4. PLANNING, POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the proposed project in the context of the relevant legislative and policy framework for renewable energy and spatial planning, at international, European, national, regional and local levels. The purpose of the chapter is to assess the extent to which the proposed project aligns with applicable strategic planning policy objectives and the legislative framework that informs renewable energy policy, in order to determine its consistency with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

This chapter is not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of all environmental legislation applicable to the proposed project. Compliance with relevant environmental directives and legislation, including but not limited to the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, together with the associated Irish transposing legislation, is addressed in detail within the relevant EIAR chapters and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The nature and location of the proposed project is described fully in Chapter 2. The site is located on the Tipperary and Offaly County border. The site of the proposed wind farm is located approximately 5km south of Birr and 3.6km north of Shinrone in County Offaly. Roscrea in County Tipperary is approximate 11km to the southeast of the site.

As such, the proposed wind farm site and the associated areas lies within the functional areas of Offaly County Council and Tipperary County Council thus informed by the provisions of both the Offaly County Development Plan and the Tipperary County Development Plan.

The relevant international, European, national, regional and local climate, energy and planning policies as set out in Section 4.4 of this chapter emphasise the need to generate renewable energy and the importance of moving towards decarbonising the economy. The proposed project will contribute to the expansion of the renewable wind resource in Ireland and contribute towards governmental, national and regional goals and targets by generating more power from renewable resources. At European level, the Renewable Energy Directive (Directive 2009/28/EC) set Ireland a legally binding target to achieve 16% of its overall energy demand from renewable sources by 2020. This Directive was subsequently recast in 2018 (Directive (EU) 2018/2001) to establish a binding EU-wide renewable energy target of at least 32% by 2030, with provision for an upward revision. In 2023, the Directive was further amended to increase the binding target to at least 42.5% at EU level, with an indicative ambition of 45%, reflecting a strengthened and ongoing policy commitment to the deployment of renewable energy sources across the European Union.

4.2 Statement of Authority

This chapter has been prepared having regard to relevant local, regional, and national planning and environmental policy frameworks. It draws upon current government strategies, including the Programme for Government 2025, the Climate Action Plans (CAP24 and CAP25), and the European Green Deal and Fit for 55 legislative package. It is based on the most up-to-date policy documents at the time of preparation of this chapter. The chapter has been compiled by Saoirse Burke, Graduate Planner (BSc in Human Geography and Urban and Regional) and Eirene Varghese, Planner (Bachelor's in architecture, and Masters in Regional and Urban Planning) with over 4 years of experience in environmental planning, renewable energy policy, and statutory compliance. Eirene has completed planning sections for wind farms and solar farms over the last 3 years. The chapter was reviewed by Senior Planner - Louise Byrne , with over 9 years of experience in environmental planning, renewable energy policy, and statutory compliance. The authors have the requisite qualifications and experience, as outlined above, to prepare this chapter in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Directive.

4.3 Planning History Search of the Proposed Wind Farm Site

This section comprises a desktop review of historic local authority and ACP planning applications made within the application site and developments considered for cumulative effects within a specific study area from the proposed wind farm site. There appears to be no planning history within the proposed wind farm site.

A study area was identified for other developments for the purpose of the cumulative assessment. This was set at a 10 km buffer from the red line boundary of the proposed wind farm site within which 'other development' is either in situ, has planning permission, or which are still in the system and awaiting a decision. For the cumulative impact assessment, a 10 km study area was established, measured from the red-line boundary of the proposed wind farm site. This distance provides a sufficiently wide search radius to capture developments that may give rise to cumulative interactions with the proposed wind farm across the specialist environmental topics assessed in this EIAR.

Within this 10 km buffer, a comprehensive review was undertaken of all relevant existing, permitted, and publicly known planned developments for which adequately defined information is available in the public domain. This included infrastructure such as electricity and grid works, quarries, wastewater treatment plants, piggeries, power and biomass facilities, renewable energy developments, and any other large-scale projects of a nature or scale potentially capable of contributing to cumulative effects.

Details of all developments considered within the study area are provided in **Appendix 4-1** of this chapter, which provides a full list of approved and undecided projects (i.e., currently under consideration by the local planning authority or ACP) that could be considered cumulatively with the proposed project. These projects have been considered where their nature, scale and available information permit a meaningful cumulative assessment in accordance with EIA requirements and current guidance. Speculative or undefined future developments that lack sufficient locational or design parameters have not been included, in line with best practice.

4.3.1 Projects Considered for Cumulative Impacts Assessments

Legislative Context

The EIA Directive and associated guidance documents state that as well as considering any indirect, secondary, transboundary, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project (all of which are considered in the various chapters of this EIAR), the description of likely significant effects should include an assessment of cumulative effects that may arise. The factors to be considered in relation to cumulative effects include population and human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climate, material assets, landscape, and cultural heritage as well as the interactions between these factors.

To gather a comprehensive view of cumulative effects on these environmental considerations and to inform the EIA process being undertaken by the consenting authority, each relevant chapter within this EIAR includes a Cumulative Impact Assessment. The potential for cumulative effects arising from significant projects have therefore been fully considered within this EIAR.

Methodology

The projects considered in relation to the potential for cumulative effects and for which all relevant data was reviewed include those planning applications listed in **Table 4-1**, as described below.

For the purpose of the evaluation of potential cumulative effects, the term development has been taken to include:

- Any permitted electricity transmission developments, or proposed developments currently in the planning process, located within Offaly and Tipperary.
- Permitted or proposed developments with the potential for significant cumulative effects with the proposed project, e.g., major linear infrastructure development, such as proposed road development, windfarms, other Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), or public utilities and services along the GCR.

The review of the relevant local authorities planning registers documented in Offaly and Tipperary County Council's and ACP's websites was conducted on 20th February 2026.

Projects Considered within a 10km Study Area

Below are some of the key relevant planning applications within the study area of the proposed project site which have been selected due to them being large scale and of strategic importance.

Table 4-1 List of Select Granted/Undecided Applications within 10 km from the proposed wind farm site between January 2015 and February 2026.

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
Wind farms				
Tipperary County Council	2360763 (ACP ref. 318689)	The construction of 7 no. Wind turbines, 1 no. 38kV electrical substation, 38kV underground cabling works to connect to the existing Dallow 119kV substation, along with 10no. loading bays and all other associate site development works.	In the townlands of Croghan Clohaskin Caherhoereigh Ballykinash Tinnakilly Arragh More Ballyloughnane Faddan Beg Coolderry , Tinlough Sharragh Doughkill Ballaghgar Faddan More , Cloncorig Killeen and Cornhill Co. Tipperary	Granted 30/06/2025
Offaly County Council	ACP ref. 306706	A ten-year permission for a wind farm consisting of 21 wind turbines and all associated site works.	Derrinlough and other townlands Co. Offaly	Granted 26/08/2021
Offaly County Council	ACP Ref. 318816	10 year planning permission for wind energy development consisting of 8 no. wind turbines and all associated works	located at Cush, Galros West, Boolinarig Big, Eglish, and Ballindown, Co. Offaly. (www.cushwindfarmplanning.ie)	Granted 04/11/2024
Solar farm				
Tipperary County Council	16600136	a solar PV energy development of maximum export capacity 4 MW, to include one ESB Networks substation building with a height of 4m, two electrical transformer stations with a height of 2.7m, site access roads and solar PV panels mounted on steel support structures with a height of 2.5m, associated cabling and ducting.	Lacka , Carrig , Birr	Granted 23/08/2016
Offaly County Council	21227	A 10-year permission for the construction of a solar PV development with a maximum export capacity (MEC) of up to 40MW.	Ballindown Bogderries , Ballywilliam and Ballynaguilsha , Co. Offaly	Granted 10/08/2021

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
Electricity and telecoms				
Offaly County Council	ACP ref. 304056	Install approximately 12.5km of 38kv electricity transmission line from the permitted (windfarm) substation in Stonestown, County Offaly to the electricity substation in Clondallow, County Offaly.	Across The Townlands Of Stonestown, Kilcamin, Crancreagh, Derrinlough, Clooneen, Whigsborough, Galros East, Galros West, Cush, Boolinarig Big, Conspark, Ballaghanoher, Ross And Clondallow, Co Offaly	Granted 25/05/2020
Offaly County Council	2360140	The development involves a ten-year planning permission for underground electrical cabling (38kV) from Townparks to the Dallow 110kV substation in Clondallow, facilitating the connection of the proposed Carrig Renewables Wind Farm to the national grid. It includes joint bays, communication chambers, earth sheath links, road reinstatement, and associated site works,	In the townlands of Townparks (Birr) Dovegrove , Woodfield or Tullynisk , and Clondallow Co. Offaly	Granted 07/06/2024
Offaly County Council	2560367	100MW Battery Energy Storage Station with 53 battery containers and associated equipment, with a control room container, site entrance, and all associated works	Clondallow , Birr , Co. Offaly	Undecided
Other				
Tipperary County Council	15600881	Horticultural Park containing an amphitheatre incorporating audience seating and a stage and all associated landscaping and ancillary works.	The Ecovillage , Oxpark , Cloughjordan	Granted 25/04/2016
Offaly County Council	15349	Construction of new innovation centre and training building, construction of new sto	Grant Engineering , Crinkill , Birr	Granted 31/03/2016

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
		extension with loading bay canopy, extend concrete yards, additional parking area, form new opening in west boundary wall for goods entrance / exit and all associated works.		
Offaly County Council	16433	Demolition of the existing two storey water treatment plant building, construction of a 2,000 m3 water storage reservoir including associated site development works and services.	Birr Water Treatment Plant , Seefin , Birr	Granted 11/04/2017
Offaly County Council	16145	The upgrade to Birr water supply scheme which will comprise the following at the existing Birr water treatment plant (WTP) site: refurbishment of the existing two storey masonry WTP building, demolition of the existing open sludge lagoon, construction of a new WTP process building with gross floor area 660sqm approximately, new tank structures, new sludge treatment and storage structures, underground watermains and service connections, together with improvements to existing boundaries, landscaping and all associated site works.	Seefin , Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 09/11/2016
Offaly County Council	16144	The upgrade to Birr water supply scheme which will comprise the following at the existing intake (for Birr water treatment plant): provision of a new pumphouse building with gross floor area 37.50sqm approximately, upgrade of the existing river bankside intake structure with underground watermains and service connections, refurbishment of existing pumphouse structure, new roadside boundary setback and relocation of access to site, extension of overall site area together with improvements to existing boundaries including the existing access walkway to the Camcor river, new boundary treatment, landscaping and all associated site works.	Clonoghil Upper , Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 7/08/2016
Tipperary County Council	17601366	As-built standalone furniture manufacturing building, as built storage building, demountable office building, single storey spray building, use of portion of existing yard as open storage, together with all associated site works.	Sopwell , Cloughjordan , Co Tipperary	Granted 19/03/2018
Offaly County Council	20592	The filling of lands with inert waste consisting of concrete, bricks, tiles and ceramics, soil and stone for the purpose of land reclamation, the setting up of a temporary	Ballystanley , Roscrea , Co. Offaly	Granted 15/02/2022

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
		portacabin & portaloo, weighbridge, construction of site entrance, access road and associated works.		
Offaly County Council	ACP ref. 306246	Application for leave to apply for substitute consent under section 177c of the planning and development act 2000, (as amended) to regularise the planning status of bord na mona's historic peat extraction (and ancillary works) on the milled peat production bogs.	Boora Bog Group Located Predominantly In County Offaly.	Granted 30/04/2020
Offaly County Council	ACP ref. 314549	Application for an extension of time to apply for substitute consent in relation to peat harvesting.	Coole And Clonbeale Mor, Near Birr, Co. Offaly	Granted 28/09/2022
Offaly County Council	ACP ref. 306863	Peat harvesting.	Coole And Clonbeale Mor, Near Birr, Co. Offaly.	Granted 16/06/2021
Offaly County Council	21599	Filling quarried land with topsoil, subsoil to raise level of land for agricultural purposes.	Glasshouse , Shinrone , Co. Offaly	Granted 30/03/2023
Offaly County Council	22449	(1) carry out of civil engineering works to adjust the ground levels of the existing rugby training pitch and provide an underground pitch drainage system (2) erect 6 no. Columns and floodlights to existing training pitch and all associated site works.	Scurragh , Townparks Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 25/04/2023
Offaly County Council	22404	Development consisting of the construction of: (1) a 4060m2 three storey primary care centre to accommodate (a) HSE facilities comprising consulting rooms, treatment areas, meeting rooms, offices and support spaces (b) surgery space totalling 807m2 for general practitioners (c) a 138m2 pharmacy with two consulting rooms totalling 34m2; (2) a 175m2 single storey ancillary structure at the rear of primary care centre for stores, waste, back-up generator and associated external plant; (3) a 397.5m2 two storey ambulance base with single storey garage and external canopy; (4) 157 no. Car parking area including provision for 6 no.	Railway Road , Townparks Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 14/04/2023

