

13. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

13.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA assesses the likely significant effects of the Prospective Development on the landscape and visual amenity. The LVIA reported in this chapter was informed by desktop studies and receptor mapping, site visits, verified photomontages, and an impact assessment methodology which follows best practice guidance for LVIA. The LVIA also includes assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects. This chapter is supported by one volume and three appendices:

- **EIAR Volume 2 Photomontage Booklet** (Hereafter 'Photomontage Booklet'): A1 Banner Photomontage Booklet presenting verified photomontage visualisations from representative viewpoints
- **Appendix 13-1, LVIA Methodology**: An appendix detailing the methodology and guidance used for the assessments reported in this chapter
- **Appendix 13-2, Visual Impact Assessment of Viewpoints**: A visual impact assessment of the representative viewpoints included in the Photomontage Booklet
- **Appendix 13-3, A0 LVIA Baseline Map**: A large scale (A0) map showing all baseline landscape and visual receptors and LVIA tools (e.g. Viewpoints and Visibility mapping)

13.1.1 Statement of Authority

MKO has developed extensive expertise and experience over the last 20 years in the LVIA of large-scale infrastructure developments for Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR). The MKO Landscape and Visual team have produced LVIA across a diverse range of project types, including renewable energy and grid infrastructure; residential developments; transport infrastructure; extraction infrastructure; and a range of other projects requiring EIAR.

This LVIA was written by Dija Mazonaite with direction from Jack Workman, with oversight from Michael Watson.

Jack Workman MSc., TMLI. is the Landscape & Visual Project Director at MKO and is chartered as a Technician Member of the British Landscape Institute. Jack is an environmental scientist and an LVIA specialist with an academic background in the field of Environmental Science and Geography. Jack's primary role at MKO is scoping and writing LVIA for EIARs with over 5 years' experience managing all aspects of LVIA for a broad range of commercial infrastructure developments. Jack holds a BSc. in Psychology, and an MSc. in Coastal and Marine Environments (Physical Processes, Policy & Practice). Jack is an active participant in the National Landscape Forum, presenting in 2023 and 2024 on the topic of LVIA, he also regularly delivers guest lectures for students on the topic of LVIA at top third level institutions in Ireland including University of Galway, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and University College Cork. Jack holds a membership with the Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management and is also a member of the Landscape Research Group.

Dija Mazonaite is a Project Environmental Scientist - LVIA Specialist at MKO. Dija has a BSc (Hons) in Geography & Geosystems, PGCert in Marine Spatial Planning, and was recognised as a University Scholar at the University of Galway. Dija's primary role at MKO is producing and reviewing the LVIA chapter of EIA reports for large-scale infrastructure developments. Since joining MKO, Dija has over 3 years' experience conducting and project managing all aspects of LVIA for a broad range of commercial infrastructure developments including wind and solar energy projects, grid infrastructure, extraction industry and Strategic Housing Developments. Dija's key strengths include proficiency in GIS tools such as ArcGIS and QGIS, conducting landscape and visual impact assessments and capturing image data through drone surveys and photomontages. Dija is an affiliate member with the

Landscape Institute and is an active participant of the Irish National Landscape Forum. Diya also regularly delivers guest lectures for students on the topic of LVIA at top third level institutions in Ireland.

Michael Watson is the Environment Division Director in MKO who has over 25 years' experience in the environmental sector. Following the completion of his master's degree in environmental resource management, Geography, from National University of Ireland, Maynooth he worked for the Geological Survey of Ireland and then a prominent private environmental consultancy prior to joining MKO in 2014. Michael's professional experience includes managing Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and Landscape & Visual Impact Assessments on behalf of clients in the wind farm, waste management, commercial and industrial sectors nationally. Michael worked on the capture and development of photomontages as well as compiling the Landscape & Visual Impact Assessments for some of the first wind turbines being proposed in Ireland in the early 2000's and has been compiling and reviewing LVIA chapters for multiple wind farm projects each year since 2014. Michael is a key member of the MKO senior management team and as head of the Environment Division has responsibilities to mentor various grades of team members, foster a positive and promote continuous professional development for employees. Michael also has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Geography and Economics from NUI Maynooth, is a Member of IEMA, a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv).

13.1.2 Prospective Development Description

A full and detailed description of the Prospective Development can be found in Chapter 4: Description of the Prospective Development. Section 4.4 of that chapter describes the Prospective Development and its component parts, including the works subject of a proposed application for planning permission to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP).

This planning application seeks a 25-year operational life from the date of full commissioning of the wind farm.

13.1.2.1 In-Text Referencing

As detailed in Section 1.1.1 in Chapter 1 of this EIAR/rEIAR, the various development components are described and assessed using the following references: 'Subject Development', 'Existing Development', 'Prospective Development', 'Permitted Development', 'Site', 'Wind Farm Site', 'Grid Connection Site', 'BMEP Site', 'Grid Connection', 'November 2020 Peat Slide', '2017 EIAR' and 'proposed turbines' or 'proposed turbine locations'.

13.1.3 Essential Aspects of the Prospective Development and Primary Focus of the LVIA

This LVIA follows 'The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition' (hereafter, GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute (LI) & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (2013) as well as 'Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of GLVIA3: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 2024-01' (hereafter, LI TGN 24-01) published by the Landscape Institute (LI) (2024). This guidance states that:

"It is important to make sure that the Project description provides all the information needed to identify its effect on particular aspects of the environment. For LVIA it is important to understand, from the Project description, the essential aspects of the scheme that will potentially give rise to its effects on the landscape and visual amenity".

The tall, vertical nature of the proposed turbines make them the most prominent elements of the Prospective Development from a landscape and visual perspective and have the most potential to give

rise to significant landscape and visual effects. In this regard, the proposed turbines are deemed to be the 'essential aspect' of the Prospective Development which will give rise to effects on the landscape and visual amenity and are the primary focus of the LVIA reported in this chapter.

