

**4. Chief Executive's Report - In accordance with Section 37E(4) of the Planning and development Act 2000, as amended, -Proposed development of 15 no. wind turbines, a permanent 220kV on-site substation, and associated infrastructure at Lemanaghan and surrounding townlands, Co. Offaly - Strategic Infrastructure Development Application.**

Cllr. N. Feighery advised the Cathaoirleach that he was withdrawing from the meeting for this agenda item in accordance with S.177 of the Local Government Act 2001 (Disclosure by member of local authority of pecuniary or other beneficial interests). Cathaoirleach, Cllr. J. Leahy advised that Cllr. N. Feighery would be recalled when the item had been finalised.

Cllr. John Leahy, Cathaoirleach read the following statement:

It is advised that in accordance with Section 37E(6) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) that the members may, decide to attach recommendations as specified, by resolution to the CE report.

In this regard, where the members so decide on recommendations, it is advised that the recommendations (together with the meetings administrator's record) shall be attached to the CE report.

The CE report along with the views expressed by the members on the proposed development and recommendations specified in the resolution, is required to be submitted to An Coimisiun Pleanála by the 05 June 2026.

Mr. A. Murray, Director of Services introduced Mr. J. Condrón, Senior Executive Planner who brought the members through the Chief Executive Report for the Proposed development of 15 no. wind turbines, a permanent 220kV on-site substation, and associated infrastructure at Lemanaghan and surrounding townlands, Co. Offaly - Strategic Infrastructure Development Application.

He noted the Strategic Infrastructure Act 2006 to members and specified in the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (PDA).

In September 2025, An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) determined:

- Having regards to the size, scale and location of the proposed wind farm and related development, and to the policy context, it is considered that the proposed development constitutes development that falls within the definition of energy infrastructure as set out in the 7<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the PDA (Section 37A(1) of the PDA).
- Proposed development is of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of sections 37(A)(2)(a) and (b) of the PDA.

Normal mechanism of applying to the relevant Local Authority for planning permission there, does not apply – Planning application shall be submitted directly to ACP.

He informed the members of the Process:

- The Planning Authority prepares a report setting out the views of the Authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the Authority having regard to Section 34(2) of the PDA.
- The Chief Executive, before submitting any report in relation to a proposed development to ACP, must circulate the report to the members of the Authority and seek their views on the proposed development.

He noted the application details as follow:

- Applicant: Lemanaghan Wind Farm Designated Activity Company.
- Application lodged with An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) on the 27th March 2026.
- 15 no. wind turbines, an onsite 220kV substation, grid connection to the existing 220 kV line and associated infrastructure.
- A 10-year planning permission and a 35-year operational life of the wind farm from the date of full commissioning is sought
- Application accompanied by Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement
- Generation capacity of c.90 MW
- Application website: [www.lemanaghanwindfarmplanning.ie](http://www.lemanaghanwindfarmplanning.ie)
- Planning Authority report –to be submitted to ACP before the 5th June, 2026.
- SID & REDIII application.
- Application decision date: 25th March, 2027.

The subject site is located in the rural townlands of Cooldorrugh, Kilnagarnagh, Cappanalosset, Tumbleagh, Killaghintober, Castlearmstrong, Leabeg, Cornafurrish and Corrabeg, Lemanaghan, Kilnagoolny, Straduff, Lisdermot, Derrica More, Rosfaraghan, Rashinagh, Cor Mor and Cor Beg, Corbane, and Ballindown, approximately 3 kilometres (km) northeast of Ferbane and approximately 2.5 km southwest of the village of Ballycumber in Co. Offaly.

It is noted that the boundary of the site is located 700 metres north west of the monastic complex of Lemanaghan at its nearest point.

The site comprises 1,258 hectares & is described in the submitted documentation as being located in a peatland setting, comprising a mixture of bare cutaway peat, re-vegetated bare peat, degraded raised bog, scrub, low immature woodland and remnants of high bog (intact raised bog).

