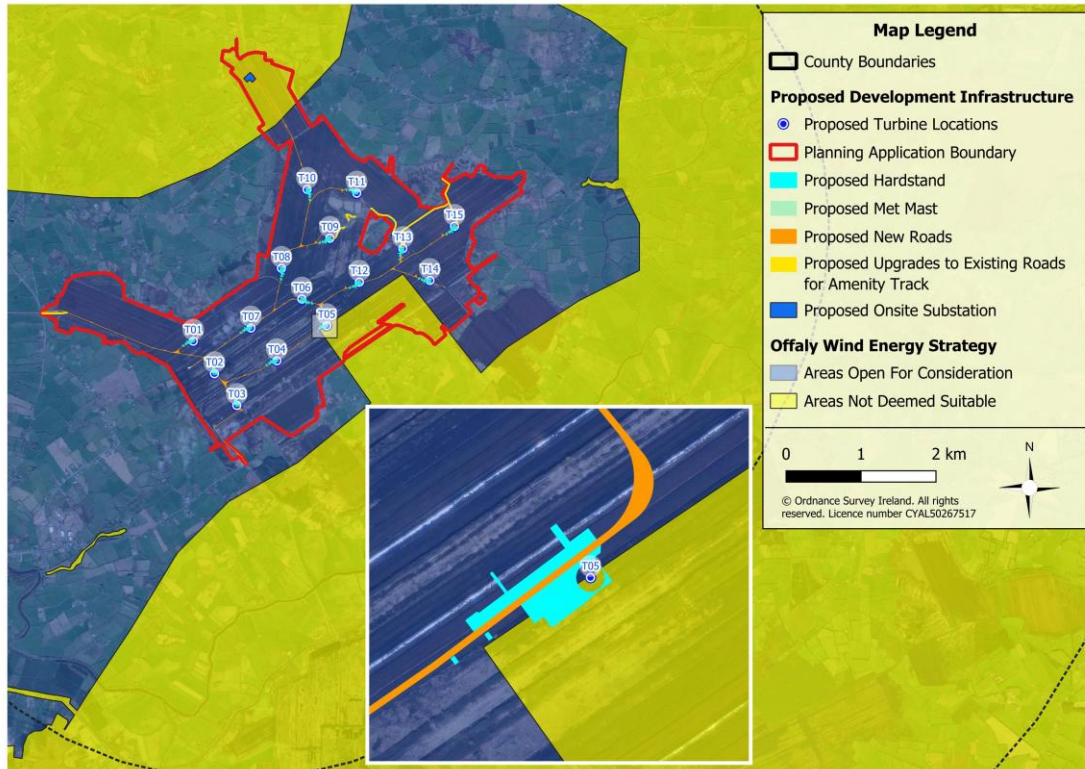


Figure 1-7 Zoomed view of County Offaly 2021 Amended Wind Energy Zoning highlighting location of turbine T05

The mapping above shows the proposed turbine layout and amended Wind Energy Zoning. This map was produced using Wind Zoning GIS data provided by Offaly County Council.

Only 1 no. proposed turbine (T05), is located at the boundary of this area between ‘Open to Consideration’ and ‘Area not Deemed Suitable’. The hardstand and infrastructure of turbine T05 is located approximately 1.9m outside of the ‘Open to Consideration’ zoning. As part of the impact assessment in this EIAR, both Landscape and Cultural Heritage surveys were conducted to assess the location of turbine T05 and the line delineating the 2021 Amended Wind Energy Zoning. Site investigations determined that the landscape immediately adjacent to this line, and the location of proposed turbine T05 is characterised by the same cutaway peatland landscape (as shown in the images below), which is of ‘Moderate’ Landscape Sensitivity as per the OCDP on both sides of the line. The immediate environs of turbine T05 and the boundary between the wind energy zoning does not have any specific sensitive landscape or immediately adjacent cultural heritage features that would constitute it being an area of higher sensitivity.

The image below shows that there is no identifiable material change in the physical characteristics of the landscape where turbine T05 is located, and where the line delineating the Wind Energy Zoning is located. The landscape remains consistent with the ‘Flat Peatland’ landscape character type as described in the DoEHLG 2006 Guidelines and the Draft DoHPLG 2019 Guidelines. As discussed in Section 14.4.3.1 of Chapter 14, all proposed turbines of the Proposed Wind Farm follow the siting and design recommendations for this landscape type.