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
		Motorcycle parking spaces, 50 no. Bicycle spaces, 16 no. Electrical charge points and traffic control barriers for employee parking; (5) section of new access distributor road 165m long with footways; (6) all associated site development works to serve the proposal including site and distributor road lighting, hard and soft landscaping, rail and fence boundary treatment and all associated signage.		
Offaly County Council	22386	The construction of 7 no. Industrial units, entrance and all ancillary site works located to the rear and side of existing industrial units.	Units 1-6 Syngefield Industrial Estate , Clonoghil Upper , Birr Co. Offaly	Granted 31/08/2023
Tipperary County Council	NA0617 (ACP Ref. 318213)	Whether the permanent removal of 3.0 hectares of coniferous Sitka Spruce forestry for the purposes of nature conservation and environmental protection at Scohaboy Bog Natural Heritage Area (NHA) (site code 00937) Co. Tipperary is development, and if it i	Scohaboy Bog Natural Heritage Area, Co. Tipperary.	Decided 25/06/2025
Offaly County Council	21599 (ACP Ref. 312650)	Filling quarried land with topsoil, subsoil to raise level of land for agricultural purposes.	Glasshouse, Shinrone, Co. Offaly.	Granted 21/03/2023
Offaly County Council	16/145 (ACP Ref. 247027)	Upgrade Birr Water Supply Scheme comprising refurbishment of 2-storey masonry WTP building, demolition of open sludge lagoon, construct new WTP process building, new tank structures.	Seefin, Birr, Co. Offaly.	Granted 03/11/2016
Housing developments				
Offaly County Council	22274	The following: erection of a fully serviced residential housing development of 40 units, consisting of 4.no single storey semi-detached 2 bedroom bungalows, 2 no. Single storey mid-terrace 1 bedroom bungalows, 20.no. 3 bedroom 2 storey semi-detached houses, 6.no. 3 bedroom 2 storey mid-terrace houses and 8. No. 1 bedroom apartments in 4 no. 2 storey semi-detached blocks, with all associated site services, landscaping, site works, boundary treatments, and new access.	Lands To The East Of And Accessed Via The Existing Development At Forest View , Banagher Road R439 Townparks Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 26/10/2023

Planning Authority	Application number	Proposal	Address	Status
Offaly County Council	22356	Change of use of the former three-storey over basement mill building, from resource and leisure use to 12 no. Self-contained apartments comprised of 5 no. One bed apartments and 7 no. Studio units, with alterations to existing elevations and layout.	The Maltings Castle Street Townparks , Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 09/03/2023
Tipperary County Council	20612 (ACP Ref, 310643)	Construction of 6 no. two-storey semi-detached dwelling houses, new boundaries, inclusive of connection to the existing estate foul and storm drainage and all associated site works.	Ballyloughnane , Riverstown , Birr Co. Tipperary.	Granted 17/11/2021
Tipperary County Council	20614 (ACP Ref. 310679)	Construction of 4 no. two storey semi-detached dwelling houses, new boundaries inclusive of connection to the existing estate foul and storm drainage and all associated site works.	Ballyloughnane , Riverstown , Birr Co. Tipperary.	Granted 21/10/2021
Offaly County Council	2460120	the construction of 58 total no. residential units comprising of: (A) 2no. three-bedroom two-storey semi-detached (Type H); 1no. 2-bedroom bungalow (Type L2); 10no. 1&2-bedroom terraced bungalows in three blocks (Type L3/L4); 12no. two-bedroom two-storey	Townparks & Seffin , Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 22/05/2025
Offaly County Council	2460122 (ACP Ref. 322482)	the construction of 66 total no. residential units comprising of: (A) 20no. dwellings, comprising of 8no. four-bedroom two-storey detached houses (Type A); 8no. four-bedroom two-storey semi-detached houses (Type B1/B2); 2no. two-storey three-bedroom dual	Railway Road Townparks & Seffin , Birr , Co. Offaly	Granted 15/04/2025

4.3.2 Wind Farm Developments within 20km from the proposed Wind Farm Site

A separate review of all existing, permitted and undecided wind farms has been conducted to provide a list of wind farm development across Offaly and Tipperary and are listed under **Table 4-2** below.

Table 4-2: Pending and Determined Wind Farm Planning Applications 20km from the Site.

Wind Farm	Consenting Authority	Planning Reference	Decision	No. Turbines	Distance from site approx. Km
Carrig (Lacka) Wind Farm	Tipperary	5123496	Granted (Conditional) - operational	3	c.1.7km
Skehanagh (Lacka) Wind Farm	Tipperary	5123495	Granted (Conditional) - operational	5	c.2.7km
Carrig Wind Farm (AIR)	ACP	318689	Granted June 2025	7	c.3.9km
Meenwaun Wind Farm	ACP	PL.19.2449	Granted (Conditional)	5	c.13km
Derrinlough Wind Farm	ACP	306706	Granted (Conditional) - operational	21	c. 16.5km
Ballinlough – domestic wind turbine	Offaly	06/1508	Granted (Conditional)	1	c.17.5km
Cush Wind Farm	ACP	318816-24	Granted November 2024	8	c.17.5km
Cloghan Wind Farm	ACP	244053, PL19.24405	Grant permission with revised conditions- operational	9	c.17.5km
Monaincha Bog wind Farm	Tipperary	3510957	Granted (Conditional) - operational	10	c.17.5km

There are only two operational windfarms in 10km of the proposed wind farm site. The nearest operational wind farm to the proposed wind farm is the Carrig (Lacka) and Skehanagh Wind Farm (planning references 5123495/5123496), located approximately 1.7km to 2.7km west the proposed wind farm site.

4.4 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

When considering wind as an energy source, it is important to place its development in an international, national, regional and local policy context from the perspective of environment, energy, and planning. This section outlines the relevant legislative mechanisms and policy from an International and European to local level, which have been formulated to support the generation of energy from renewable sources and reduce the dependency on fossil fuels and increase in national energy security.

The Irish planning policy system is set within a hierarchical structure. National policy is informed by EU Directives, Planning Legislation, Ministerial Guidelines. Government Policy and Capital programmes.

4.4.1 International and European Policy

4.4.1.1 The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. As of 2025 all 197 countries of the United Nations have endorsed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and 195 have solidified their support with a formal commitment. It is a framework for international efforts to combat the challenge posed by climate change. The UNFCCC seeks to limit average global temperature increases and the resulting climate change. In addition, the UNFCCC seeks to cope with impacts that are already inevitable. It recognises that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

The framework set no binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms. Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called "Protocols" or "Agreements") may be negotiated to set binding limits on greenhouse gases. The convention enjoys near universal membership, with 197 countries listed as being Parties to the Convention[1].

4.4.1.2 The Kyoto Protocol Targets

The Kyoto Protocol is an international treaty which extends the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention. The Kyoto Protocol came into effect in 2005, as a result of which, emissions reduction targets agreed by developed countries, including Ireland, are now binding. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the EU agreed to achieve a significant reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions of 8% below 1990 levels in the period 2008 to 2012. Ireland's contribution to the EU commitment for the period 2008 – 2012 was to limit its greenhouse gas emissions to no more than 13% above 1990 levels.

4.4.1.3 The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol

In Doha, Qatar, on 8th December 2012, the "Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol" was adopted. The amendment includes:

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/organisation/unfccc-united-nations-framework-convention-climate-change_en

- New commitments for Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol who agreed to take on commitments in a second commitment period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2020;
- A revised list of greenhouse gases (GHG) to be reported on by parties in the second commitment period; and amendments to several articles of the Kyoto Protocol which specifically referenced issues pertaining to the first commitment period and which needed to be updated for the second commitment period. During the first commitment period, 37 industrialised countries and the European Community committed to reduce GHG emissions to an average of 5% against 1990 levels. During the second commitment period, parties committed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 18% below 1990 levels in the eight-year period from 2013 to 2020; however, the composition of parties in the second commitment period is different from the first.

Under the protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures, although market-based mechanisms (such as international emissions trading) can also be utilised.

4.4.1.4 The Paris Agreement 2015

This is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance, starting in the year 2020, which aims to keep the global average temperature rise this century to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

In 2016, the threshold for entry into the agreement was adopted and came into force. Ireland is legally bound by Article 7 of the United Nations COP21 Paris Agreement to prepare and submit periodic updates on its national adaptation and mitigation plans in the global effort to keep global warming below 1.5 °C.

An article published by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) on the 6th October 2018 titled *'Global Warming of 1.5 °C',* notes the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above preindustrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways; in the context of mitigation pathways, strengthening of the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty. This special report is part of an invitation contained in the Decision of the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to adopt the Paris Agreement and provides an update on the impact of climate change if emissions are not reduced.

The Conference of Parties, more commonly known as COP, is held annually to agree policies for limiting global temperature rises and policies for adapting to impacts associated with climate change.

In 2021, the following agreements were reached by participating parties under COP26:

- Recognition that impacts from climate change will be lower at a temperature increase of 1.5 °C when compared with an increase of 2 °C;
- A request for participating countries to provide stronger national action plans for the year 2022 instead of the original agreed timeline of 2025;
- Agreement for participating nations to phase-down coal power and phase-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies;

- A reaffirmed commitment by all parties to deliver financial aid to developing countries with a request for this aid to be doubled;
- An agreement on issues contained within the "Paris Rulebook", pertaining to operational details for the practical implementation of the Paris Agreement;
- An acknowledgment that the impacts of climate change are increasing with developing nations especially affected;
- Agreement to strengthen the Santiago Network for the connection of at-risk countries for the provision of assistance, knowledge and resources.

COP27 was held in November 2022, where it was agreed for the first time to set up a loss and damage fund for the most vulnerable countries.

COP 28 introduced the first global 'stocktake' which is a process for countries and stakeholders to see where they are collectively making progress towards meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement and where they are not. The first global stocktake affirmed that we are not on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and the window for meaningful change is quickly closing due to slow progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening climate resilience, and providing financial and technological support to vulnerable nations. Countries decided to accelerate action by 2030, including a call for governments to transition from fossil fuels to renewables like wind and solar power.

COP29 was held in November 2024 and outlines actions and ambitions in the energy sector such as:

- Launch of the COP29 Global Energy Storage and Grids Pledge. The pledge commits signatories to commit to a collective goal of deploying 1,500 GW of energy storage globally by 2030.
- Launch of the COP29 Green Energy Pledge: Green Energy Zones and Corridors. The pledge focuses on promoting connecting green energy zones and corridors to the communities most in need by developing larger intraregional and interregional interconnected power grids.
- Call to Action for Energy Transition. As an outcome of a series of dialogues in 2024 to discuss the level of ambition and action required to achieve just and equitable transitions, the COP 29 Presidency, in partnership with the International Energy Agency (IEA), shared five key opportunities for COP 29 to demonstrate positive progress on energy goals identified at COP 28.
- Global Renewables Alliance (GRA) Call to Action at COP 29. GRA called on governments to address critical trade barriers that limit the expansion of renewable energy markets and challenge meeting the goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Most recently COP30 took place in Belém in November 2025. This outlined ambitions and further actions for the energy sector.

- COP30 adopted the "Global Mutirão" cover decision, which reaffirms the 1.5°C goal and calls on all countries to strengthen their 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including clearer pathways for accelerating renewable energy deployment, enhancing energy efficiency, and supporting just, orderly and equitable transitions away from fossil fuels.

- Countries agreed to mobilise at least USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035 to support climate action, which includes scaling renewable energy, upgrading grid infrastructure, and funding technology deployment for low-carbon energy systems. This also includes commitments to double adaptation finance by 2025 and triple it by 2035, a key enabler for resilient energy transitions.
- Launch of the Global Implementation Accelerator and the Belém Mission to 1.5°C. New initiatives introduced at COP30 aim to support countries in delivering enhanced NDCs, accelerating renewable energy investment, and improving transparency and planning around national energy transitions.
- Under the COP30 Climate Action Agenda, international initiatives—including IRENA, IEA, the Clean Energy Ministerial and the Green Grids Initiative—aligned on a global plan to reinforce and expand power grids, with USD 1 trillion in planned investment to triple collective renewable energy capacity by 2030, emphasising grid resilience and integration of large-scale solar and wind

Although COP30 did not deliver a formal roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels, the conference's final text did acknowledge the need to reduce unabated fossil fuel use. This reflects the widespread support shown by over 80 countries for stronger fossil-fuel phaseout commitments.

4.4.1.5 The European Green Deal 2019

The European Green Deal 2019 resets the European Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges. It is a new growth strategy that aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases in 2050 and where economic growth is decoupled from resource use. The various elements of the deal are indicated in the infographic below:

Figure 4-1 Elements of the Green Deal[2]

First climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

- European Climate Law to enshrine the 2050 climate-neutrality objective into EU law;
- European Climate Pact to engage citizens and all parts of society in climate action.