The summary of the proposed development:

- 10 year permission / 35 year operational;
- 15 no. wind turbines with a total tip height of 220m;
- Total generation capacity of c. 90 MW;
- A new permanent 220kV electrical substation compound (c. 9611m<sup>2</sup>) in the townland of Cooldorrugh consisting of 1 no. Gas Insulated Substation (GIS) building, 1 no. Independent Power Producer (IPP) control building, 2 no. gantry structures;
- 800m of 220kV overhead line;
- 2 no. new gated site entrances off the L7002 local road, upgrade of 3 no. existing site entrances off the N62 national road, R436 regional road and L7001 local road; and
- Associated infrastructure.

He highlighted that The Planning Authority considers that the Lemanaghan Monastic Site represents a highly sensitive and nationally significant heritage asset, whose value derives not only from surviving physical fabric but also from its wider landscape setting, visual prominence and historic relationship with the surrounding environment. The appreciation and legibility of this early medieval monastic complex are intrinsically linked to its open and relatively undeveloped setting and to long established views both towards and from the site.

It is further noted that Bellair House (Protected Structure (RPS: 11-07) and included in the NIAH (Reg. No. 14907005) and Bellair Hill, despite their relative proximity to the proposed development (approximately 2 km) and their elevated vantage point, have not been adequately assessed within the EIAR. The absence of verified photomontages from Bellair Hill represents a notable gap in the assessment, and additional visual material is required to allow a complete and balanced understanding of potential impacts on the setting of this Protected Structure.

The Planning Authority strongly disagrees with the evaluation of the visual and landscape impact experienced by VP 18 as being 'Moderate' and 'on the balance not significant' having regard to the topography and contours of the public road and dwellings to the south of the subject site and the combination effect of the large substation building combined with the density of turbines to the south as shown below in image from the Photomontage Booklet in Volume 2 of the EIAR

The Planning Authority strongly disagrees with the evaluation of the visual and landscape impact experienced by VP 1 and VP 9 as being 'Moderate' and 'on the balance not significant' having regard to the proximity, orientation and exposure of a number dwellings to the south west of the subject site and a total number of 14 and 15 turbines respectively.

It is noted that Section 4.8.1 of the EIAR states that "the value of the Community Benefit Fund will be linked to the productivity of the wind farm and is calculated based on 2/MWh of the overall total generated by the wind farm. It is estimated that the proposed Fund could be in the region of circa €8million over the first 15 years of the operation of the Proposed Wind Farm, on the basis of an annual generation of 275,940 MWh."

Section 3.4 that much of the 17.1 km internal site roads will be made available for amenity uses once the proposed windfarm becomes operational and that an additional 3.9 km of new dedicated amenity link, along with the further upgrade of approximately 1.8 km of existing track for the purposes of amenity is also proposed. Three new public car parks are to be provided in the townlands of Lisdermot, Corbane, Cor Mor and Cor Beg, Lemangahan and Tumbeagh.

The proposed Amenity Plan does not fully reflect the proposed Midland Cycling Destination – Offaly (Bord na Mona, Coillte & OCC) route along the western site boundary of the site. It is noted that the bottom of the western 'spur', banks east to follow the proposed industrial windfarm road rather than the much more appropriate, in terms of amenity, existing industrial railway line to meet with the old Banagher – Clara line to the south and then Bord na Mona's Strategic Trail towards the Grand Canal Greenway and Lough Boora.

The potential Pilgrims route, as identified by the Lemangahan Conservation plan is identified in the Midland Cycling Destination – Offaly, is not addressed in the amenity proposals.

Noted that 3 no. carparks are proposed to be developed to accommodate future amenity trails; one off the N62, one on the Cappanalosset to Rashinagh Road and one off the R436. It is suggested by the Planning Authority that, in order to facilitate access to the Old School House and the monastic site, that it would be beneficial to have the existing track in parallel to the R436 upgraded and facilitate car parking to the rear of the castle and school house.

The proposed windfarm development must be considered within the context of a highly sensitive and extensively modified bog and wetland landscape. Particular emphasis must be placed on the protection, restoration and long-term management of peatland habitats, ensuring that hydrological regimes, habitat integrity and ecological functionality are not only maintained but demonstrably enhanced over time.