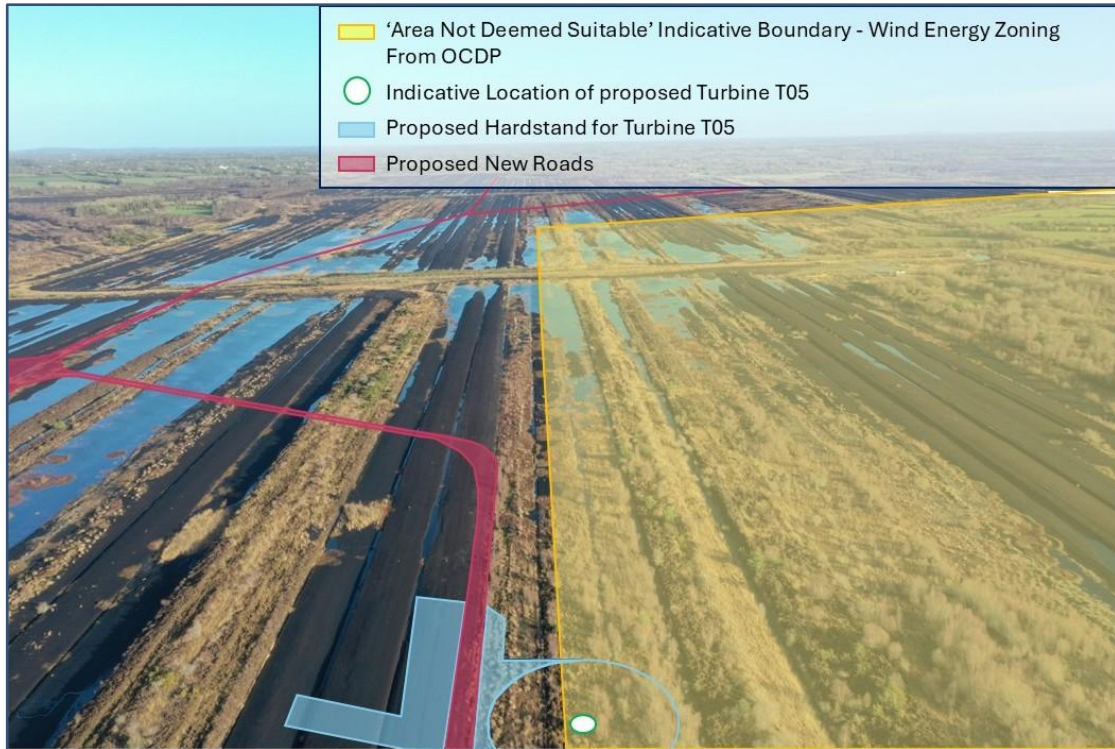


Plate 18 Indicative Image: Drone Image for Landscape Context: Views east, captured approx. 300m from nearest turbine (T05)

Site investigations and analysis of mapping and drone imagery determined that the Wind Energy Zoning Amendment was solely created to provide an appropriate set-back distance from the Monastic Site to mitigate potential impacts on the setting and character of the Monastic Complex. As outlined in the Chief Executive’s Report, the set-back distances are “500m north of the disused railway line” and “700m in each direction from Lemanaghan/Pollagh junction east towards Ballycumber and west towards Ferbane”. It is clear that turbine T05, and its associated infrastructure including hardstands and access roads will not physically and materially alter the landscape of the Monastic Complex itself. Therefore, the impact of turbine T05 is only on the landscape setting of the Monastic Site, which is assessed using photomontage visualisations in Volume 2 Photomontage Booklet, which are discussed above in Section 1.4.

Whilst the amendments in 2021 changed the Wind Energy Zoning, the Landscape Sensitivity where proposed turbine T05 is located remains within an area designated of ‘Moderate’ sensitivity in the Offaly County Development Plan, as per Figure 4.22 in Chapter 4 of the OCDP. It is again highlighted, that all proposed turbines of the Proposed Wind Farm are located beyond the buffer specifically created for protecting the character of the Monastic Site, with the exception of T05 which is located on the boundary of an area designated ‘not Deemed Suitable for Wind Energy Developments’.

## 1.6 Impact Assessment

The likely significant effects on recorded monuments are included in Chapter 13, following the methodology set out in Section 13.2 of Chapter 13. The likely significant effects on landscape and visual receptors are included in Chapter 14, set out in Section 14.7.3.1.4 and Section 14.7.3.2.3 of Appendix 14-1 Methodology.

Chapter 13 and Section 1.6.1 below refers to the ‘visual effects’. These visual effects relate to effects of the proposed turbines on the setting of the cultural heritage receptors (i.e. recorded monuments).