The proposed 80m met mast is a tall vertical structure; therefore, it is included in the photomontage booklet and is fully considered throughout this chapter. However, it will be substantially less visible than any proposed turbine given its shorter and slender lattice form.

The proposed met mast is the only element of the Prospective Development that differs in location and height from the Permitted Development and, as such, has the potential to give rise to different landscape and visual effects. However, while it would be slightly visible in a different position within the landscape, it would remain located within a marginal upland landscape, primarily characterised by commercial forestry. Furthermore, the small change in height of the mast being reduced from a maximum height of 110m tall to a proposed mast height of 80m tall will not be discernible. As a result, these changes do not materially alter the overall landscape and visual effects on receptors.

13.1.4 Planning History Context and LVIA Topics of Focus

As set out in Chapter 2, the Wind Farm Site has been the subject of previous planning applications, most recently the Permitted Development, which comprises the same optimised turbine layout and height of turbines as the Prospective Development. The Permitted Development was permitted by ACP in 2018, with the Inspector reporting acceptable levels of Landscape and Visual Impacts. Relevant extracts from the Inspector's Report for the Permitted Development are set out below.

In relation to potential landscape and visual effects arising from the Permitted Development, the Inspector's Report states that the Inspector was:

"satisfied that they have been appropriately addressed in terms of the application and that no significant adverse effect is likely to arise."

The principle of this development, from a landscape and visual perspective, has therefore already been established at the Wind Farm Site. Landscape and visual receptors have not materially changed in the intervening period. Accordingly, this previous conclusion of the Planning Inspector in relation to the Permitted Development is of direct relevance to the current assessment of the Prospective Development, particularly given that the turbine height and layout, are the same as those assessed in the 2017 EIAR and permitted under the Permitted Development.

The Inspector's conclusions on the key landscape and visual topics previously raised by relevant authorities are set out below. The topics which remain relevant to the Prospective Development have been given due consideration and assessment in this LVIA and where appropriate the Inspector's conclusions are referenced throughout this Chapter.

Barnesmore Gap

Potential for adverse landscape and visual effects on the Barnesmore Gap were identified as a key topic of focus in the previous planning application. The 2017 EIAR provided a robust and comprehensive assessment of landscape and visual receptors in this regard. In considering visual impacts assessed for the Permitted Development, the Inspector was satisfied that no significant adverse impacts would arise in relation to the Barnesmore Gap, noting the following (bold emphasis added by MKO):

*"The various views of turbines from along the N15 when travelling SW towards Barnesmore Gap are **considered acceptable** as they **would not interfere with the character and setting of the Gap to any significant extent**, and they **would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the wider area.**"*

*“None of the views along this section of the N15 are protected and although several of the turbines would be highly visible, there **would be no significant adverse impacts on the view of Barnesmore Gap.**”*

As outlined throughout this chapter, the proposed turbines of the Prospective Development follow the same siting and overall height as the turbines assessed within the 2017 EIAR for the Permitted Development. The assessment presented in this Chapter independently demonstrates that significant adverse impacts on views of the Barnesmore Gap will **not** occur. Overall, the visual effects arising from the proposed turbines are considered to be acceptable.

Co. Donegal Protected View towards Barnesmore Gap

In relation to the protected view designated by County Donegal, the Inspector notes (bold emphasis added by MKO):

*“Although some of the blade tips would be visible from this location, the **impact on visual amenity would not be significant and the Protected View would not be adversely affected.**”*

*“The separation between the Protected View from along the N15 across Lough Mourne taken in conjunction with the **siting and location of the turbines would not detract from the view along Barnesmore Gap.**”*

As outlined throughout this chapter, the proposed turbines of the Prospective Development follow the same siting and overall height as the turbines assessed within the 2017 EIAR for the Permitted Development. The assessment presented in this Chapter independently demonstrates that significant adverse impacts on the protected views towards Barnesmore Gap will **not** occur, as discussed in Section 13.7.3.2.3. Overall, the visual effects arising from the proposed turbines are considered to be acceptable.

Co. Donegal EHSA (Especially High Scenic Amenity Areas)

In relation to the ‘Especially High Scenic Amenity’ Area (EHSA) as designated by County Donegal, the Inspector notes (bold emphasis added by MKO):

*“The Blue Stack Mountain Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA) Area to the W **would not be adversely affected.**”*

As outlined throughout this chapter, the proposed turbines of the Prospective Development follow the same siting and overall height as the turbines assessed within the 2017 EIAR for the Permitted Development. The assessment presented in this Chapter independently demonstrates that significant adverse impacts on the EHSAs will **not** occur, as discussed in Section 13.7.3.1.3.

Overall Acceptability of the Permitted Development in terms of Landscape and Visual Effects

In light of the above, it is appropriate and necessary to revisit the Inspector’s overall conclusions in respect of the landscape and visual effects associated with the Permitted Development. These findings are directly relevant to the current proposal, given that the height and layout of the proposed turbines remain consistent with those previously assessed and accepted (bold emphasis added by MKO).

*“Having regard to all of the above, I am satisfied that the most significant visual impact would be from within the site itself, and then from along the local road to the N and the dispersed houses to the NE, and from along sections of the N15 to the NE of Barnesmore Gap. **The proposed development would not adversely affect the visual amenities of the area or interfere with any protected views, prospects or scenic routes in the surrounding area, to any significant***

extent. The proposed development **would not give rise to any significant adverse cumulative impacts** with other windfarms in the wider area. The **height and rotor blade dimensions** of the proposed turbines **would not give rise to a significant adverse visual impact** having regard to the **overall scale of the site and the high degree of natural screening from the surrounding mountain ranges.**”

Border Region Context

Previous planning applications (not the Permitted Development) included turbines in separate clusters either side of the border demarking the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland (NI). There was previously focus on the division of these turbines across the landscape which is somewhat defined by its context on the border. As all proposed turbines of the Prospective Development comprise only one turbine cluster, all located within the ROI, this factor is no longer considered as relevant and is not of critical focus. However, a full comprehensive assessment of effects from receptors within both ROI and NI are included in this LVIA.