Habitats of seemingly low intrinsic value may nonetheless function as essential steppingstones, commuting routes, or buffer zones for Annex I habitats and Annex II species, and therefore require careful consideration.

The site and surrounding landscape are known to support a range of sensitive species associated with peatland, wet grassland and upland habitats, including Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), and Common Crane (*Grus grus*), alongside wintering and passage species such as Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and other migratory waterbirds. Concerns expressed in relation to impacts on birds from barrier effects, collision risk, disturbance and displacement effects and Loss or degradation of functionally important habitat.

Given this uncertainty, and in the context of emerging obligations under the EU Nature Restoration Law, any development not directly contributing to habitat restoration must be subject to the highest level of scrutiny. A precautionary approach is required, ensuring that the integrity, connectivity, and recovery potential of the wider bog and wetland landscape are not compromised.

### **Need for a Comprehensive Reappraisal of the Project at this Location**

- Omission of 8(no) turbines notably T5,T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14 and T15.
- Submit a Revised Site Layout for any subsequent proposal, ensuring that internal roads and site access arrangements are not located at or within the western 'spur' of the site to the N62 (as shown below), due to the substantial archaeological sensitivities of the site at this location (including a high number of recorded monuments, a Class 1 Togher, Class 2 Toghers and Class 3 Toghers).

He noted there is currently 520MW of operational wind energy developments within Co. Offaly which has been delivered over a short period of time in the context of such developments nationally i.e. the first windfarm was energised in 2014.

In addition, it is submitted that 300MW alone has been energised since 2024, with a further 85MW permitted and awaiting construction imminently and along with a further 247MW currently in the planning system (including the subject application) within the County. The above, when combined (inclusive of the requirements to omit a large portion of the turbines within the current application) represents 9% of the entire country's Climate Action Plan / National Planning Framework 2030 wind energy target of 9,000MW and yet Co. Offaly represents only 2.3% of the country's landmass.

County Offaly has strongly embraced the transition to renewables in a plan-led manner, starting with its 2009 Wind Energy Strategy. Policy to encourage other technologies, including solar and bio-energy, followed in 2014, as did the policy requirement to strongly consider cumulative impacts. In all other policy respects the policy has remained consistent, in particular the concept of a 'reasonable balance', which, it must be noted was taken directly from the Governments (statutory) Wind Energy Guidelines, 2006.

He highlighted that in the event the ACP grants planning permission for the proposed development, the PA recommend that planning conditions include:

- Reappraisal of Site and Reduced Scale of wind farm
- Timescale for completion, operation and decommissioning.
- Turbines not to be replaced without consent.
- Pre-roads surveys and reinstatement costs.
- Noise levels during construction and operation, including monitoring and a noise complaint monitoring programme.
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Archaeological recording, reporting and any further mitigation arising from same.
- Navigation lighting.
- Public lighting.
- Mitigation measures in the EIAR and NIS to be applied.
- Surface water monitoring and management.

- Development contributions.
- Special Development Contributions – Roads. See suggested conditions in report from Birr District Engineer.
- Community Benefit Scheme.
- Bonds.
- Colour – standard off-white / light grey
- Standard condition in relation to telecom tower
- Conditions on environment and water. See suggested conditions in report from Environment and Water Services
- All required costs incurred by the Local Authority in ensuring full compliance with ongoing noise monitoring requirements for the duration of the operational life of the wind farm to be burdened on the applicant.
- Conditions on road and traffic safety. See suggested conditions in report from Birr District Engineer.

Members thanked Mr. J. Condon for his presentation and expressed concerns over this development.

Cllr. S. O'Brien included the following addendum:

**Cllr. S. O'Brien - ADDENDUM TO BE ATTACHED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT IN RELATION TO THE LEAMANAGHAN WIND FARM APPLICATION, AN COIMISIUN PLEANALA CASE REFERENCE NUMBER PAX19. 324161**

The members of Offaly County Council acknowledge the objectives of the County Climate Policy and the Government's objective to increase the supply of energy through sustainable methods including wind energy. Our County has contributed significantly towards achieving the country's wind energy targets and we support the policy of continuing to do so over the coming years. This commitment encompasses major projects in wind energy, solar and battery storage.