Based on a comprehensive impact assessment, analysis of the national energy and climate plans, and considering stakeholder contributions received to the public consultation, the European Commission will propose a new EU ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

In July 2021, the European Commission launched the first tranche of its 'Fit for 55%' measures that will support Europe's climate policy framework and put the EU on track for a 55% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050. The interconnected proposals cover areas of climate, land use, energy, transport and taxation to bring them into line with the targets agreed in the European Climate Law. The package is comprised of thirteen proposals; eight of them are revisions to existing laws and five are new proposals:

Revisions:

- Revision to the EU Emission Trading Scheme, to lower the overall emissions cap per economic sector, phase out free emission allowances for aviation, and include shipping for the first time;
- Revision to the Effort Sharing Regulation, assigning stronger reduction targets for each Member State in building, road, domestic maritime transport, agriculture, waste and small industry sectors;

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/european-green-deal-communication_en.pdf

- Revision to the Regulation on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry, setting an overall EU target for carbon removals by natural sinks and setting national targets;
- Amendment of the Renewable Energy Directive, setting a new 2030 target of 40% (up from 32%) energy use from renewables by 2030 and strengthening bioenergy sustainability criteria;
- Amendment of the Energy Efficiency Directive setting a more ambitious binding annual target at EU level, raised from 32.5% to 36%;
- Amendment of the regulation setting CO2 emission standards for cars and vans requiring average emissions of new cars to come down by 55% from 2021 to 2030 and net zero by 2035;
- Revision to the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive to require aircraft and ships have access to clean energy supply in major ports and airports; and
- Revision of the Energy Taxation Directive to align taxation of energy products with climate policies and promote clean technologies.

New initiatives:

- An EU Forest Strategy to improve quality, quantity and resilience of EU forests, ensure sustainable use of biomass, and plant three billion trees by 2030;
- The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to place a carbon price on imports and prevent EU companies being undercut by energy-intensive competitors;
- A Social Climate Fund to help citizens finance investment in energy efficiency, clean mobility and renewable energy;
- The ReFuelEU Aviation Initiative to oblige fuel suppliers to blend more sustainable aviation fuels in jet fuel, including e-fuels; and
- The FuelEU Maritime Initiative to stimulate uptake of sustainable maritime fuels and zero-emission technologies.

Further proposals and amendments are expected, including a revision of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, and new Climate, Energy and Environmental State Aid Guidelines.

4.4.1.6 REPowerEU Plan & Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577

A REPowerEU Plan was published by the European Commission in 2022 with the purpose of saving energy, producing clean energy and diversifying the supply of energy. The plan was produced in response to the Ukraine war to reduce Europe's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. The Plan contains strategies and measures to phase out the EU's dependency on Russian fossil fuels by the end of the decade by building on the implementation of the European Green Deal and the EU's "Fit for 55" proposals (seeking to cut emissions by at least 55% by 2030). The Plan focuses on diversifying energy sources, accelerating a transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, saving energy, smart investment and reinforcing preparedness.

In support of this plan, Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 was adopted on the 22nd of December 2022 to provide a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy.

This regulation was adopted as a temporary measure for the “fast deployment of renewable energy sources” to “help mitigate the effects of the current energy crises”.

One significant measure introduced by the Regulation was the “introduction of a rebuttable presumption that renewable energy projects are of overriding public interest and serving public

health and safety for the purposes of the relevant Union environmental legislation, except where there is clear evidence that those projects have major adverse effects on the environment which cannot be mitigated or compensated for".

This regulation demonstrated the international support for wind energy projects which contribute to the much-needed shift away from fossil fuels to clean energy through the production of clean energy, thereby reducing GHG emissions from the electricity sector and highlights the level of urgency required in the deployment of renewable energy projects. The temporary regulation was in force until June 2024, with a partial extension of validity until June 2025 under Regulation (EU) 2024/223.

4.4.1.7 Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC,2018/2001/EU & 2023/2413/EU

Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, known as the "Renewable Energy Directive", implements one of the 20-20-20 targets from the EU's 2020 climate and energy framework, which is:

> *"Raising the share of EU energy consumption produced from renewable resources to 20%"*

The Directive sets national binding targets for all EU countries with the overall aim of making renewable energy sources account by 2020 for 20% of EU energy and for 10% of energy specifically in the transport sector (both measured in terms of gross final energy consumption, i.e., total energy consumed from all sources, including renewables). Ireland has a binding national overall target for renewable energy consumption of 16% in 2020.

In December 2018, the recast Renewable Energy Directive 2018/2001/EU (RED II) entered into force, as part of the Clean energy for all Europeans package, aimed at keeping the EU a global leader in renewables and, more broadly, helping the EU to meet its emissions reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement. The recast directive moved the legal framework to 2030 and set a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%, with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023 and comprised measures for the different sectors to facilitate this target. This included new provisions for enabling self-consumption of renewable energy, an increased 14 % target for the share of renewable fuels in transport by 2030 and strengthened criteria for ensuring bioenergy sustainability. The 2019 Green Deal amended the Renewable Energy Directive and set a new 2030 target of 40% (up from 32%) energy use from renewables by 2030 and strengthening bioenergy sustainability criteria.

In 2023, the RED II Directive was further amended by 'Directive (EU) 2023/2413', known as Renewable Energy Directive III (RED III) to set a current binding renewable energy target of at least 42.5% at EU level, but aiming for 45%, emphasising a growing obligation to renewable energy sources.

Renewables Go-To Areas

The legislation aims to expedite the permitting process for new or modified renewable energy installations, such as wind turbines and solar panels, with new timelines for decision making and streamlined environmental assessment. Further, if a new renewable energy plant is situated in a "renewables go-to area," national authorities should approve it in no more than a year. Outside of these designated areas, the procedure should not exceed 24 months.

Member states are to map the areas necessary for national contributions towards the 2030 renewable energy target within 18 months after the entry into force of this directive; adopt a

plan or plans designating 'renewables go-to areas' within 30 months; and adopt mitigation measures that counter the potential adverse environmental consequences of development activities of the projects located in each go-to area.

4.4.1.8 The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework

The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework was adopted by EU leaders in October 2014 and marks a further development of EU renewable energy policy. The Framework sets out a policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030 and aims to make the European Union's economy and energy system more competitive, secure and sustainable. The framework defines further EU wide targets and builds on the 2020 climate and energy package in setting three key targets for the year 2030 as follows:

- A binding commitment at EU level of at least 40% domestic Green House Gas reduction by 2030 compared to 1990;
- An EU wide, binding target of at least 27% renewable energy by 2030; and
- An indicative EU level target of at least 27% energy efficiency by 2030.

The European Commission published its proposal for an effort sharing regulation on the allocation of national targets for greenhouse gas emissions for the period 2021-2030 in July 2016. The enacted regulation implements EU commitments under the Paris agreement on climate change (COP21) and marks an important milestone in the allocation to Member States of a package of climate targets formally adopted as part of the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework.

On the 27th of June 2018, EU ambassadors endorsed the provisional agreement reached by the Bulgarian Presidency on the revision of the renewable energy directive. The new regulatory framework is expected to pave the way for Europe's transition towards clean energy sources such as wind, solar, hydro, tidal, geothermal, and biomass energy. The agreement sets a headline target of 32% energy from renewable sources at EU level for 2030. Importantly, under the Effort Sharing Regulation, Ireland is required to reduce its non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions by 42% relative to 2005 levels by 2030—a target that underscores the scale of action needed across transport, buildings, agriculture, and other non-ETS sectors.

The proposed project will directly contribute to Ireland's on-going progression towards its 2030 targets in line with the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework.

4.4.1.9 A Sustainable Europe by 2030 and RED

'A Sustainable Europe by 2030' (January 2019) is the EU's ten-year growth strategy for years 2020-2030 which focuses on the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Strategic Development Goals (SDG's) and informs the EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. The plan identifies several key areas of importance to the sustainable growth of the Eurozone through to 2030 while transitioning to a carbon friendly economy and maintaining rankings in the 2030 SDG's. The four important policy areas include:

1. Transitioning from a linear to a circular economy;
2. Sustainability from Farm to Fork;
3. Future proofing energy, buildings and mobility; and,
4. Ensuring a socially fair transition (to ecologically sustainable economic growth).

In 2019, more than half of the European Union's energy supply was climate neutral, underpinning the importance of renewable energy to the EU. As part of the Energy Union regulation, the European Commission framework for energy transition brings together climate, energy, transport, research and other policies. It is this framework which is responsible for requiring under EU legislation that at least 32% of all energy consumption be from a renewable energy source by 2030. This framework also seeks to have 32.5% energy efficiency by 2030. A strategic aim of this policy is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, in alignment with the EU commitment under the Paris Climate Agreement and beyond.

> "*Beyond 2030 more is needed to live up to the letter as well as the spirit of the Paris Climate Agreement, exploiting the full economic potential of the energy transition. The EU can significantly decrease its costly dependency on fossil fuels, reduce its fossil fuel import bill of some EUR 260 billion, increase its energy autonomy, and contribute to a fairer energy market. It is essential that we continue the integration of the energy market by building the missing interconnections and facilitating cross-border energy trade. The clean energy transition can also be supported by ocean energy and offshore wind energy. As a leader in this field, the EU should continue enjoying its first-mover advantage."*

The EU indicates in this policy document that it can significantly decrease the costly dependency on fossil fuels, increase energy autonomy, lower our carbon footprint and contribute to a fairer energy market while growing the EU economies. It is understood that the economic measures to keep the EU at the forefront of SDG's in the world rely heavily on renewable energy.

In 2018, the Directive was recast to RED II (2018/2001/EU) to align the legal framework with the EU's 2030 climate targets. It set a new binding target of at least 32% renewable energy in gross final consumption, with a clause for upward revision by 2023. RED II introduced provisions to enable self-consumption, increased the renewable fuels in transport target to 14%, and strengthened bioenergy sustainability criteria. These measures supported the EU's 2030 Climate Target Plan and the broader goals of the European Green Deal, aiming to build an integrated energy system based on renewables and climate neutrality.

In line with the Green Deal and REPowerEU initiatives, the European Parliament adopted RED III (Directive EU 2023/2413) in October 2023, which entered into force in November 2023. RED III raises the EU-wide binding target to 42.5% renewable energy by 2030, with an indicative target of 45%. It also introduces sector-specific targets, including:

- 29% renewable energy in transport
- 1.1 percentage point annual increase in heating and cooling (2026–2030)
- 1.6 percentage point annual increase in industry
- 49% renewable share in buildings by 2030 [3]

RED III also mandates the designation of Renewables Acceleration Areas by 21 February 2026, where permitting for renewable energy installations must be completed within 12 months, and no more than 24 months outside these zones. These reforms aim to streamline permitting, accelerate deployment, and enhance grid integration of renewables.

[3] Renewable Energy Directive

The Renewable Energy Directive III (RED III), transposed into Irish planning law through S.I. No. 274 of 2025, introduces a reformed permitting framework designed to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure. In accordance with this legislation, this application for permission will be assessed by the competent authority pursuant to the RED III-transposed provisions, including the 45-day completeness check, the binding statutory decision timelines, and the streamlined environmental assessment requirements now applicable to eligible renewable energy projects. The project therefore directly benefits from — and must comply with — the accelerated permitting procedures and legal presumptions established under RED III, further strengthening its relevance and alignment with national and EU renewable energy objectives.

The proposed project will contribute to the EU's ten-year growth strategy by increasing Ireland's share of energy sourced from renewable generators and by reducing the country's dependence on fossil fuels. It aligns with RED III's objectives and will benefit from the expedited permitting and locational planning incentives introduced under the directive.

4.4.1.10 Clean Industrial Deal

The European Commission published The Clean Industrial Deal: A Joint Roadmap for Competitiveness and Decarbonisation in February 2025 as an overarching strategic framework to align industrial competitiveness with climate action and energy security objectives at EU level. The Clean Industrial Deal functions as an umbrella strategy, bringing together a suite of policy, funding and regulatory measures intended to support decarbonisation, reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels and strengthen the resilience of the EU energy system. It is accompanied by a number of delivery measures which were outlined by the European Commission in a separate document in July 2025. Of relevance to renewable energy development, the Deal emphasises the need to accelerate the deployment of domestic renewable electricity generation and to improve the efficiency of permitting processes for energy infrastructure, building on existing provisions of the Renewable Energy Directive (as amended). A central focus of the Clean Industrial Deal is the delivery of affordable, secure and low-carbon energy, with the accelerated deployment of renewable electricity generation identified as a key enabler of industrial electrification and long-term competitiveness. In this regard, the strategy reinforces the importance of expanding domestic renewable energy capacity, alongside grid development and permitting efficiency, as part of the transition to a decarbonised energy system.