“The Inspector raised concerns in relation to the visual impact of the proposed development on both sides of the Border with NI. However, the Board did not share these concerns and concluded that the site is located outside of the areas of especially high scenic value in a part of the county where wind developments are open for consideration”

Comparative Visual Wireline (133m vs 136m Rotor Diameter)

The following image (Plate 13-1) is extracted from the Section 146(B) – Photomontage Booklet – February 2019, which accompanied a Section 146B Amendment Application seeking to increase the turbine rotor diameter up to 136m. The image presents a comparative wireline, where the rotor diameter was increased from 126m to 136m, with no change in overall tip height (156.5m). The Prospective Development includes turbines with a rotor diameter of 133m, while maintaining the same tip height. As such, given a difference of 3m, there will be no discernible difference in visual appearance between the 133m rotor proposed as part of the Prospective Development and the 136m rotor diameter modelled in Plate 13-1 below.

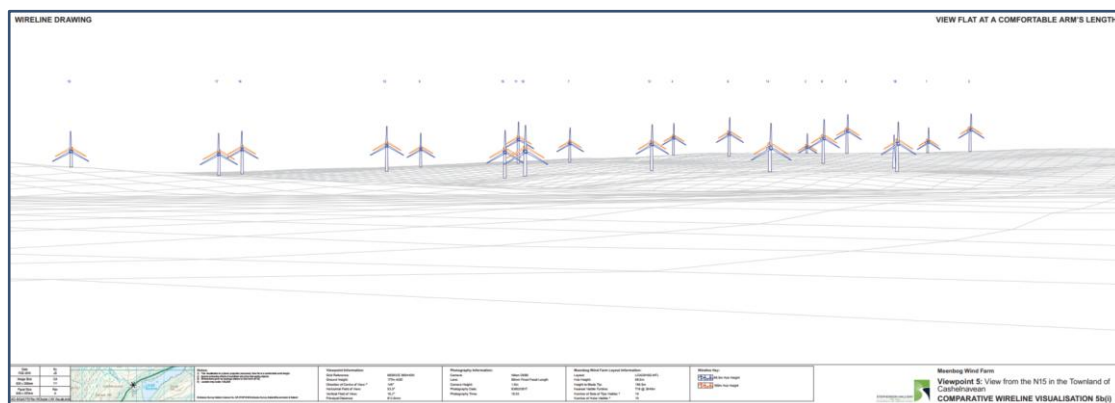


Plate 13-1 Extract from Section 146(B) – Photomontage Booklet – February 2019, Comparative Visual

13.1.5 Mitigation by Design

The Wind Farm Site was strategically selected as a landscape highly suitable for the development of wind energy. Through the iterative project design process for the Permitted Development (a design consistent with the Prospective Development), various best practice tools for assessing the landscape and visual impact of a proposed wind farm development were utilised to bring forward the optimum design with respect to landscape and visual factors. These tools include landscape modelling, Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) mapping and the preparation of photomontage visualisations.

The iterative design process was informed by the siting and design guidance for wind farms in specific landscape types as set out in the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government [DoEHLG], 2006), hereafter the 'Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006)'. For the LVIA detailed in this chapter, the layout of the proposed turbines is also considered with respect to the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government [DoHPLG], 2019), hereafter the 'Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019)'.

The final design of the Permitted Development included careful micro-siting of infrastructure with the aim of preventing the potential for significant landscape and visual effects. As previously mentioned, the Permitted Development (as amended) comprises the same optimised turbine layout and overall turbine tip-height as the Prospective Development. Various turbine layout iterations were considered as part of the design process in the 2017 EIAR. Landscape and visual 'mitigating' factors which were key to the Site selection and design of the Prospective Development are established below, these factors are of key relevance to this LVIA in this chapter.

- The Prospective Development is sited within a low sensitivity landscape comprising sparsely settled, remote, marginal upland characterised by commercial forestry.
- The proposed turbines are visible within a large-scale landscape which can effectively accommodate wind energy development. It is an area surrounded by distinct landforms which limits visibility of the proposed turbines from a large proportion of the LVIA Study Area.
- The siting and design of the Prospective Development adheres to the guidance for design and siting of wind farms within Mountain Moorland Landscape Types in terms of location, spatial extent and spacing set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019).
- Siting of the proposed turbines exceeds the minimum 500m set back distance in the current Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and exceeds the recommended 4 times tip height set back distance to third party properties, explicitly set out for residential visual amenity, prescribed by the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019).
- The design ensures acceptable levels of landscape and visual effects on the Barnesmore Gap and views from the N15 National Road. This included omission of turbines at the western extent of the Wind Farm Site in a landscape of higher sensitivity during early stages in the design of the Permitted Development, a design currently consistent with the Prospective Development.
- As part of the iterative design process for the turbine layout, design workshops were previously held to carefully microsite turbines within the Wind Farm Site to ensure a neat and de-cluttered visual configuration from key scenic viewpoints on the N15 National Road. This included ensuring spacing and alignment of turbines is visually coherent to avoid visual stacking ensuring the array is seen as a simple legible layout allowing the proposed turbines to be present without detracting from the views towards the Barnesmore Gap.

13.2 Brief Methodology and Assessment Criteria

This section broadly outlines the guidance and methodology used to undertake the LVIA of the Prospective Development; a more detailed description of the methodology is provided in Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology*. There are five main sections to the LVIA reported in this Chapter:

- Visibility of the proposed turbines:
 - ZTV mapping
 - Overview of actual visibility from site visits
- Landscape Baseline:
 - Policy Context – Relevant landscape and visual policies and designations in local planning policy documents

- Landscape Character and Sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site - informed by site visits, and an overview of relevant best practice siting and design guidance for wind farms appropriate to the landscape of the Site
- Visual Baseline:
 - Identify visual receptors scoped in for impact assessment
 - Selection of photomontage viewpoints
- Cumulative Context: Identification of other wind energy developments included for cumulative LVIA
- Likely Significant Landscape and Visual Effects:
 - Impact assessment supported by Appendix 13-2: *Visual Impact Assessment of Viewpoints*
 - Landscape and Visual effects reported through the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Prospective Development
 - Assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects

13.2.1 Guidance

Regarding legislation and general guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, please refer to Chapter 1 of this EIAR.