The Offaly County Development Plan 2011-2027 designated "areas deemed open for consideration for wind energy development" and the site in question in this application was one such area. The inclusion of this site was carried by a one vote margin. Considering the amount of wind farm development in the County meanwhile and the issues which relate to this particular site the Members now consider that this site should not be considered as an area suitable for consideration for wind energy development. Furthermore the Council also states that each application would be considered on a case by case basis.

Leamanaghan is an island of mineral soil in the midst of an expanse of peatland. The people living in this area have a strong attachment to the traditions and history of St. Manchan. The relationship between the Saint, the place and the people is witnessed by their attachment to St. Manchan's Shrine and the work they have carried out over many decades to maintain and improve access to the local sites and artefacts associated with St. Manchan. Features of the Leamanaghan site, whose significance spans the early Christian to Medieval period, include the Ancient Graveyard, Church Ruins, Toghar, Holy Well, Ballaun Stones and Oratory. It also includes a secluded area known as St. Mella's Cell, located in an area which is known locally as Kell; this includes an Enclosure and Oratory and a newly discovered Medieval Burial Site. This is located approximately 900 meters from the main road. People visit this site all year round to enjoy its serene and tranquil atmosphere.

The Heritage Council published a Conservation Plan for Leamanaghan in 2007 and a summary of their findings stated that Leamanaghan is 1) A sacred place of great antiquity

2) A place containing buildings of architectural significance 3) A place rich in documentary history and archaeological potential 4) A place where there is a long history of devotional practice 5) A place apart, possessing a strong sense of being untouched by the modern world.

Archaeological remains in Leamanaghan Bog date back over 5000 years. The harvesting of peat at the bog has led to an incredible number of archaeological discoveries, including numerous Toghers, which are ancient walkways across the bog. These Toghers have been dated by dendrochronology as dating back to the seventh century and are likely to have been walkways between Leamanaghan and Clonmacnoise. The plans for the construction of the wind farm will totally destroy this bog and all of the unique history which it holds. Also found were several artefacts, one of the most impressive being an early medieval crosier which can be dated to the tenth or eleventh century.

The most famous of the traditions is the centuries old tradition where farmers historically refuse to sell milk. The ancient traditions and folklore are deeply woven into the local landscape and collective memories of the people of Leamanaghan. The traditions of this area showcase how the Medieval Christian heritage of this area blends with ancient Pagan roots, shaping a uniquely Irish spiritual identity.

The proposal to construct a wind farm on Leamanaghan Bog will significantly violate this special sacred location and permanently alter the whole essence of the area. The Photomontage 5a(VP5a) to CPA is seriously faulty and fails to address the enormous turbines' visual impact on the complex. The model used by the applicant does not consider the impact from the Holiest section of the complex, specifically St. Manchan's Holy Well, which attracts a large number of visitors every year. The Photomontage also does not address the visual influence of the gigantic turbines, 225 Meters in height, on the secluded area of the site known as St. Mellas Cell.

When visitors gaze across the bog to the north they can see St. Manchan's Church in Boher which houses St. Manchan's Shrine; this artefact is a remarkable example of early Irish metalwork and serves as a connection between Leamanaghan and Clonmacnoise, where it is believed to have been crafted. This Shrine also holds a significant importance as a relic, as it contains the bones of St. Manchan. The existence of the Shrine in the Parish demonstrates the ongoing dedication to the Saint, a devotion that may extend a thousand years. If the view of St. Mnachan's Church at Boher is blocked by the proposed massive wind turbines and ancillary buildings this will create a disconnection and disrupt a long standing tradition. Local people consider that the construction of the proposed wind farm would seriously interfere with an established religious practice and would be a violation of Article 10 of the European Charter of Fundamental Human Rights which relates to the rights to observe religious practice.