Chapter 14 and Section 1.6.2 below refers to ‘visual effects’ in relation to the effect on specific visual receptors – this means the people (receptor) visiting the monastic site. Chapter 14 and Section 1.6.2 also

reports the effects on the Monastic Complex as a landscape receptor – in this instance, only effects on its character and setting.

### 1.6.1 Cultural Heritage – Chapter 13

The Lemanaghan Monastic Complex comprises a collection of recorded monuments relating to the monastic foundation established here in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. It contains numerous monuments which range in date from that time through to the medieval period when the church at Lemanaghan was still in use. The Lemanaghan Monastic Complex shares associations and connectivity with other nearby monuments including the poorly preserved tower house to the north and a togher in Derrynagun bog to the east. Given its archaeological, architectural and cultural merit the complex as a whole is regarded as being of high archaeological sensitivity.

The complex of monuments at Lemanaghan are located between c. 1km-1.2km south-west of the nearest proposed turbine, T14, and a similar distance south-east of T5. They are located in an area in which the ZTV demonstrates theoretical visibility of 11-15 proposed turbines. The proposed turbines are, however, set back from the monastic complex being separated from same by agricultural lands and associated field boundaries. In this regard potential visual effects to the immediate setting of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex will not occur. Similarly, the togher OF015-084— located in Derrynagun bog to the north-east of the monastic complex is located outside the Proposed Project site at a distance of c. 817m from the nearest proposed turbine, T14, at its closest point. Visual effects to the immediate setting of this recorded monument will also not occur given the set-back between the Proposed Wind Farm infrastructure and this peatland site. It should also be noted that while the togher in question is extant and is visible within Derrynagun Bog, such sites by their nature comprise low-visibility monuments within the landscape and are not visually dominant. As demonstrated in the figures above, this monument is most visible from an aerial perspective rather than at ground level.

It has been demonstrated in Sections 1.2 and 1.3 above that any physical connection that may once have existed between toghers in Lemanaghan Bog to the north and in Derrynagun Bog to the east-north-east and Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is no longer present. Such connectivity, if it once existed, pertains to the time period in which the monastic complex was still functioning as a place of worship and pilgrimage, from the early medieval period through to the later medieval period. The landscape around the monastic complex and within Lemanaghan Bog has been significantly altered since this time. Furthermore, there are currently no formal walking routes through Lemanaghan Bog which extend to the monastic complex. Similarly, a walking route along the togher in Derrynagun Bog to the monastic site is not in existence.

Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is, however, located on the Offaly Way walking route and may be regarded as a Point of Interest along same. The Lemanaghan Monastic Complex is also visited by people on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, the feast day of St Manchán, as well as by those who come to the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, and in particular the holy well, for prayer or contemplation. The typical current visitor experience to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex has been described above, with reference to the potential effects of the Proposed Project on same. The typical journey scenario is taken to commence from the south, with the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex as a stop along its route. The potential effects to the visitor experience have been shown to be intermittent as the proposed turbines are not experienced at all times during the typical journey through the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex. Where the proposed turbines are experienced by the visitor, such as on the return journey from the Hermitage towards the church and graveyard, they are visible at a distance from the monastic complex and are set back from same beyond deciduous trees and residential dwellings. They are also experienced for a short period of time.

As detailed in Section 1.5.2 above, the zoning of the Offaly Wind Energy Strategy (WES) was updated and amended in 2021 to account for the Monastic Complex and specifically to “*protect the character of the monastic site*”. This resulted in an amendment to the Wind Energy Zoning for Lemanaghan Bog which is deemed ‘Open to Consideration’ to allow a set-back from Lemanaghan Monastic Complex.

The amendment and consequent set-back from the Monastic Complex has resulted in an area to the north-west of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex which is currently zoned as an ‘Area Not Deemed Suitable’. The vast majority of the Proposed Project infrastructure is located within the area deemed ‘Open to Consideration’. One proposed turbine, T05, is located just within the ‘Area Not Deemed Suitable’, with a portion of this infrastructure (turbine foundation and hardstand) being situated c. 2m south-east of the area ‘Open to Consideration’. T05 is located c. 1.2km north-west of the Monastic Complex and will not result in visual effects to the immediate setting of the monuments therein. The potential visual effects to the wider landscape setting of the Monastic Complex have been assessed in Chapter 14, Chapter 13 and again in this technical appendix (see below). The location of proposed turbine T05, 1.9m inside the area ‘Not Deemed Suitable’ is not considered to increase the potential visual effects to the Monastic Complex and it is not considered that its location 1.9m further to the north-west would result in any notable change to the potential visual effects to the wider landscape of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex as identified below and in Chapters 13 and 14 of the EIAR.