The methods and processes used for the LVIA reported in this chapter was guided and informed by benchmark best practice guidance specifically pertaining to LVIA and the LVIA of wind energy development. Details of the guidance used to conduct this LVIA are outlined in Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology* (Section 1.4: Relevant LVIA Guidance).

13.2.2 Alignment with Methodology for LVIA of the Permitted Development

This LVIA fundamentally follows the same overall methodology for the impact assessment process and applies the same LVIA tools as those used for the Permitted Development (e.g. ZTV mapping, photomontage viewpoint locations, as discussed in Section 1.7.1.1). The assessment has been undertaken independently for the Prospective Development, while maintaining consistency where appropriate with the approach previously adopted.

There are, however, some minor updates to the process and methodology to align with current best practice guidance, for e.g. alignment with EPA, 2022. Furthermore, in relation to photomontage production, MKO follows a range of best practice guidance for the LVIA of wind energy developments in Ireland in respect of data collection, modelling, rendering and the presentation of photomontages which have evolved since the LVIA of the Permitted Development. For example, the configuration and alignment of the proposed turbines in the wireline views match the configuration of the proposed turbines as presented in the photomontages so that direct comparison/correlation can be made as set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019). Further information and justification for this is detailed in Section 1.6.4.1 in Appendix 13-1. Overall, these very minor changes in methodology have no bearing on the overall outcome of the impact assessment.

13.2.3 Scope of the LVIA and Study Areas

The effects of the Prospective Development on the landscape of the Wind Farm Site are assessed in this LVIA. However, the landscape baseline mapping, visual receptor mapping and viewpoint selection are based on a wider study area, the '**LVIA Study Area**'. Following best practice guidance, the experience and professional judgement of the assessment team the LVIA Study Area comprises all lands within **20km** from the proposed turbines for assessment of effects on landscape and visual receptors, and is the

search area for other wind energy developments included for cumulative assessment. The LVIA Study Area incorporates the BMEP Site, and its surrounding landscape setting.

The full justification and rationale for use of the LVIA Study Area for assessment of effects on landscape and visual receptors are presented in detail in Section 1.10 of Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology*. After defining the parameters for this LVIA, and on the basis of desk studies, survey work undertaken, professional judgement and experience of the assessment team, the following are of assessment in this LVIA:

- Effects on landscape and visual receptors with minimal or no theoretical visibility (as predicted by the ZTV mapping), and/or very distant visibility, and are therefore unlikely to be subject to significant effects
- Effects on designated landscape receptors beyond 20km from the proposed turbines where it is judged that significant effects on key characteristics and/or special qualities are unlikely to occur
- Effects on visual receptors beyond 20km from the proposed turbines where it is judged that significant effects are unlikely occur
- Cumulative landscape and visual effects beyond 20km from the proposed turbines where it is judged that significant effects are unlikely to occur
- Cumulative effects with single turbines with a tip height under 50 metres, located at distances greater than 5km from the Prospective Development turbines.

13.2.4 Assessment of Potential Impacts

The landscape and visual assessment methodology used in this chapter includes clearly documented methods based on the GLVIA3 (LI & IEMA, 2013). This includes consideration of landscape and visual sensitivity balanced with the magnitude of change to determine the likely significance of effects. Potential for cumulative effects are also considered and accounted for in these determinations and judgements. Mitigating factors are then taken into consideration to arrive at residual landscape and visual effects. Residual landscape and visual effects are graded upon an 'impact assessment classification of significance' scale, as defined by the 'Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (EPA, 2022). The assessments have been informed by many site visits and are supported by a range of best practice tools for LVIA including ZTV mapping and photomontages. Further details of the methods used to produce ZTV maps and photomontages, as well as the LVIA process, including assessment of cumulative effects are presented in Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology*.

13.2.5 LVIA Wind Energy Context

Given Ireland's renewable energy targets, which have been set by the State for onshore renewable wind energy development, wind turbines will form a new component in the working landscape for the coming decades. The focus for visual impact assessment of wind energy developments is therefore distance, arrangement, location and potential disruption to key scenic sensitivities rather than a commonly misconceived focus on whether turbines are visible or not from a particular vantage point. The outcome of the visual impact assessment, with regards to the EPA, 2022 definition of significance, is calibrated in the overall context of LVIA of wind energy developments in Ireland and what is acceptable in the context of emerging baseline trends and the acceptability of wind turbines within views as a result of national policy.

Over time, wind turbines have, and will become, a more familiar and accepted component of the Irish landscape, particularly in working rural contexts. Accordingly, their presence may not carry the same level of perceived visual intrusion as less common or incongruous forms of development. In this context, the calibration of visual impact significance reflects both the policy-driven imperative for renewable energy development and the evolving visual baseline in parts of the Irish landscape. While

the visibility of turbines remains an important consideration, it does not in itself equate to significant visual impact.

Key factors of focus in the overall impact assessment on visual receptors in relation to photomontages are:

- The scale of the proposed turbines relative to the landscape due to setback distance
- The number of proposed turbines visible
- Full or partial visibility of partial turbines (e.g., are they partially screened by features)
- The horizontal extent of the proposed turbines in the field of view
- Overall visual coherency with regards to form and arrangement and how the proposed turbines correspond to the landscape from a particular vantage point as per best practice siting and design guidance

13.3 Visibility of the Prospective Development

Determining the visibility of the Prospective Development is a fundamental component of the assessment of landscape and visual effects. Visibility has been evaluated using a combination of complementary best practice methods. While the assessment focuses primarily on the proposed turbines, all associated infrastructure has been considered. Visibility analysis is informed by GIS-based spatial analysis, including ZTV mapping. The nature and extent of actual visibility were verified through systematic field surveys undertaken across the LVIA Study Area during 2024 and 2025. The degree of visibility and the resulting magnitude of visual effects were further tested through the preparation of photomontages from a range of representative viewpoints, selected to reflect different geographic locations and visual receptor types.