We recognise CAEO(Objective) 03 which states that "It is an objective of Offaly County Council to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to Government policy on renewable energy and in enabling the wind energy resources of the county to be harnessed in an environmentally sustainable manner". This balance must take account of many issues which arise in the area under consideration and all areas will vary in relation to impact.

We concur very strongly with the Chief Executive's submission which states "It is important for the Commission to note...with particular reference to the reasonable balance per CAEO-03. Offaly currently has 520MW of operational wind energy developments

300 MW has been energised since 2024

A further 85 MW is permitted and awaiting construction imminently

A further 247MW is currently in the planning system(including the current application)

all SID applications to An Coimisiun

Combined, the above (inclusive of the requirements to omit a large portion within the current application) represents 9% of the entire country's Climate Action Plan/National Planning Framework 2030 wind energy target of 9,000MW.

Co. Offaly represents 2.3% of the country's landmass

An additional c.266MW is in the public domain at the pre planning stage"

This clearly demonstrates the commitment of Offaly Co. Council to achieve and even surpass the Government objectives in relation to wind generated energy. Any objections to the current application or amendments being sought are thus well founded and serve to achieve the "reasonable balance" referred to above.

The Members acknowledge the work being undertaken by the Leamanaghan Bog Heritage and Conservation Group and their concern that the construction of the wind farm will erode the significant archaeological and historical significance of the many features of the area. The following are some of the concerns which have been expressed by the group together with members of the local community.

- 1) Bord Na Mona continues to rely on a 2011 framework for the development of peatlands. This plan has excluded many areas as suitable for re-wetting and has targeted them as more suitable for wind farm development
- 2) Peatlands provide a unique carbon sink and when disturbed this carbon is released in contrast to the major mitigation opportunity if restored. The plans contained in the proposed development are for 15 wind turbines with a height of 220 meters. The foundation required for each turbine will be very significant, thus totally ravaging this bogland area resulting in a very significant carbon release. It will also destroy all of the significant archaeological history.
- 3) There has been a total focus on wind farms for the production of renewable energy. The potential for solar energy production could be much bigger than anticipated.
- 4) There is a huge potential for off-shore wind farms which could produce vastly more renewable energy than from a small wind farm in an area like Leamanaghan
- 5) Residents are very concerned about the potential health impacts of the proposed wind farm. Several complaints have been made to Offaly Co. Council by residents living close to the Stonestown Wind Farm in West Offaly; these complaints related to infrasound, noise pollution, sleep deprivation and shadow flicker. These issues remain for those residents and their properties have been seriously diminished. The residents in the area surrounding Leamanaghan are very concerned that the same issues are facing them if the wind farm is constructed. One clear example is the Special Needs Unit in the area which caters for children with Autism.
- 6) The residents are very concerned that there was no meaningful consultation with the residents in the area. The developers have presented documentation claiming that a structured consultation process took place but the residents claim that this was a contrived process.
- 7) The current guidelines for the construction of wind farms dates back to 2006. Revised guidelines were drafted in 2019 but have not yet been sanctioned by the Government. Offaly County Council have written to the Government on several occasions requesting the publication of new guidelines. The Climate Action Plan 2024 set out a timeline of quarter 1 2025 for the publication of the final updated guidelines but this has not happened.
- 8) The impact on nature and biodiversity will be significant. Since the cessation of peat harvesting the traditional flora and fauna have returned to these peatlands. The return of birds such as the Hen Harrier and the Curlew has been very significant. It is estimated that eight bird species on the red danger list are located in this area.

The Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 contains very specific guidelines for the development of Peatlands. Section 13.9.12, DMS-108 states ; " In the consideration of development on or adjacent to peatland areas, the following guiding principles should apply:

- Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to climate change mitigation ...”
- Consideration of habitats and species of environmental significance
- Consideration of the potential contribution of peatlands to an existing or proposed greenway/blueway/peatway network
- Consideration of the ecosystem services and tourism potential provided by peatlands
- Development of peatlands shall ensure that there are no negative impacts on water quality and hydrology
- Consideration of existing and future rehabilitation measures including enhanced rehabilitation measures(i.e. drain blocking and rewetting)
- Achievement of a carbon emissions balance”

These objectives are very important and clearly the construction of the proposed wind farm will negate many of these objectives.