While the Clean Industrial Deal does not introduce project-specific consenting requirements nor alter existing national planning or environmental assessment frameworks, it provides relevant strategic policy context for renewable energy development at EU level. The Deal recognises the important role of renewable electricity, including wind energy, in supporting industrial electrification, reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhancing energy security and contributing to long-term decarbonisation and economic resilience. Wind energy, as an established and scalable source of indigenous renewable electricity, is therefore aligned with the objectives of the Clean Industrial Deal. EU Climate and Energy Governance Regulations (2018–2024)

Wind farm planning in Ireland is shaped by a comprehensive EU policy framework designed to drive the transition to a climate-neutral energy system. Regulation (EU) 2018/1999[4] on the

[4] Regulation - 2018/1999 - EN - EUR-Lex. Accessed January 20th, 2026

Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action establishes the mechanisms through which Member States develop, implement, and report on their National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), ensuring coordinated progress towards shared EU energy and climate objectives. Building on this governance structure, Regulation (EU) 2021/1119[5], the European Climate Law, introduces a legally binding requirement for the EU to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and mandates a minimum 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. This law sets the overarching decarbonisation pathway that national planning and permitting regimes must support. Building on these, Regulation (EU) 2024/1735[6], the Net Zero Industry Act was created to strengthen Europe's industrial capacity to deliver the technologies needed for the clean-energy transition. It introduces accelerated permitting processes, strategic project designations, and measures to expand manufacturing capacity for renewable energy components, thereby supporting timely delivery of infrastructure such as onshore wind. Together, these regulations create a unified and legally binding framework that reinforces the strategic importance of renewable energy development and establishes clear expectations for Member States to facilitate the deployment of wind energy at scale.

4.4.2 National Policy Context

The following section sets out the relevant national policies which will influence the development of the country in the coming decades with respect to energy production, carbon neutrality and climate change mitigation. These policies are supported by the latest Programme for Government (2025) 'Securing Ireland's Future'. This is a programme of investment and reform backed by ambitious actions in order to protect our country but also supporting significant progress in addressing critical social, economic, political, demographic and environmental challenges.

The "Accelerating Renewables" section within the "Protecting Our Environment" part of the Programme for Government 2025 outlines the government's commitment to significantly boost renewable energy production. The key goals include achieving 80% of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030. This will be accomplished through the development of 9 GW of onshore wind and 8 GW of solar energy capacity. These efforts are aimed at creating a more sustainable and resilient energy system for Ireland's future. It also aims to utilise the new Planning Act to fast-track developments which further highlights support for renewable energy projects.

Other climate goals outlined within this section aim to 'Empower Communities in Renewable Energy and Make Climate Action Accessible' and 'Support Economic Growth with Renewable Energy'. To achieve this, the government will support battery development and take-up to allow portable energy and reduce grid dependence, and enable the creation of employment opportunities, all to ensure renewable energy benefits all communities.

[5] Regulation - 2021/1119 - EN - EUR-Lex.. Accessed January 20th, 2026

[6] Regulation - EU - 2024/1735 - EN - EUR-Lex. Accessed January 20th, 2026

Overall, it is the government's goal to 'lead a revolution in renewable energy' supported by the above mentioned aims to accelerate renewable energy generation and provide benefits to the local economy.

4.4.2.1 National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision

The National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan together make up Project Ireland 2040.

Planning legislation provides for the Government to revise or replace the NPF every six years. Both Houses of the Oireachtas have approved the Revised National Planning Framework (NPF). The approval by the Seanad and the Dáil followed the decision of Government to approve the Final Revised NPF on 8th April 2025.

Chapter 9, Section 9.1 of the NPF relates to Climate and Environmental Capacity which sets out the following overarching aims to allow 'Resource Efficiency and Transition to a Climate Neutral Economy':

- Sustainable Land Management and Resource: Efficiency Adopting the principles of the circular economy to enable more sustainable planning and land use management of our natural resources and assets.
- Climate Neutral Economy: Our need to accelerate action on climate change.
- Renewable Energy: Our transition to a climate neutral energy future.
- Managing Waste: Adequate capacity and systems to manage waste in an environmentally safe and sustainable manner.

The Chapter identifies that Ireland's transition to a zero carbon energy future requires:

- A shift from predominantly fossil fuels to predominantly renewable energy sources;
- Increasing efficiency and upgrades to appliances, buildings and systems;
- Decisions around development and deployment of new technologies relating to areas such as wind, smartgrids, electric vehicles, buildings, ocean energy and bio energy; and
- Legal and regulatory frameworks to meet demands and challenges in transitioning to a zero carbon society.

The NPF recognises that *'in the energy sector, transition to a carbon neutral economy from renewable sources of energy is an integral part of Ireland's climate change strategy and renewable energies are a means of reducing our reliance on fossil fuels.'*

The most relevant policies in the overall context of renewable energy development are as follows:

- **National Policy Objective 30** Facilitate the development of the rural economy, in a manner consistent with the national climate objective, through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.
- **National Policy Objective 66** The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits,

having regard to the medium and longer-term requirements of all relevant environmental and climate legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.

- **National Policy Objective 69** Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets.
- **National Policy Objective 70** Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a climate neutral economy by 2050.
- **National Policy Objective 71** Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including supporting the delivery of renewable electricity generating development.
- **National Policy Objective 72** Support an all-island approach to the delivery of renewable electricity through interconnection of the transmission grid.
- **National Policy Objective 73** Support the co-location of renewable technologies with other supporting technologies and complementary land uses, including agriculture, amenity, forestry and opportunities to enhance biodiversity and promote heritage assets, at appropriate locations which are determined based upon the best available scientific evidence in line with EU and national legislative frameworks.
- **National Policy Objective 74** Each Regional Assembly must plan, through their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, for the delivery of the regional renewable electricity capacity allocations indicated for onshore wind and solar reflected in Table 9.1 below, and identify allocations for each of the local authorities, based on the best available scientific evidence and in accordance with legislative requirements, in order to meet the overall national target.
- **National Policy Objective 75** Local Authorities shall plan for the delivery of Target Power Capacity (MW) allocations consistent with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, through their City and County Development Plans.

The NPS specifies that, each Region is required to plan for an adequate level of wind and solar energy development to meet the regional renewable electricity capacity targets set out in Table 9.1 (see Figure 4-2 below) and in accordance with NPO 74. The plan must also consider various factors that may influence delivery, including attrition rates and fluctuations in energised capacity levels, in addition to the currently installed energised capacity. These considerations are essential to ensure that, at a minimum, the national renewable electricity generation targets for 2030 are achieved.

Table 9.1 | Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations

Region	Energised capacity 2023 (MW)	Additional Renewable Power Capacity Allocations (MW)	Total % of National Share in 2030	Energised Capacity 2023 (MW)	Additional Renewable Power Capacity Allocations (MW)	Total % of National Share in 2030
	Onshore Wind			Solar PV		
Eastern and Midlands	284	1,966	25%	306	3,294	45%
Northern and Western	1,761	1,389	35%	0.3	959	12%
Southern	2,622	978	40%	138	3,302	43%
Total	**4,667**	**4,333**		**445**	**7,555**	

Figure 4-2 Regional Renewable Energy Capacity Allocations

Based on Table 9.1, the Southern Region is projected to play a significant role in meeting Ireland's renewable electricity targets for 2030. As of 2023, the region has an energised capacity of 2,622 MW for onshore wind and 138 MW for solar PV. To support national goals, it has been allocated an additional 978 MW for onshore wind and 3,302 MW for solar PV. This brings the Southern Region's total share to 40% of the national onshore wind capacity and 43% of the national solar PV capacity by 2030, highlighting its strategic importance in the country's renewable energy transition.

The proposed project aims to contribute significantly to the region's goal of achieving an additional 978 MW by 2030 from onshore wind resource and will help the southern region meet its share of the national renewable energy goals, supporting Ireland's transition to sustainable energy sources.

As the proposed project is also partially within the functional area of Offaly the targets of the Eastern and Midlands region must also be taken into account. This region currently has the lowest energised capacity for onshore wind in the country, providing only 284 MW. To support national goals, the region has been allocated the highest additional renewable energy capacity allocation at 1,966 MW. This increase would bring the regions total share 25% of the national share in 2030. The proposed project would contribute significantly to the ambitious goal set forth for the Eastern and Midlands region, and help it meet its share of the national renewable energy targets.

4.4.2.2 Revised National Development Plan 2021-2030

The revised NDP 2021 – 2030 is aligned with the delivery of the objectives of the National Planning Framework. It sets out the significant level of investment, almost €165 billion, which will underpin the successful implementation of the National Planning Framework and drive it forward over the next 10 years.

The NDP includes National Strategic Outcome 8 – Transition to Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society. The NDP recognises that the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive low-carbon, climate resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy and society must influence public capital investment choices over the next 10 years. It acknowledges

that Ireland's energy system requires a radical overhaul to achieve its energy and climate objectives by 2050. This means that how energy in Ireland is generated and used needs to fundamentally change. Investment in renewable energy sources, ongoing capacity renewal, and future technology affords Ireland the opportunity to comprehensively decarbonise our energy generation. Renewable energy, including wind technology, will play a key role in helping to diversify away from a reliance on fossil fuels.

National Development Plan Review 2025

In July 2025 the National Development Plan Review 2025 was published. This document is a strategic framework for public investment in infrastructure in Ireland. Wider funding specifically for energy is outlined in the NDP Review, and energy is identified as being a high priority for general government investment. This includes an increase in government equity shareholdings of ESB Networks and EirGrid, with €3.5 billion in equity earmarked for energy projects. Chapter 8 of the NDP Review outlines reforms proposed to support the financial investments outlined in the plan. In regard to energy projects regulatory and planning reforms are identified as being critical to meet outlined targets.

4.4.2.3 National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021-2030

The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) builds on the existing national energy and climate policy framework documents, which aim to diversify and decarbonise Ireland's electricity generation sector, with the long-term objective of decarbonising the energy sector and achieving an economic transformation with a carbon neutral agriculture and land use sector by 2050.

The NECP envisages a target of at least 55% renewable energy in electricity by 2030, with at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy and an increase in onshore wind capacity of up to 8.2 GW.

The NECP was drafted in line with the current EU effort-sharing approach, before the Government committed to this higher level of ambition, and therefore does not reflect this higher commitment, as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2021 to 2024. Ireland is currently developing those policies and measures.

4.4.2.4 Climate Action Plan 2024 and 2025 (CAP24 and CAP25)

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) is the third annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan and was published on 15 April 2025.

CAP25 builds upon the previous Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and it should be read in conjunction with CAP24, in contrast to previous iterations of the Climate Action Plan. It provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. It also lays out a roadmap of actions which will ultimately lead us to meeting our national climate objective of pursuing and achieving, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022.

CAP25 finds that 'rapid and significant reductions in GHG emissions are required if we are to meet the 2015 Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals'. As such, Section 1.4 of CAP25 sets out the importance of 'accelerating climate action' and stating that 'the economic benefits of the transition to climate neutrality are being recognised and acted upon internationally' and further stating that, 'this points to the need to act now, with urgency, to ensure Ireland's future in a low-carbon world.'

In terms of the current scenario in the electricity sector, CAP25 notes that in the first half of 2024, emissions were down over 17%, (their lowest level for decades) and noting increasingly positive signs across solar and wind energy. It also found that Irish wind farms generated nearly 40% of Ireland's total electricity demand in the first half of 2024, making Ireland third in the world for installed wind power capacity per capita.

Section 11.2.1 of CAP25 emphasises that Ireland's plan to further reduce emissions in the electricity sector focuses on a renewables-led system, which means accelerating the deployment of new renewable electricity generation capacity and infrastructure.

As with CAP24, CAP25 also seeks to accelerate the delivery of onshore wind by providing up to 9 GW of onshore wind by 2030. CAP24 also acknowledges that some sectors and communities will be more impacted than others with the costs of transition to a low carbon economy. To address this, CAP24 embodies Just Transition principles which are also supported by CAP25, and a Just Transition Commission has been established to provide advice to the Government; and retains one of the most important measures of CAP23 which is to increase the share of electricity demand generated from renewable energy sources to 80% by 2030. This national target is retained under CAP25.

CAP25 also places significance on the revised NPF, as it supports the development of electricity grid infrastructure via setting out regional renewable electricity capacity allocations for 2030. As such, Regional Assemblies and Local Authorities must plan for sufficient wind and solar energy development to meet these targets. Each Regional Assembly will prepare a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy (RRES) to coordinate efforts and set specific targets for local authorities.

It is also important to note the key metrics to deliver abatement in electricity as outlined in CAP24 (which remain the same for CAP25 as per Section 19.3.5 of the plan) to deliver a decarbonised economy for Ireland by 2050, as shown in Figure 4-3 below.