13.3.1 ZTV Mapping: Theoretical Visibility of the Proposed Turbines

ZTV mapping is an important step in the LVIA process, in that it clearly shows which areas of the LVIA Study Area will have theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines and which areas will have no theoretical visibility. The ZTV mapping methodology is outlined in Appendix 13-1. This method was used to examine the theoretical visibility of the 19 No. proposed turbines from all landscape and visual receptors within the LVIA Study Area, using the half blade height of the wind turbines as points of reference.

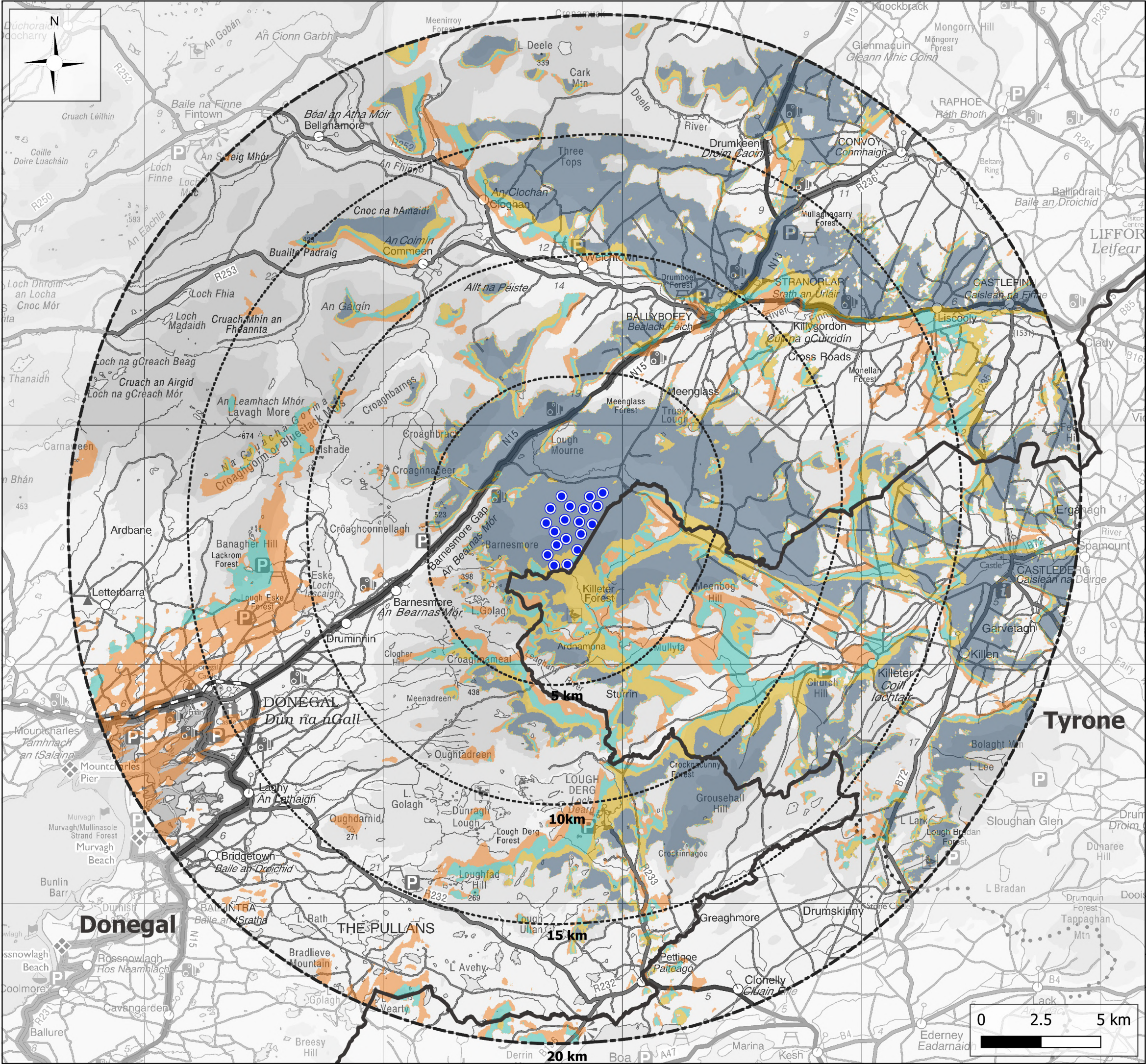
As noted in Appendix 13-1, actual visibility on the ground is significantly less than predicted by the ZTV mapping due to intervening factors such as on-site screening from natural and man-made features, atmospheric weather, and/or localised topography.

Generation of the ZTV utilises large scale topographical data (interpolation across 10 m OSI contour data) and does not account for topographical variation of smaller scale (e.g. < 10 metre). Therefore, small, localised undulations in topography are likely to further inhibit visibility of the proposed turbines that may not be represented in the ZTV map. Other features of the landscape such as vegetation and man-made elements are also likely to obscure the proposed turbines from view from many areas where the Half-Blade ZTV indicates there is full theoretical visibility. In this regard, the ZTV Map is a useful tool to indicate where there is definitely no visibility of the proposed turbines, thus receptors located in these areas can be scoped out from further assessment.