There is also a section in the County Development Plan 2021-2027 in relation to Energy and Communications 13.9.13 DMS-109 Wind Farms and the following are listed as objectives;

- Impact on the visual amenities of the area
- Impact on the residential amenities of the area
- Impact on nature conservation, ecology, soil hydrology, groundwater, archaeology, built heritage and public rights of way
- Impact on ground conditions and geology
- Consideration of falling distance plus an additional flashover distance from wind turbines to overhead transmission lines
- Impact of development of the road network in the area
- Impact on human health in relation to noise disturbance (including consistency with the World Health Organisations 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region), shadow flicker and air quality.

The issues raised in these objectives are very relevant in relation to this proposed wind farm planning application.

**Cllr. F. Moran - ADDENDUM TO BE ATTACHED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT IN RELATION TO THE LEAMANAGHAN WIND FARM APPLICATION, AN COIMISIUN PLEANALA CASE REFERENCE NUMBER PAX19. 324161**

Firstly, I note that there appears to be a difference between the turbine removal recommendations within the report itself. The Executive Summary recommends removal of turbines 5, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, while the Heritage and Visual Assessment section recommends removal of turbines 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. That means there are additional turbines identified by the Heritage and Landscape assessment as giving rise to concern.

I appreciate that this may reflect different assessment disciplines reaching conclusions through different lenses. However, I believe that where we are making recommendations on a development of this scale and significance, clarity and consistency are important. I would therefore ask that this discrepancy be clarified and amended so that there is one clear overall recommendation within the report and that the precautionary principle is applied by adopting the broader recommendation identified by the Heritage and Landscape assessment. [ie. that turbines 9, 10 added to ex summary on page 2 to be recommended for refusal].

Secondly, Chair, I would also like clarification on a point raised within the report regarding turbine specification and overall generating capacity.

The proposal seeks a total generating capacity of 90MW across 15 turbines and the report raises a question regarding the relationship between the proposed turbine model and the power output assumptions being used. Given that these assumptions can influence matters such as noise levels, cumulative impacts and residential amenity impacts, I think it is important that there is complete clarity that the figures and assumptions used throughout the assessment process are fully aligned.

Can clarification be provided that the Council is seeking confirmation that all assessments, including noise, cumulative impacts and residential amenity impacts, have been carried out on a realistic worst-case operational basis?

Given the scale and long-term nature of the proposed development, I believe any uncertainty should be fully resolved and the precautionary principle applied so there can be confidence that all potential impacts have been properly assessed.

Finally, I also want to make a broader point as follows:

The report identifies significant concerns relating to landscape, heritage, cumulative impacts and overall project scale. It recommends the removal of a substantial number of turbines and a major redesign of the proposal. To me, that raises an important question — at what point does the extent of redesign required become so substantial that we are no longer dealing with modifications to the current proposal, but an entirely different proposal altogether?

I believe we need to be careful that in seeking the removal of eight turbines, we do not unintentionally create the impression that the remaining elements of this scheme are somehow acceptable in principle. I do not believe that is what this report is saying.

The application before us today is the proposal as submitted. The concerns identified within the CE Report relate to this proposal as a whole, and the extent of redesign identified appears substantial. If a significantly altered proposal were to come forward in the future, then that proposal should be assessed independently and on its own merits, having regard to the planning considerations, policies, technologies and evidence at that time.

However, that is not the decision before us today.

What we are considering today is whether the proposal currently before us represents proper planning and sustainable development. Based on the findings and concerns identified throughout this report, I believe there is a strong basis for stating clearly that, in the absence of substantial redesign and reduction in scale, the proposed development would not represent proper planning and sustainable development.

I believe that should be reflected clearly in the Council's final position, therefore *In the absence of substantial redesign and reduction in scale, the proposed development would not represent proper planning and sustainable development. REFUSAL of the proposal in its current state is recommended.*

Cllr. Ormond thanked Cllr O'Brien and Cllr Moran on their work on the addendum.