Theme	2025 KPI	2025 abatement (vs. 2018) MtCO2eq.	2030 KPI	2030 abatement (vs. 2018) MtCO2eq.	2031-2035 measures
Accelerate Renewable Energy Generation72	50% renewable electricity share of demand 6 GW onshore wind capacity Up to 5 GW solar PV capacity, including at least 1 GW of new non-utility solar	2. 21	80% renewable electricity share of demand At least 5 GW offshore wind capacity 9 GW onshore wind capacity 8 GW solar PV capacity, including 2.5 GW of new non-utility solar Green hydrogen production from renewable electricity surplus generation	7.18	Decarbonisation Roadmap for a net-zero power system Green hydrogen production via 2 GW offshore wind
Accelerate Flexibility	Maximum level of renewables at any one time on the grid: 85% Dispatch down (excluding surplus generation) of renewables below 7% Minimise surplus generation Required long term storage (4 hour plus) in place	See above abatement figure	Maximum level of renewables at any one time on the grid: 95-100% Dispatch down (excluding surplus generation) of renewables below 7% Minimise surplus generation Required additional long-term storage (4 hour plus) in place At least 2 GW of new flexible gas-fired generation Zero-emission gas-fired generation from biomethane and hydrogen commencing by 2030	See above abatement figure	Required additional long duration storage technologies in place Increased zero emission gas-fired generation to enable a net zero power system
Demand Management	Demand side flexibility 15-20% Zero carbon demand growth	2.21	Demand side flexibility 20-30% Zero carbon demand growth	7.18	Demand side flexibility 30% Zero carbon demand growth
Total Estimated Abatement Potential					

Figure 4-3 CAP24 Key Metrics to Deliver Abatement in Electricity

Renewable Energy Generation

As outlined in the CAP25 executive summary, the electricity sector has a sectoral emissions ceiling of 40 MtCO2eq. for 2021-2025 which means a 75% reduction in emissions is required by 2030. The electricity sector has a ceiling of 40 MtCO2eq. for the first carbon budgetary period (2021-2025). If emissions continue at ~60 MtCO2eq., Ireland could exceed its 5-year budget by 50 MtCO2eq.

Central to maintaining emissions below the ceiling is the strategic increase in the share of renewable electricity to 80% by 2030 which includes ambitious targets of deploying 9 GW of onshore wind. These measures are vital not only for significantly reducing electricity sector emissions but also for enabling the broader electrification of other sectors, thus multiplying the impact on overall emissions reductions.

The electricity sector continues to face an immense challenge in meeting its requirements under the sectoral emissions ceiling, as the decarbonisation of other sectors, including transport, heating, and industry, relies to a significant degree on electrification. CAP24 states that, 'deployment rates of renewable energy and grid infrastructure required to meet the carbon budget programme for electricity is unprecedented and requires urgent action across all actors to align with the national targets'. Additionally, the Climate Change Advisory Council has made a number of recommendations for actions in the electricity sector such as the need to streamline the planning process for wind farms.

Table 4-3 CAP25 Measures to Accelerate Renewable Electricity Generation

CAP25 Measure	Applicant Response
Accelerate the delivery of utility-scale onshore wind, offshore wind, and solar projects through a competitive framework;	RWE Renewables Ireland Ltd. has 320MW of existing or consented wind and BESS facilities and 1200MW of onshore wind and BESS in pre planning as well the Dublin Array offshore wind farm (842MW) at the time of writing.
Target 6 GW of onshore wind and up to 5 GW of solar by 2025;	The proposed project includes the provision of 11 no. wind turbines capable of producing a total output of 61.6 - 77 MW which directly contributes towards achieving the target of 6 GW of onshore wind by 2025. As of December 2024, Ireland's installed onshore wind capacity is just over 4,836 MW according to Wind Energy Ireland data (WEI, Wind Stats (2024)).
Target 9 GW of onshore wind, 8 GW of solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind by 2030;	
All new or repowered renewable electricity generation projects shall implement a	RWE hopes to put the Ballincor Project into RESS and as such the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) will be established for the proposed project in

Community Benefit Fund equivalent to the RESS requirements of €2/MWh;	accordance with the RESS Terms & Conditions in situ at that time. The 15 year RESS Fund will be augmented by a similar level CBF for the remaining lifetime of the wind farm project The RESS CBF will be in the region of up to €472,000 per annum for the 15 years of RESS. Post RESS - RWE will also commit to maintaining a Community Benefit Fund for the duration of the project in line with best practice and guidelines.

4.4.2.5 White Paper on Energy – Irelands Transition to a Low Transition to a Low Carbon Future 2015-2030

This White Paper on energy policy (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (December 2015) provides a complete energy policy update for Ireland. It sets out a framework to guide policy and actions that the Government intends to take in the energy sector up to 2030. It also outlines a transition to a low carbon energy system by 2050. It is significant as it was the first time a government has proposed the eventual elimination of fossil fuels from Ireland's energy system. The then Minister for Energy Alex White stated that *"high-carbon fuels like peat and coal will give way to lower-carbon or renewable alternatives in the short to medium term before fossil fuels are largely replaced by renewable energy sources by 2050. Greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector will "fall to zero or below by 2100".*

The 2015 White Paper's stated objective is to "guide a transition to a low carbon energy system, which provides secure supplies of competitive and affordable energy to our citizens and businesses" as Ireland progresses towards a low carbon energy system. In doing so, it takes into account European and international climate change objectives and agreements, as well as Irish social, economic and employment priorities.

The White Paper sets out how Ireland's energy transition will be facilitated by an accelerated and diversified programme of renewable energy generation, and an increased focus on energy efficiency, facilitated by innovative financing. It promises strong regulation, effective markets, appropriate infrastructure, and deeper European cooperation. It heralds a new focus on citizens and communities as agents of change in the way Ireland generates, transmits, stores, conserves and uses energy. It also sets out actions to enable people to participate in energy-related decisions, including decisions about grid and renewable energy infrastructure.

The White Paper, and achievements since its introduction, underpins government policy to continue to support development of both onshore and offshore wind energy developments in accordance with published planning guidelines and local development plan policy.

4.4.2.6 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

This Act provides the statutory basis for the national transition objective set in the national policy position. It commits Ireland to being carbon neutral by 2050 and to also match Ireland's targets with those of the EU. It requires that the Minister for Communications, Climate Action, and the Environment must make and submit to Government a series of successive National Mitigation Plans and National Adaptation Frameworks. While there are no explicit targets set out within the Act itself, the legislation obliges the State to consider any existing obligations of the State under the law of the European Union or any international agreement. In effect the Act formally obliges the State to adhere to EU targets.

4.4.2.6.1 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 strengthens Ireland's climate governance framework by amending the 2015 Act. The purpose of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021 is to provide for the approval of plans '*for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by the end of the year 2050'*. The 2021 Climate Act also '*provides for carbon budgets and a decarbonisation target range for certain sectors of the economy'*. The 2021 Climate Act removes any reference to a national mitigation plan and instead refers to both the Climate Action Plan, and a series of National Long Term Climate Action Strategies.

In addition, local authorities shall prepare a 'local authority climate action plan' lasting five years which specifies the mitigation measures and the adaptation measures to be adopted by each local authority. This represents a mandate for Local Authorities to adapt to climate change.

The Act has set a target of a 51% reduction in the total amount of greenhouse gases over the course of the first two carbon periods ending 31 December 2030 relative to 2018 annual emissions. The 2021 Climate Act defines the carbon budget as 'the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted during the budget period'.

The Act also outlines duties for certain bodies (which includes consenting authorities) under Article 15 (1) as follows:

> *A relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—*
>
> *(a) the most recent approved climate action plan,*
> *(b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,*
> *(c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,*
> *(d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and*
> *(e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.*

4.4.2.7 Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)

RESS is a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, which provides financial support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland through a series of scheduled, competitive auctions. It is a pivotal component of the National Energy and Climate Plan and is essential for achieving Ireland's renewable electricity target by 2030, with a primary focus on cost effectiveness, the RESS will deliver a broader range of policy objectives, including:

- An enabling framework for community participation through the provision of pathways and supports for communities to participate in renewable energy projects;
- Increasing technology diversity by broadening the renewable electricity technology mix (the diversity of technologies);
- Delivering an ambitious renewable electricity policy to 2030; and
- Increasing energy security, energy sustainability and ensuring the cost effectiveness of energy policy.

On 27th February 2020, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Energy published the final terms and conditions for the first competition under the Scheme. The RESS will be implemented through a series of renewable electricity competitions, providing a renewable electricity roadmap and indicative timelines and capabilities.

The first RESS auction (RESS 1) was delivered by a number of organisations and agencies, namely the DCCAE, Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and EirGrid, working together. RESS 1 took place in August 2020. A total of 114 projects applied to participate, with 82 successful projects.

Following this, the Renewably Electricity Scheme 2 (RESS 2) auction process commenced with qualification for RESS 2 opening in December 2021. The auction sought to support the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) and the Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21) to secure new renewable energy targets of 80% renewable electricity by 2030. The scheme is crucial in helping Ireland to meet new climate targets and ambitions. The successful projects in RESS 2 represented a potential increase of nearly 20% in Ireland's current renewable energy generation capacity; 2,748 GWh of the 3,772 GWh bids submitted were successful in the auction. This equates to approximately 414 MW of onshore wind and 1,534 MW of solar. These projects will be delivered between 2023 and 2025.

RESS 3 took place in September 2023. It used a competitive auction process to determine which generators received support. For projects that are successful in the RESS 3 Auction, this support typically applies for approximately 15 years. RESS 3 marked a significant decrease in successful projects. Only three wind farms had contracts awarded to them, with their total capacity coming to 148MW. The total capacity of the solar contacts came to 500MW. The total annual generation from the RESS capacity is expected to be 934 GWh annually. This is significantly lower than that of the RESS is a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, which provides financial support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland through a series of scheduled, competitive auctions. It is a pivotal component of the National Energy and Climate Plan and is essential for achieving Ireland's renewable electricity target by 2030, with a primary focus on cost effectiveness, the RESS will deliver a broader range of policy objectives, including:

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On 27th February 2020, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Energy published the final terms and conditions for the first competition under the Scheme. The RESS will be implemented through a series of renewable electricity competitions, providing a renewable electricity roadmap and indicative timelines and capabilities.

Ireland's Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) has been a central mechanism for accelerating the deployment of renewable energy projects since its launch in 2020, with five auctions held to date. The scheme was designed to support Ireland's target of achieving 80% renewable electricity by 2030, and has primarily focused on onshore wind and solar PV projects. Each auction has used a competitive bidding process to determine which projects receive financial support through guaranteed strike prices.

The first RESS auction in 2020 awarded support to 82 projects, totalling 1,275 MW, with a strong showing from both wind and solar. RESS 2 in 2022 was the largest, allocating 1,948 MW across 80 successful bids. RESS 3 in 2023 saw a significant drop in awarded capacity, with only 414 MW contracted, reflecting market challenges. RESS 4 in 2024 provisionally awarded 1,333 MW, including 959 MW of solar and 374 MW of wind, with an average strike price of €96.85/MWh. The most recent auction, RESS 5, held in September 2025, provisionally awarded 1,079 MW, dominated by 860 MW of solar and 219 MW of wind, at an average strike price of €98.81/MWh[7].

The proposed project will apply for support through the RESS process. Therefore, a community benefit fund will apply to the project. The community benefit fund is further detailed in Chapter 2 of the EIAR.

4.4.3 Other Relevant Policies

4.4.3.1 National Energy Security Framework

The National Energy Security Framework was launched in 2022 to provide an overarching and comprehensive response to Ireland's energy security needs in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The Framework sets out how the government can support households and businesses, with a particular focus on protecting those most at risk of fuel poverty, how it is already ensuring Ireland's energy security, and how it will speed up the country's shift to increased energy efficiency and indigenous renewable energy systems. It also sets out how consumers and businesses can be supported to save energy and save money.

The Framework sets actions in response to issues such as ensuring the security of energy supply in the near-term and over the longer term, reducing Ireland's dependency on imported fossil fuels.

Within the context of the proposed project, the framework seeks to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources such as wind.

4.4.3.2 Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006

In 2006, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published '*Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities'* under Section 28 of

[7] RESS 5 Provisional Auction Results Released | Mason Hayes Curran

the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (WEDG) provide statutory guidance for wind energy development, including consideration of environmental issues, such as noise and shadow flicker, design, siting, spatial extent and scale, cumulative effect and spacing, as well as the layout and height of wind turbines having regard to the landscape and other sensitivities. Planning authorities must have regard to the Guidelines on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The guidelines are intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy projects and in the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments.

Relevant points include:

- Visual impact is among the more important considerations and advice is given on spatial extent, spacing, cumulative effect, layout, and height. There is an emphasis on the distinctiveness of landscapes and their sensitivity to absorbing different types of development;
- Environmental considerations such as the impact on habitats and birds and the need for habitat management are discussed. It is noted that designation of an area of natural and cultural heritage does not in itself preclude development, unless it is judged to be such that it would impact on the integrity of such sites and their natural heritage interests;
- The need for information on the underlying geology of the area including a geotechnical assessment of bedrock and slope stability and the risk of bog burst or landslide. Geological consultants should be employed to ensure that sufficient information is submitted;
- Impacts on human beings such as noise and shadow flicker.