The introduction of the Proposed Project to Lemanaghan Bog will not affect the immediate setting of Lemanaghan Monastic Complex given the intervening distance, vegetation and natural screening between same. The proposed turbines will, however, affect the wider landscape within which the site is located. VP13 was captured from within the Lemanaghan Monastic Site and demonstrates that a total of 10 no. proposed turbines are either partially or fully visible from this viewpoint. Taking into consideration the distance of the proposed turbines from the monastic complex, the number of proposed turbines which will theoretically be visible from same and intervening screening a Moderate effect to the wider setting of the complex is identified. There is no current visible or physical connectivity between the Monastic Complex and toghers which once traversed Lemanaghan Bog and in this regard visual effects to such connectivity will not occur. The potential connectivity (albeit not an existing walking route) between the togher in Derrynagun Bog to the north-east will continue despite the introduction of the proposed turbines. While a change to the wider landscape in which the monuments are located will occur it should be noted that the original setting of the monastic complex and any potentially connected monuments is significantly altered from that which existed during the heyday of the monastery. Overall, no significant effects to the current visitor experience or to Lemanaghan Monastic Complex as a result of the Proposed Project are identified.

## 1.6.2 Landscape and Visual – Chapter 14

### Landscape Effects

As detailed in Section 14.7.3.4 of Chapter 14, the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex (including the Monastic Site and Hermitage) is assessed as a high-sensitivity cultural heritage landscape receptor. The Monastic Site is located approximately 1.2 km from the nearest proposed turbine (T05) and is physically and visually set back from the Proposed Project by intervening agricultural fields, farms, residences, boundary walls and mature vegetation. The Proposed Project will not affect the physical fabric of the Monastic Complex; effects are confined to potential changes in landscape character and setting only, with turbines not located within the immediate visual context of the cultural heritage monuments.

As detailed in Chapter 14, the magnitude of change to the landscape setting of the Monastic Site is Moderate, within a landscape already characterised by existing residential and agricultural buildings. The Proposed Wind Farm is set back beyond the buffer specifically created to mitigate impacts on the Lemanaghan Monastic Site as set out in local planning policy through the 2021 amended Wind Energy Zoning (as per the Chief Executive’s Report), with the exception of proposed turbine T05, which is only located approximately 1.9m within the buffer. As such, given the adherence to the set-back from the Monastic Site in the local planning policy, and other mitigating factors detailed above, the overall residual effects on the landscape setting of the Monastic Site are ‘Moderate’.

The Hermitage (seen in VP14), is also a high-sensitivity cultural heritage landscape receptor, though its setting is more enclosed and defined primarily by the mound on which it sits and surrounding mature

vegetation. The magnitude of change to the landscape setting of the Hermitage is deemed to be Slight in Chapter 14. As discussed in Chapter 14, the grove of trees enclosing the Hermitage provides partial visual screening of the proposed turbines, even in winter when trees have lost their foliage, mitigating impacts on the immediate setting and reducing the horizontal extent of visible turbines in views from within the site. Overall, residual effects on the landscape setting of the Hermitage are deemed to be ‘Slight’.

### Visual Effects

As detailed in Section 14.7.3.4 of Chapter 14, the Lemanaghan Monastic Complex, is assessed as a high-sensitivity cultural heritage receptor. The Monastic Site is located approximately 1.2 km from the nearest proposed turbine (T05) and is visually set back from the Proposed Project by intervening agricultural land, boundary walls and a grove of mature trees enclosing the site. Visual effects are therefore experienced only in relation to the wider visual setting, with turbines not located within the immediate visual context of the monuments.

As detailed in Chapter 14, the magnitude of change experienced from within the Monastic Site (as illustrated in VP12 and VP13) is deemed to be Moderate (as detailed in Appendix 14-3), within a landscape setting already characterised by existing residential and agricultural development, overhead lines and utility poles. While the proposed turbines will introduce new elements into the wider landscape that will be visible from within the monastic complex, their location is consistent with established planning policy. Given the nature of views, the setback distance, and existing vegetative screening, the proposed turbines will not materially alter the key characteristics of this sensitive receptor and as a result, will not result in Significant visual impacts. The magnitude of change is considered to be ‘Moderate’. The Proposed Wind Farm is set-back beyond the buffer specifically created to mitigate impacts on the Lemanaghan Monastic Site as set out in local planning policy through the 2021 amended Wind Energy Zoning (as per the Chief Executive’s Report), with the exception of turbine T05, which is only located approximately 1.9m within the buffer. Overall, residual visual effects are deemed to be ‘Moderate’ on the Monastic Site, and ‘Slight’ on the Hermitage.

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