Noted the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines in respect of environmental noise and emphasises that all applications of this nature should demonstrate full compliance with the applicable environmental noise standards.

Reference was made to sections of the report which highlight concerns across a range of areas, including nature conservation, ecology, archaeology, and public rights of way. It was stated that members are of the view that, when these factors are considered in their totality, the only appropriate conclusion is that the proposed development should be refused.

Cllr. Ormond further sought guidance in relation to the availability and application of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III) mapping, including clarification on its status and the implications of the referenced 12-month timeframe.

Concerns were also raised regarding the credibility and robustness of certain reports submitted in support of the application. In particular, reference was made to assertions regarding potential impacts on residential property values, questioning whether such conclusions would withstand independent scrutiny. Additionally, it is the need for consistency with the policies and objectives set out in the County Development Plan (CDP).

Cllr. C. Murray Smale expressed concern regarding noise associated with wind farm developments. She noted that the proposed development is likely to give rise to additional noise complaints to the local authority. She further highlighted that noise is already a significant issue and suggested that such complaints should be referred to the HSE where appropriate.

Cllr. H. Egan outlined the historical significance of the Lemangahan area, highlighting its considerable archaeological importance and the potential for further discoveries. He emphasised the need to preserve the area, noting its connection to the route linking to Clonmacnoise. He also referred to a shrine in Boher Church, which he stated is the largest of its kind and was produced in Clonmacnoise.

Cllr. Egan further noted that various artefacts have been uncovered in the area, including a wooden staff, a blackthorn staff, and footwear dating from the medieval and post-medieval periods. He advised that the area contains a group of monuments and that its archaeological significance is unparalleled in the country. He noted this proposed development would constitute vandalism of archaeological heritage.

Cllr. Maher expressed support for Cllr O'Brien's proposed addendum to the Chief Executive's Report. He emphasised that an appropriate balance must be achieved in the delivery of renewable energy, and noted that other counties also have a responsibility to contribute in this regard.

Cllr. A. Masterson thanked Mr. J. Condon for his report and noted that Offaly has a rich monastic history which could be further utilised to support tourism. She emphasised that this heritage, once lost, cannot be recovered, and highlighted that the full extent of the history of Clonmacnoise is not yet fully understood. She stated that further research in this area is required.

Cllr. L. Quinn thanked the Planning and Management Team for the Chief Executive's Report. He noted that the Wind Energy Strategy was passed by a single vote and expressed the view that a three-quarter majority may have been more appropriate at the time, given the narrow margin of approval. He further stated that, considering the unique character of the Lemangahan area, Area 5 should have been excluded.

Cllr Clendennen reiterated her support for the development of renewable energy; however, she expressed the view that County Offaly has already made a substantial contribution in this regard and has met its fair share of national targets. Concerns were raised regarding the impact on the local community, including the financial burden associated with participation in the process and the strain arising from ongoing objections and protests. The sensitive nature of the area, highlighting potential adverse impacts in relation to noise, biodiversity, and the wider environmental context were highlighted.

Cllr. J. Leahy, Cathaoirleach, called on the energy companies to reflect on the position of the Council, noting that it is rare for members to oppose such proposals. He emphasised the importance of building constructive relationships with the Council and urged that members' views be respected, stating that

there is a clear objection to the proposal. He requested that this position be acknowledged and respected.

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Management Team for the significant work undertaken in preparing the report. He also extended an apology to the community of Lemanaghan, acknowledging the efforts made by local residents in fundraising to support their campaign.

We, the members of the Planning Authority of Offaly County Council, by resolution, respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála duly considers all issues raised within the CE report, along with the expressed views of the elected members.

In light of the concerns raised, and given the need for a full comprehensive reappraisal of the site, the members, by resolution request that permission be REFUSED for the proposed Strategic Infrastructure Development (An Coimisiún Pleanála Case reference: PAX19.324161) for the proposed Lemanaghan wind farm development comprising 15 no. wind turbines, a permanent 220 kV substation and all associated infrastructure – RED III application.

-END-