The Half-Blade ZTV map of the proposed turbines and LVIA Study Area is shown in Figure 13-1 below. Separate colour bands are used on each ZTV map to indicate the number of proposed turbines of which the half blade will potentially be visible due to visual screening from landform. The legend on each map shows the number of theoretically visible turbines for each corresponding colour, which are as follows:

- > Orange: 1-5 proposed turbines theoretically visible
- > Light Green: 6-10 proposed turbines theoretically visible
- > Yellow: 11-15 proposed turbines theoretically visible
- > Dark Blue: 16-19 proposed turbines theoretically visible

Figure 13-2 (below) shows the landform features and elevation gradients existent within the landscape of the LVIA Study Area. The geography of these topographical characteristics define the distribution of theoretical visibility illustrated in Figure 13-1.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations

Half-Blade Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 1-5 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 6-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 11-15 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 16-19 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-1

Zone of Theoretical Visibility

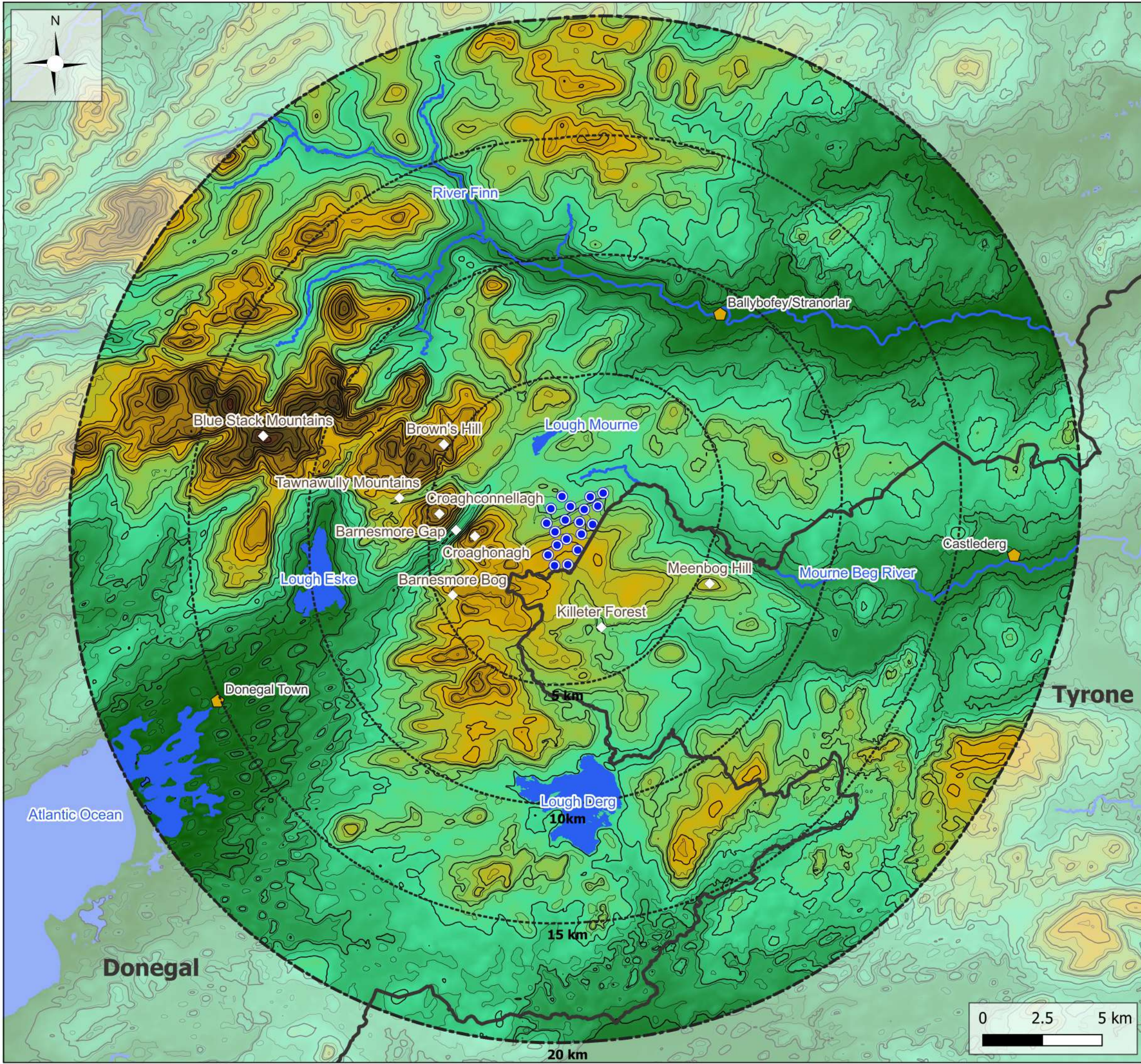
Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	19/02/2026	GL	JW



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Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations
- ★ Key Settlements

Physical Landscape Features

- ◇ Key Topographic Features
- Key Waterbodies

Elevation (Above Ordnance Datum)

- 0m
- 1m
- 150m
- 300m
- 450m
- 600m
- 750m

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-2

Drawing Title

Physical Landscape Features

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	19/02/2026	GL	JW



Planning and Environmental Consultants

0 2.5 5 km



The proposed turbines are sited within a sparsely settled upland area of County Donegal near the border with County Tyrone. The proposed turbines are located beyond the south-eastern extent of the Bluestack Mountains, with the nearest proposed turbine approximately 3.5 km east of the Barnesmore Gap. The proposed turbines are sited on the northern slopes of a series of undulating landforms which comprise Meenbog Hill to the south-east, Killeter Forest to the south and Barnesmore Bog to the south-west. The ZTV map shows that these landforms enclosing the proposed turbines to the south-east, south and west serve to visually screen the proposed turbines from vast areas of the LVIA Study Area in these directions, with most of the map showing no theoretical visibility.

Most full theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines is shown within the Mourne Beg River Valley immediately north-west, north and east of the proposed turbines within 5-10 km. This is a gently sloping upland valley. Full theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines occurs in very sparsely settled portion of the Mourne Beg Valley which predominantly comprises open moorland and conifer plantations, as well as a small stretch of the N15 National Road where it passes by Lough Mourne. Large and prominent landforms north and west of the N15 National Road such as the Tawnawully Mountains and Brown's Hill visually screens the proposed turbines from all lands beyond 5km to the west and north-west, as shown by the ZTV map.