These guidelines have been considered in the preparation of this EIAR as at the time of writing they are the current guidelines.

4.4.3.3 Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines – December 2019

The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were published in December 2019 and issued for public consultation, which concluded in February 2020. The Revised Guidelines primarily focus on addressing a number of key aspects including noise, visual amenity setback, shadow flicker, community consultation obligations, community dividend and grid connections.

The draft guidelines propose the following main changes to the 2006 Guidelines:

- Noise Standards
    - Introduction of Relative Rated Noise Limits (RRNL): 35–43 dB(A), not exceeding background noise by more than 5 dB(A).
- Penalties of up to 11 dB(A) for special audible characteristics:
    - Tonal noise
    - Amplitude modulation
    - Low-frequency noise
- Noise monitoring requirements:
    - Minimum of four verification locations
    - Quarterly monitoring for small wind farms (<25 turbines)
    - Continuous monitoring for large wind farms (>25 turbines)
- Setback Distances
    - Proposed minimum setback of 500 metres from residential properties.

  - Setback may vary based on turbine height and local topography.
- Shadow Flicker
  - Mandatory use of automatic control systems to eliminate shadow flicker.
  - Shadow flicker must be fully mitigated under normal operating conditions.
- Community Consultation
  - Developers must engage in early and meaningful consultation with local communities.
  - Requirement to document and respond to community concerns during planning.
- Community Dividend
  - Introduction of a community benefit scheme:
  - Financial contributions or infrastructure investments for local communities.
  - Aimed at increasing public acceptance and local support.
- Grid Connections
  - Guidelines now include planning considerations for grid infrastructure.
  - Emphasis on integrated planning for wind farms and associated grid upgrades.
- Cumulative Impact Assessment
  - Requirement to assess combined noise impacts from:
  - Proposed
  - Consented
  - Existing wind energy developments
  - Expanded study area for noise and visual impact assessments.

These revised guidelines are still under review and until such time as the new guidelines are published, the 2006 guidelines remain the statutory policy guide in relation to all wind energy developments. As demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, the Ballincor Wind Farm development will not result in any likely significant effects on the environment and is in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and has been designed such that it is anticipated it is capable of adhering to the draft guidelines.

4.4.3.4 Commission for Regulation of Utilities: Grid Connection Policy

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) launched a new grid connection policy in March 2018 for renewable and other generators, known as the Enduring Connection Policy (ECP-1), which sought to allow "shovel ready" projects, that already have a valid planning permission, connect to the electricity networks. The principal objective which guides this decision is to facilitate greater opportunities for advanced projects to connect to the network in addition to preparing for future, more regular batches for connection. In August 2018, the successful applicants for new connection capacity under ECP-1 were published.

On the 10th June 2020, the CRU further published the Enduring Connection Policy – Stage 2 (ECP-2) Decision (CRU/20/060). This decision marked a major milestone in the Enduring Connection Policy regime and provides for three batches of new generation connection offers to access the electricity network.

The number of connection offers represents an increase in ambition from ECP-1 and sets a challenging but achievable programme for the System Operators (SO's). This will facilitate new renewable generators competing in forthcoming RESS auctions as well as conventional generators and system service providers.

The application window for the fourth annual batch (ECP-2.4) opened on 1 October 2023 and closed on 30 November 2023. Following the closure of the application window, the batch was formed over the following three months. Three batches have been awarded connection offers in May 2024 where projects having the largest volume of GWhrs/yr generated given highest priority under Category A. Maximum number of connection offers were awarded to solar farms, followed by battery and then wind farms. The ECP 2.4 connection report[8] stated that, the SOs were developing a proposal to commence a pilot of "renewable hubs" to run in parallel with the opening of the ECP-2.4 batch window.

According to the Renewables Hub Pilot Consultation report[9], Renewable Hubs will be established in new or existing substations, with network capacity created based on a known pipeline of projects, with SOs engaging industry stakeholders.

The Renewable Hubs pilot is expected to include some, but not all, of the projects within the batch. In the longer-term the CRU expects that,

> *"Renewable Hubs will be developed in areas which strike a balance between grid-optimal locations and renewable resources, thus providing locational signals for project developers. This could include targeted hubs in areas that could release significant renewable capacity. "*

The introduction of this policy demonstrates the strong policy support to accelerate the grid connection for advanced projects such as renewable energy projects (particularly via the ECP-2 which prioritised large renewable energy projects) and to further secure success at RESS auctions. The potential introduction of the 'renewable hubs' could further accelerate delivery of the proposed project.

In September 2024, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) launched the Electricity Connection Policy – Generation and System Services (ECP-GSS), which supersedes the previous ECP-2 framework. ECP-GSS introduces bi-annual application windows and a mandatory pre-engagement process to streamline grid connection applications for renewable and system service projects. This new policy aims to accelerate delivery of Ireland's renewable electricity targets, improve transparency, and optimise use of grid infrastructure. The first ECP-GSS batch closed in September 2025, with solar, wind, and battery projects receiving the majority of connection offers. The CRU also continues to support the development of Renewable Hubs, which are expected to be integrated into future connection strategies under ECP-GSS.

4.4.3.5 Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland Guidelines for Community Engagement (DCCAE, 2016)

In December 2016, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment DCCAE published a Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement.

It is intended to ensure that wind energy development in Ireland is undertaken in observance of best industry practices, and with the full engagement of communities around the country. Community engagement is required through the different stages of a project, from the initial scoping, feasibility, and concept stages, right through construction to the operational phase. The

[8] Enduring Connection Policy (divio-media.com)
[9] CRU202353_Renewable_Hubs_Pilot_Consultation.PDF (divio-media.com)

guidelines advise that ignoring or poorly managing community concerns can have long-term negative impacts on a community's economic, environmental, or social situation. Not involving communities in the project development process has the potential to impose costly time and financial delays for projects or prevent the realisation of projects in their entirety.

The proposed project fully complies with the Code of Practice for Wind Energy Developments in Ireland.

4.4.3.6 Energy Security in Ireland to 2030

Ireland's Energy Security Package, published alongside *Energy Security in Ireland to 2030*, sets out a consolidated strategy to safeguard affordability, sustainability, and security during the transition to an electricity-led, renewables-based system. The package synthesises supplementary analyses, consultations, and reviews—including the close-out of the National Energy Security Framework—and prioritises four pillars of action:

1. Reduced and responsive demand;
2. a renewables-led system;
3. more resilient systems (grid, storage, diversification, interconnection), and;
4. robust risk governance and oversight.

It draws on lessons from recent European supply disruptions and domestic capacity shortfalls and includes short to medium-term measures such as a state-led strategic gas emergency reserve approved by Government to mitigate systemic risk during the transition. Complementary technical work for DECC indicates resilience gains from accelerated renewable deployment, increased interconnection, and development of indigenous biomethane and hydrogen, alongside expanded demand-side participation. Implementation will be monitored by the Government's Energy Security Group, with a formal follow-up review due in 2030 and every five years thereafter. The proposed wind farm directly advances the Energy Security Package by contributing new, indigenous renewable electricity capacity into the national system. This aligns with the Package's core objective of building a renewables-led electricity system, which is identified as essential to reducing reliance on imported fuel sources and ensuring long-term energy affordability and security

4.4.4 Regional Policy Context

The proposed Ballincor Wind Farm lies within the functional areas of Offaly County and Tipperary County, and is thus informed by the provisions of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for both the Eastern Midland Region (for Offaly) and the Southern Region (for Tipperary).

The RSES is a link between the National Planning Framework, the City & County Development Plans, and the Local Economic & Community Plans. Each assembly is centrally involved in the formulation of policies geared towards achieving a greater dispersal of economic growth and development throughout the region. Local Authorities must update their development plans to be in accordance with the RSES. Draft plans or proposed variations to development plans are referred by the Local Authority to the Regional Assembly to ensure alignment.

4.4.4.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy ((RSES) - EMRA)

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) agreed to make the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019 – 2031 in June 2019. The primary statutory objective of the

RSES is to support implementation of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan. Policies in the RSES which are directly relevant to the proposed Ballincor wind farm include:

- **Regional Policy Objective 3.7:** Local authorities shall have regard to environmental and sustainability considerations for meeting sustainable development targets and climate action commitments, in accordance with the National Adaptation Framework. In order to recognise the potential for impacts on the environment, local authorities shall address the proper site/route selection of any new development and examine environmental constraints including but not limited to biodiversity, flooding, landscape, cultural heritage, material assets, including the capacity of services to serve any new development.
- **Regional Policy Objective 4.8.4:** Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri-business, rural tourism, and renewable energy so as to sustain the employment opportunities in rural areas.
- **Regional Policy Objective 6.9:** The Regional Assembly supports the Regional Enterprise Plans to ensure that the Midlands is well positioned to address the challenges posed by the transition to a low carbon economy and renewable energy.
- **Regional Policy Objective 7.35:** EMRA shall, in conjunction with local authorities in the Region, identify Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, the role of community and micro energy production in urban and rural settings and the potential for renewable energy within industrial areas. The Strategic Energy Zones for the Region will ensure all environmental constraints are addressed in the analysis. A regional landscape strategy could be developed to support delivery of projects within the Strategic Energy Zones.
- **Regional Policy Objective 7.36:** Planning policy at local authority level shall reflect and adhere to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to 'Wind Energy Development' and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.

Furthermore, the strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region. This includes the use of wind energy – both onshore and offshore, biomass, and solar photovoltaics and solar thermal, both on buildings and at a larger scale on appropriate sites in accordance with National policy and the Regional Policy Objectives outlined in this Strategy.

4.4.4.2 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019-2031 for the Southern Region

The proposed project is located within the Southern Region. The Southern Regional Assembly RSES sets out a vision for the Southern Region to[10]:

- *'Nurture all our places to realise their full potential;*
- *Protect, and enhance our environment;*

[10] https://www.southernassembly.ie/uploads/general-files/Regional_Spatial__Economic_Strategy_for_the_Southern_Region_LOW_RES.pdf

- *Successfully combat climate change;*
- *Achieve economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all our citizens;*
- *Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations;*
- *Make the Southern Region one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest, and liveable regions'.*

The Southern RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework and came into effect on 31st January 2020. The Region has nine counties Cork, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny, and Wexford which are administered by 10 local authorities. The region is further divided into three sub-regional areas, called Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) - the Mid-West, Southeast and South-West and Tipperary belongs to Southeast (A) Area.

The RSES recognises and supports the many opportunities for onshore wind as a major source of renewable energy. It states opportunities for both commercial and community wind energy projects should be harnessed, having regard to the requirements of DoEHLG Guidelines on Wind Energy. It also states that Wind Energy, with current and future developments in technology, has an important role in delivering value and clean electricity for Ireland.

Policies in the RSES relevant to the proposed project are outlined as follows:

- **RPO 87 Low Carbon Energy Future**: The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport, and agriculture.
- **RPO 95 Sustainable Renewable Energy Generation:** It is an objective to support implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP), and the Offshore Renewable Energy Plan and the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in their respective SEA and AA and leverage the Region as a leader and innovator in sustainable renewable energy generation.
- **RPO 96 Integrating Renewable Energy Sources:** It is an objective to support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure, and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.
- **RPO 98 Regional Renewable Energy Strategy:** It is an objective to support the development of a Regional Renewable Energy Strategy with relevant stakeholders.
- **RPO 99 Renewable Wind Energy:** It is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.
- **RPO 219 New Energy Infrastructure:** It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.

The RSES supports the measures outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2023. Supporting actions will focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, agriculture and forestry and climate resilience through flood defences. Actions on decarbonisation will be linked to the implementation of the crosscutting measures in the Climate Action Plan 2023 the National Mitigation Plan, and the National Adaptation Framework in conjunction the work of the Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO).

Section 8.2 of the RSES relates to the Strategic Energy Grid. It notes that the existing infrastructure, developed over many years, represents major and on-going capital and infrastructural investment in strategic national assets and is essential for the continued provision of a secure and reliable electricity supply.

4.4.5 Local Policy Context

Chapter 2 of this EIAR sets out an overall description of the proposed project and provides a list of all townlands that the proposed project is located within. As previously mentioned, the proposed wind farm site and the associated areas lie within the functional areas of Offaly County Council and Tipperary County Council thus informed by the provisions of both the Offaly County Development Plan and the Tipperary County Development Plan. Therefore, this section will set out the relevant objectives, policies, and provisions for wind energy in both development plans.

4.4.5.1 Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Offaly County Development Plan (CDP) came into effect on the 22nd of October 2021, replacing the previous 2014-2020 CDP. The CDP sets forth the framework for the county's land use strategy and sustainable development of the functional area of County Offaly. The CDP sets forth a strategic vision for the county in the lifetime of the plan:

> *"To create a sustainable and competitive county that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to employment opportunities supported by high quality housing and physical, social and community infrastructure for all, in a climate resilient manner and with respect for our biodiversity"*

Additionally the CDP contains a number of separate strategy documents which have been undertaken in parallel with the preparation of the plan. This includes a wind energy strategy document.

4.4.5.1.1 Offaly County Wind Energy Strategy

The key objectives of the Strategy include the following:

- Reflect and plan for technological advances in wind farms over the next number of years;
- Support wind energy as a renewable energy source which can play a vital role in achieving national targets in relation to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions;
- Identify key areas within the county that are 'Open for Consideration for Wind Energy Developments' or 'Unsuitable for Wind Energy Developments' based on wind speed, access to the electricity grid and substations, and avoidance of adverse impacts on the landscape and designated sites.

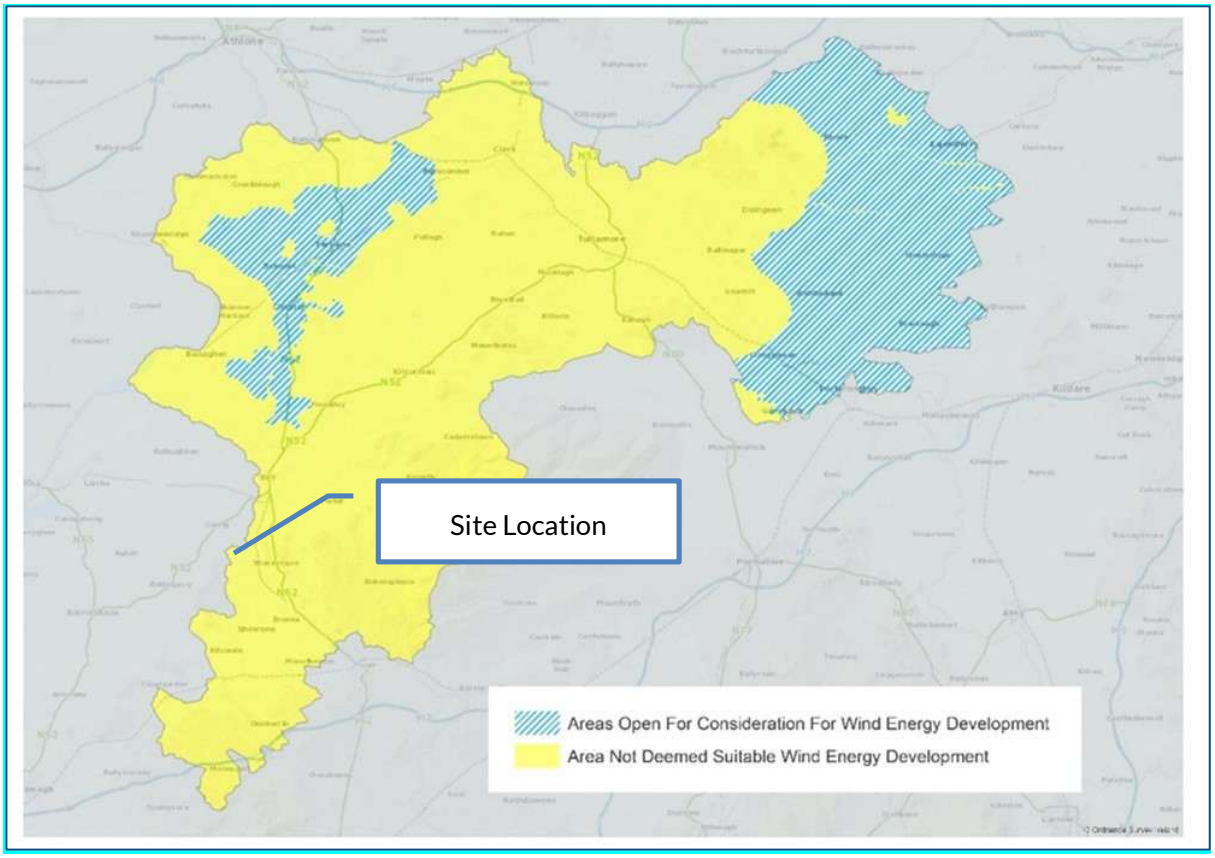

Figure 4-4 Wind Energy Strategy Designations Map extracted from Offaly CDP (Map No. 10) Including Proposed Site Location

The figure above shows the areas in the county designated as 'Open for Consideration for Wind Energy Development' or as an 'Area Not Deemed Suitable for Wind Energy'

As shown above the site location of the proposed project is in an 'Area Not Deemed Suitable for Wind Energy Development'.

It is the policy of the Council to assess proposals for new wind energy developments in accordance with Map No. 10 'Wind Energy Strategy Designations', Climate Action Energy Objective CAEO-05 (Chapter 3 Climate Action and Energy) and the following parameters:

1. **Areas Not Deemed Suitable for Wind Energy Developments**

a) This area is considered to be generally unsuitable for wind farm development due to significant environmental, heritage and landscape constraints and housing density.

b) Individual small-scale turbines will be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to relevant exemption provisions in the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

c) Applications for re-powering (by replacing existing wind turbines) and extension of existing and permitted wind farms will be assessed on a case by-

case basis and will be subject to criteria listed in Development Management Standard 109 contained in Chapter 13 of Volume 1 of this County Development Plan and the Section 28 Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

A planning statement forms part of the application documentation for the proposed project, which sets out a planning rationale for permitting the proposed project.

In addition, Section 3.2.6 of the Offaly County Development Plan on 'Wind Energy' states

> *''Site suitability is an important factor in determining the suitability of wind farms having regard to possible adverse impacts associated with, for example, residential amenities, landscape, including views or prospects, wildlife, habitats, designated sites, protected structures or bird migration paths and compatibility with adjoining land uses.*
>
> *The Council Is thereby required to achieve a reasonable balance between responding to overall positive Government policy on renewable energy and enabling the wind energy resources of the Planning Authority's area to be harnessed in a manner that is consistent with proper planning and sustainable development.*
>
> *The Council recognises that community ownership of wind energy projects enables local communities to benefit directly from local wind energy resources being development in their local areas, ensuring long term income for rural communities.''*

Table 3.1 of the CDP demonstrates County Offaly's contribution to realising overall national targets (under the Climate Action Plan 2019) on renewable energy and climate change mitigation, and in particular wind energy production and the potential wind energy resource during the plan period. The wind energy target for 2027 is 466.3MW.

Policies in the CDP which are relevant to the proposed project include:

Renewable Energy

- **CAEP-25** It is Council policy to encourage and facilitate the production of energy from renewable sources, such as from bioenergy, waste material, solar, hydro, geothermal and wind energy, subject to proper planning and environmental considerations.
- **CAEP-26** It is Council policy to encourage developers of proposed large scale renewable energy projects to carry out community consultation in accordance with best practice and to commence the consultation at the commencement of project planning.
- **CAEP-27** It is Council policy to ensure that whenever possible, community benefits are derived from all renewable energy development in the county such as near-neighbour benefit funds and general community benefit funds, which may take the form of contributions in kind to local projects, assets and facilities such as public amenities on the renewable energy site, measures to promote energy efficiency or a local energy discount scheme.
- **CAEP-28** It is Council policy to co-operate if required with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly in identifying Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger energy generating projects, community and micro energy production, whilst ensuring environmental constraints and a regional landscape strategy are considered.

Wind Energy

- **CAEP-37** It is Council policy to recognise the importance of wind energy as a renewable energy source which can play a vital role in achieving national targets in relation to reductions in fossil fuel dependency and therefore greenhouse gas emissions.
- **CAEP-38** It is Council policy that in assessing planning applications for wind farms, the Council shall:
    a) have regard to the provisions of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, the Interim Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Statutory Plans, Renewable Energy and Climate Change 2017 and the Draft revised Wind Energy Guidelines 2019 which are expected to be finalised in the near future;
    b) have regard to 'Areas Open for Consideration for Wind Energy Developments' in the Wind Energy Strategy Designations Map from the County Wind Energy Strategy.

Additionally, DMS-109 is relevant in terms of assessment of windfarms and considerations that will be made by the local authority.

Electricity Transmission and Distribution

- **CAEP-01** It is Council policy to support and facilitate the development, reinforcement, renewal and expansion of the electricity transmission and distribution grid, including the development of new lines, pylons and substations as required to provide for the future physical and economic development of Offaly
- **CAEP-02** It is Council policy to require that, in all new developments, local services such as medium and low voltage electricity cables shall be undergrounded, with multiple services accommodated in shared strips underground and that access covers are shared, whenever possible.
- **CAEP-05** It is Council policy to support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/ distribution of a renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres.
    - Facilitating trans-boundary networks into and through the County and Region to ensure the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner;
    - Facilitate the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to allow linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner; and
    - Support the safeguarding of strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks.

Peatlands

Approximately 30% of the site comprises peatlands within County Offaly. As such, the following policies have been considered:

- **CAEP-16** It is Council policy to support the preparation of a comprehensive after use framework plan for the industrial peatlands and associated workshops, office buildings and industrial sites in the midlands and adjacent parts of the north west and southern regions, which meets the environmental, economic and social needs of communities in these areas, and also demonstrating leadership in climate change mitigation and land stewardship. The

Council recognises that the industrial peatlands in the midlands are a significant resource will transition to after uses ranging from amenity, tourism, biodiversity services, 'wild areas', flood management, climate mitigation, energy development, industry, education, conservation and many more.

4.4.5.2 Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Tipperary CDP 2022-2028 came into effect on the 22nd August 2022. The CDP is a framework for how Tipperary will deliver for communities, through protecting the environment, reducing energy demands, maintaining viability of towns, villages and rural communities and supporting job creation. The CDP aims to build sustainable growth within the county given its national reputation as a leader in renewable energy development and innovation.

Policies in the CDP which are relevant to the proposed Ballincor wind farm include:

Renewable Energy:

- **3-1** Promote and facilitate renewable energy development, in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy 2016 (and any review thereof), and the Tipperary Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019.
- **3-F** In accordance with the objective of the Renewable Energy Strategy (and any review thereof), to encourage and support community energy schemes, and ways to incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy development at the community level, though micro-generation, auto-production and investment in commercial energy production.
- **10-1** Support and facilitate new development that will produce energy from local renewable sources such as hydro, bioenergy, wind, solar, geothermal and landfill gas, including renewable and non-renewable enabling plant, subject to compliance with normal planning and environmental criteria, in co-operation with statutory and other energy providers. The provisions of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (and any review thereof) as set out in Volume 3, will apply to new development.
- **10-5** Support and facilitate the co-location of renewable energy development and technologies to ensure the most efficient use of land identified as suitable for renewable energy generation.
- **10-A** Support the Climate Action Plan (DECC, 2019) as it relates to renewable energy production, having consideration to the strategic importance and potential benefits of renewable energy investment to rural communities.
- **10-C** To continue to support renewable energy development and to maintain a positive framework for development through the review of the Renewable Energy Strategy over the lifetime of the Plan.
- **15-E** Support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas infrastructure, by network providers, to enable the integration of renewable energy sources and enable an energy system that is safe, secure and adaptable.

Electricity transmission and distribution

- **15-E** Support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas infrastructure, by network providers, to enable the integration of renewable energy sources and enable an energy system that is safe, secure and adaptable.
- **15-F** Work in partnership with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in line with their 'Policy Statement to Ensure Security of Electricity Supply

and Facilitate the Target of up to 80% Renewable Electricity Generation by 2030', and to facilitate additional electricity transmission and distribution grid infrastructure, as well as additional electricity interconnection and electricity storage.

4.4.5.2.1 Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (RES)

The Tipperary County Wind Energy Strategy sets out a planning framework for development of wind energy in the county. The Strategy, which has been informed by a LCA and SEA/HDA, identifies areas where wind energy development is 'open for consideration' and where wind energy developments are considered 'unsuitable'. The Strategy also set out the appropriate planning policy and development management standards to support and manage sustainable wind energy development.

The RES states that the wind energy strategy for Tipperary was prepared in accordance with the recommendations of the Planning Guidelines for Wind Energy Development for Planning Authorities 2006, which included a step-by-step methodology comprising sieve mapping analysis of the key policy considerations. This process aims to balance environmental, landscape, technical and economic criteria in order to identify the most suitable locations in Tipperary for wind energy development.

The Renewable Energy Strategy indicates that the lands adjacent to the county border and closest to the proposed project as similarly 'Areas Unsuitable for New Wind Energy Development'. This is consistent with the previous Renewable Energy Strategy for North Tipperary which was published in 2016.