Theoretical visibility is sporadic and intermittent to the east of the proposed turbines, the ZTV map shows a combination of 'full', 'partial' and 'no' theoretical visibility out to 20km from the proposed turbines. These areas to the east comprise undulating landscape of sparsely populated river valleys and then the town of Castlederg approximately 17.5km east of the nearest proposed turbine. To the east, the theoretical visibility occurs on the lands of higher elevation with no or partial visibility occurring in the lower valleys where typically most of visual receptors are located such as residential properties and the local road network.

The River Finn is located approximately 8.4km to the north of the nearest proposed turbine, it bisects the LVIA Study Area in a west-east direction. The northern side of the valley shows a large linear area of full theoretical visibility which includes elevated areas immediately north of Ballybofey/Stranorlar town and the surrounding rural area.

13.3.2 The Nature of Visibility Determined During Site Visits & Focus of the LVIA

Site visits were conducted throughout 2024 and 2025 to assess the reality of visibility of the proposed turbines on the ground within the LVIA Study Area compared with the ZTV output, and to capture imagery to produce photomontages. Site visits determined actual visibility of the proposed turbines is likely to be far less than is shown on the ZTV map. Visibility of the proposed turbines is further limited by above ground features of the landscape such as vegetation, the built environment, and localised topography not accounted for in the ZTV modelling.

Analysis of ZTV mapping and information gathered during site visits determined that large areas showing theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines occurs in unpopulated upland areas, which do not represent any visual receptors. The Site visits determined that there would be almost no visibility within the three largest population centres in the LVIA Study Area: Donegal Town, Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Castlederg. Photomontages were produced from vantage points where the most open views in the direction of the proposed turbines from locations nearby these three Settlements, where theoretical visibility is shown. Site visits determined that the greatest visibility of the proposed turbines will occur within the Mourne Beg River Valley, within 5km of the proposed turbines. Therefore, effects on the landscape and visual receptors in this area where most visibility occurs is a key focus of this LVIA.

An additional site visit was conducted during 2026 to recapture Barnesmore Gap imagery to address glare from sun positioning which was evident on the original imagery captured at VP5, VP6 & VP7.

Due to the different time of year, there is more foliage on the surrounding vegetation, however, the recaptured imagery ensures that clear and representative views of the Barnesmore Gap are available within the Photomontage Booklet.

13.4 Landscape Baseline

The Landscape Baseline defines the baseline landscape character and sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site and LVIA Study Area and identifies key sensitive receptors relevant to the assessment. This baseline exercise considers the design of the Prospective Development in the context of best practice siting and design guidance for specific landscape types and provides context with respect to landscape and visual policies and designations in the relevant county development plans.

13.4.1 Landscape Policy Context

This section provides an overview of local planning policy and identifies landscape and visual protections, designations and spatial zoning for wind energy development relevant to the LVIA of the Prospective Development. The Prospective Development is in County Donegal; therefore, the Donegal County Development Plan 2024-2030 (hereafter 'DCDP') was the primary document used to inform this exercise.

The south-eastern portion of the LVIA Study Area is in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Therefore, relevant policy relating to landscape, landscape character and scenic amenity in County Tyrone and Northern Ireland is also reported in this Section.

13.4.1.1 Landscape Policy and Designations in the DCDP

Landscape and Visual policy are included in Chapter 11 of the DCDP, which sets out policies and objectives relating to Natural, Built and Archaeological Heritage. Section 11.2 of the DCDP includes the specific policies relating to landscape conservation in County Donegal and includes landscape policy background and strategy across EU, National and Regional levels. Section 11.2 includes the following core landscape objective.

"L-O-1: To protect, manage and conserve the character, quality and value of the Donegal landscape."

At a county level the DCDP references the Landscape Character Assessment of County Donegal which was published in 2016 (Hereafter referred to as LCACD). The LCACD defines, designates and maps Landscape Types and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) across the entirety of Donegal. The DCDP states the following in relation to the LCACD:

"The process was an analysis, characterisation and narrative of the component parts of the landscape of County Donegal and is not to be construed as an accompanying policy document of this Plan."

Given the very specific and deliberate statement cited above, the LCACD and its LCAs do not form part of the policy in the current DCDP and are not protected or referenced in any planning policies. The LCACD is therefore used in this LVIA as a point of reference to inform the baseline landscape character assessments of the Wind Farm Site and wider LVIA Study Area. However, the impact assessments in this LVIA considers the LCAs included in the LCACD, as well as the other landscape designations and classifications in the current DCDP, which are set out in the following sections.

13.4.1.1.1 **Landscape Classifications - DCDP**

The DCDP uses a three-tier system to identify specific ‘Landscape Classifications’ for all areas of County Donegal, these classifications relate to landscape sensitivity and specifically the scenic amenity qualities and attributes of the landscape. The DCDP describes these classifications as follows:

***“Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSA):** These are sublime natural landscapes of the highest quality that are synonymous with the identity of County Donegal. These areas have extremely limited capacity to assimilate additional development.*

***Areas of High Scenic Amenity (HSA):** These are landscapes of significant aesthetic, cultural, heritage and environmental quality that are unique to their locality and form a fundamental element of the landscape and identity of County Donegal. These areas have the capacity to absorb sensitively located development of scale, design and use that will enable assimilation into the receiving landscape and which does not detract from the quality of the landscape, subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the plan.*

***Areas of Moderate Scenic Amenity (MSA):** These are primarily landscapes outside Local Area Plan Boundaries and Settlement framework boundaries, that have a unique, rural and generally agricultural quality. These areas have the capacity to absorb additional development that is suitably located, sited and designed subject to compliance with all other objectives and policies of the Plan.”*

The following policies, outlined in Section 11.2.2 of the DCDP specifically relate to these Landscape Classification Areas:

***“LP-1:** To protect areas identified as ‘Especially High Scenic Amenity’ on Map 11.1 ‘Scenic Amenity’. Within these areas, only developments of strategic importance, or developments that are provided for by policy elsewhere in this Plan may be considered.*

***LP-2:** To protect areas identified as ‘High Scenic Amenity’ and ‘Moderate Scenic Amenity’ on Map 11.1 ‘Scenic Amenity’. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the Plan.”*

The distribution of these Landscape Classifications is illustrated in Map 11.1 of the DCDP, as well as specific scenic views illustrated by blue arrows. Figure 13-3 below shows the proposed turbines in relation to these Landscape Classification and nearby scenic views.