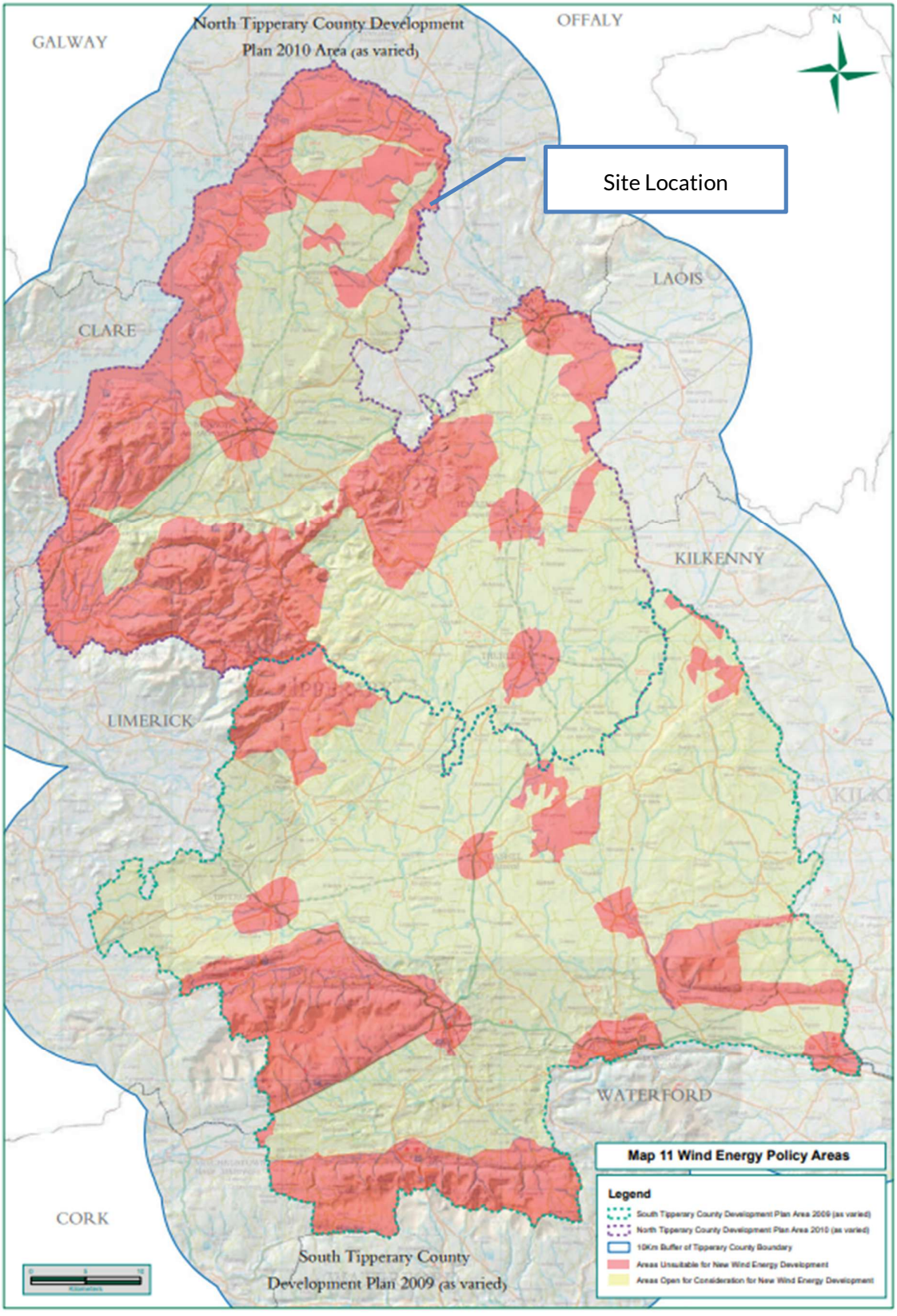

Figure 4-5 Wind Energy Policy Areas extracted from the RES (Map No. 11)

As per policy TWIND 4.14, 'Areas Unsuitable for New Development', proposals for wind farm development may be considered on a case-by-case basis in the following limited circumstances:

- *Where there are existing wind farms in these areas, proposals for 'repowering' may be considered appropriate, on a case-by-case basis. Repowering is the process of replacing older turbines with newer ones that either have a greater capacity or more efficiency which results in a net increase of power generated. Repowering may also seek to extend the overall lifespan of the development. Proposals for repowering, shall not result in a net increase in turbines, and it shall be demonstrated that there is no adverse impact on the receiving environment. or*

a) *In areas located outside of Natura 2000 sites, proposals for an extension to an existing wind farm (of up to 20% in terms of permitted numbers of turbines or in cases where 5 or less turbines are permitted in a wind farm, one additional turbine) will be considered. The proposal will be required to demonstrate that the additional turbines may be served by the infrastructure serving the existing development.*

b) *In areas located outside of Natura 2000 sites, where an existing wind farm has been permitted and this permission expires over the lifetime of this Wind Energy Strategy, a revised proposal will be considered within the planning unit of the previously permitted development, and where it is demonstrated that the is no net increase in turbines.*

All proposals will be required to comply with the policies and development management standards set out in the Wind Energy Strategy.

Other relevant policies from the RES include:

- **Policy RE2**: **Landscape** Capacity and Renewable Energy Development: It is the policy of the Council to facilitate new development which integrates with and respects the character, sensitivity and value of the landscape in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Tipperary Landscape Character Assessment 2016 and the policies as set out in the County Development Plan (as varied) and the Development Management standards set out in Chapter 10.

Peatlands

- **3-I** Support projects which assist the transition of industrial cut-over peatlands to sustainable after uses.
- **11-15** Support the diversification of peatlands, whilst ensuring the protection of their ecological, archaeological, cultural and educational significance in line with the National Peatlands Strategy (DAHG 2015). The Council may request landowners to prepare a 'Peatland Master Plan', especially for areas of industrial cut-over peatland, and will work with all stakeholders involved in the process in this regard. Any Masterplan should identify any significant tourism, amenity and recreation potential of these lands.

4.5 CONCLUSION

There are significant International, European, National, Regional and Local policy supports for renewable energy technologies in the country. In September 2022, it was confirmed that Ireland yet again missed its targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions as per the latest report from the Climate Change Advisory Council – 'Annual Review September 2022'[11] – "Ireland has failed to meet its 2020 EU target of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and will have to use allowances purchased from other Member States to meet the shortfall". More recently, the 'Annual Review For All' published in October 2024[12] states that ''planning processes must ensure that new energy infrastructure is developed to withstand future projected climate impacts.''

2050 European targets mean that Europe's energy production will have to be almost carbon-free by that time, and while Ireland has come a long way in recent years to increase renewable energy generation, the targets are ever increasing. It is this commitment on energy and climate policy that justifies a clear need for renewable energy generation in Ireland. It is recognised that there are a range of renewable resource alternatives that could be explored to meet our International and European commitments, however, onshore wind is a central pillar of Ireland's decarbonisation strategy in the short, medium and long term. Wind energy continues to dominate Ireland's renewable electricity generation. In the first quarter of 2025, wind farms supplied 38% of Ireland's electricity, highlighting the sector's consistency and scale. This contribution was achieved during a period of rising demand, with national electricity usage climbing to 3,673 GWh in March 2025.[13] Ireland currently has approximately 7 GW of renewable generation capacity, of which onshore wind accounts for around 5.1 GW, making it the single largest renewable electricity technology deployed nationwide. Solar PV, by comparison, contributes around 1.7 GW, with hydro, biomass and other sources making up the remainder.[14] Government policy has reaffirmed the central role of onshore wind in meeting national climate goals. The Programme for Government and follow-on policy frameworks reaffirm Ireland's target of 9 GW of onshore wind capacity by 2030, supported by the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce, which is specifically tasked with identifying and removing barriers to onshore renewable deployment.[15] As such onshore wind stands at the centre of Ireland's transition to renewable energy sources. It is the country's most established, and immediately scalable renewable resource available today. Its strong performance make it indispensable to meeting Ireland's 2030 targets.

[11] https://www.climatecouncil.ie/media/climatechangeadvisorycouncil/contentassets/publications/CCACANNUAL-REVIEW-2022.pdf Accessed on 1st May 2025.
[12] https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/CCAC-AR-2024-SfA-final.pdf Accessed on 1st May 2025.

[13] https://windenergyireland.com/latest-news/7852-wind-farms-provided-38-per-cent-of-ireland-s-electricity-in-first-three-months-of-2025. Accessed on 20th January 2026

[14] Wind Energy Generation – Wednesday, 5 Nov 2025 – Parliamentary Questions (34th Dáil) – Houses of the Oireachtas. Accessed on 20th January 2026

[15] Wind Energy Generation – Wednesday, 5 Nov 2025 – Parliamentary Questions (34th Dáil) – Houses of the Oireachtas. Accessed on 20th January 2026

Ireland is one of the top 20 countries in its use of wind energy worldwide[16]. As mentioned within CAP25, the Irish government is ramping up its aspirations on renewables, aiming for 80% renewable electricity by 2030. Wind energy provides a clean, sustainable solution to our energy problems. It can be used as an alternative to fossil fuels in generating electricity, without the direct emission of greenhouse gases.

The benefits of wind power are considered to be many and these can be summarised as follows:

- Wind energy releases no pollution into the air or water;
- Wind energy is both renewable and sustainable. The wind will never run out, unlike the earth's fossil fuel reserves (such as oil and gas);
- Adding wind power to the energy supply diversifies the national energy portfolio and reduces reliance on imported fuels;
- Wind turbines have a relatively small footprint;
- Wind turbines are considered relatively low maintenance;
- The wind energy sector protects consumers from continued volatility in the gas sector. A recent Wind Energy Ireland news article[17] stated that, ''spending on gas for electricity in Ireland was cut by almost one billion euro last year, as wind energy supplied 32 per cent of Ireland's electricity''; and
- Energy in Ireland 2024 Report[18] published by the SEAI has indicated that wind energy accounted for c.82.7% of renewable electricity generated in Ireland in 2023. The CO_2 intensity of electricity generation fell to a historic low in 2020, before increasing slightly in 2021 due to an increase in emissions from coal and, to a lesser extent, oil. The CO_2 intensity fell again in 2023, which was driven by a reduction in the proportion of oil and coal within the energy generation mix.

At a national level, the proposed project complies with CAP25 as it facilitates the renewable energy target of achieving 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and increasing the capacity of onshore wind in Ireland. It also contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions within the electricity sector with knock on effects on other sectors as well, thus having an overall impact on limiting emissions within sector wise ceilings set within CAP25. BESS system technologies are also included within the proposed project which further strengthens the grid by storing excess energy and providing stability. In addition, the proposed project is aligned with the objectives of RSES for the Southern Region i.e., to support the development of secure, reliable and safe supplies of renewable energy; and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. The proposed project is cognisant of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019) and other policies as described above.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015 to 2021 as adopted has set a target of a 51% reduction in the total amount of greenhouse gases over the course of the first two carbon periods ending 31 December 2030 relative to 2018 annual emissions. The 2021 Climate Act defines the carbon budget as 'the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted during the budget period'.

[16] Wind Power by Country 2025. Accessed on 1st May 2025.
[17] Wind energy saved Ireland over €1.2 billion on gas in 2024. Accessed on 1 May 2025.
[18] energy-in-ireland-2024.pdf. Accessed on 30st May 2025.

Therefore, it is requested that the Planning Authority has regard to the strong EU and national policy support for renewable energy development.

At a local level, the proposed project complies with several overarching policies outlined in the Offaly CDP and County Wind Energy Strategy. The project encourages renewable energy production in accordance with CAEP-25 and has carried out community consultation under CAEP-26 and seeks to ensure contribution to community benefits via a successful RESS auction. The project adheres to various guidelines for wind energy developments outlined in CAEP-38 and supports the development and reinforcement of the electricity grid under CAEP-01, CAEP-02, and CAEP-05. The project also protects designated peatland areas and landscapes as required by BLP-14 as works are situated away from these areas and relevant mitigation measures are applied to ensure no adverse impacts.

The proposed project also aligns with policies within the Tipperary CDP and RES promoting renewable energy development in accordance with CDP policy 3-1 and 3-F by supporting community energy schemes. Additionally, the project supports the sustainable development, maintenance, and upgrading of electricity and gas infrastructure under CDP policy 15-E and facilitates additional electricity transmission and distribution grid infrastructure as per CDP policy 15-F. The project also assists the transition of cut-over peatlands to sustainable after uses as required by CDP policy 3-I and supports the diversification of peatlands while protecting their ecological, archaeological, cultural, and educational significance in line with CDP policy 11-15.

The proposed project creates an opportunity to generate real tangible benefits for the local community who may not have a direct involvement in the project via the community benefit fund which will be set up following a successful RESS auction.

The proposed project will have several significant long-term and short-term benefits for the local economy including job creation, provision of amenity, local authority commercial rate payments and a Community Benefit Scheme. In addition, during construction, additional employment will have been created in the region through the supply of services and materials to the development.

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