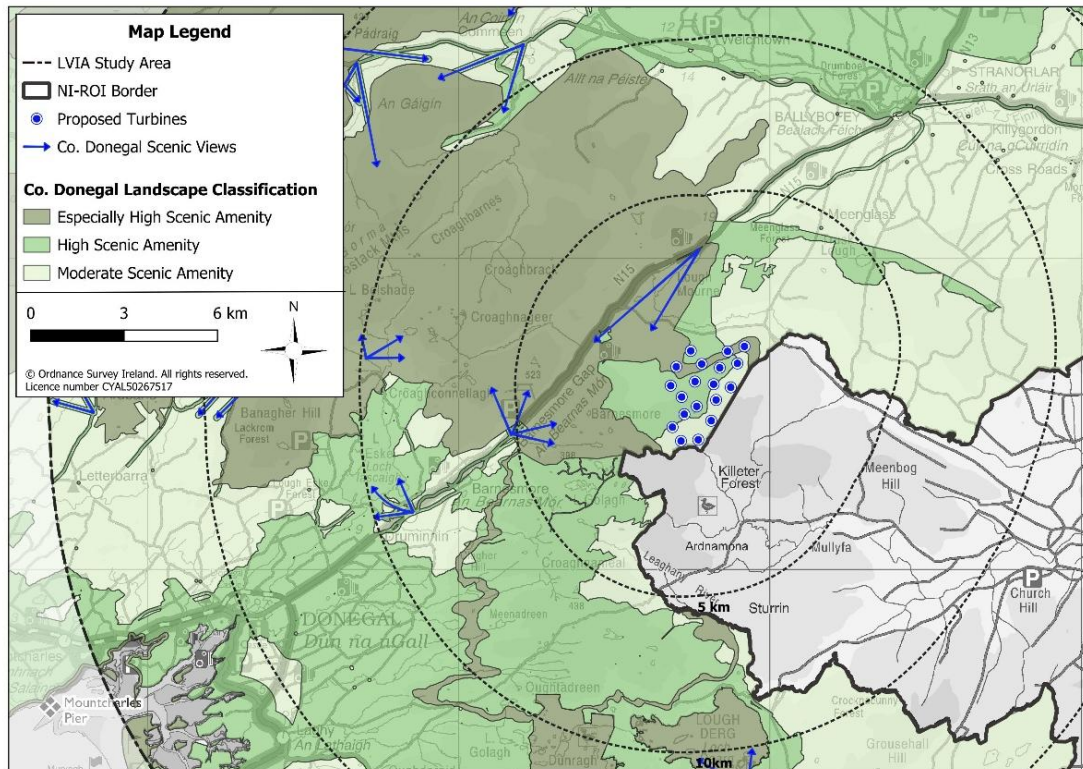


Figure 13-3 Proposed Turbines with designations from Map 11.1 of the DCDP showing Landscape Classifications and Scenic Views

As shown by Figure 13-3, County Donegal comprises a mosaic of the three different Landscape Classifications. The proposed turbines are in an area comprising all three classifications:

- 7 No. turbines in MSA – Lowest tier of landscape sensitivity
- 8 No. turbines in HSA – Medium tier of landscape sensitivity
- 4 No. turbines in EHSA – Highest tier of landscape sensitivity

The site visits and assessments in this LVIA address the difference in the Landscape Classifications on the ground where the proposed turbines and other ancillary works of the Prospective Development are located within the three different designations. These Landscape Classifications also form part of the wind energy zoning for the county and are discussed further in relation to the Prospective Development in Section 13.4.1.1.3 below.

EHSA Previous Policy Context

As set out previously in Section 13.1.4, there is substantial planning history at the Wind Farm Site. The 2017 ELAR and planning application for the Permitted Development was assessed within a different planning policy context, following the Donegal County Development Plan 2012-2018 (Hereafter ‘2012-2018 CDP’). The 2012-2018 CDP included the EHSA designation as the highest tier of landscape sensitivity at that time, as it does now. The 2012-2018 CDP did not include a medium or lower tier of landscape sensitivity. At the time, the EHSA designations in the 2012-2018 CDP were a policy driver informing the favourability of areas of Donegal with respect to wind energy development. It is very relevant to highlight that the Wind Farm Site, which has not moved location, was not an area comprising any EHSA designations in the 2012-2018 CDP and was an ‘Area Open to Consideration’ for wind energy development. Therefore, with respect to both landscape sensitivity policy and wind energy zoning, the previous policy direction in the 2012-2018 CDP was supportive of the Wind Farm Site as a landscape capable of accommodating wind energy development. This is also supported by the planning

permission and planning inspectors report, as discussed in Section 13.1.4 previously. An assessment of the current landscape designations on the Wind Farm Site is included in Section 13.4.2.1.

13.4.1.1.2 **Protected Views and Other Landscape Policy in the DCDP**

Section 11.2.2 of the DCDP includes 8 No. specific landscape policies. L-P-1 and L-P-2 are reported previously in relation to Landscape Classification. Policies L-P-3 to L-P-8 are reported below:

***L-P-3:** To safeguard the scenic context, cultural landscape significance, recreational/tourism amenities, and environmental amenities of the County's coastline from inappropriate development, save for strategic infrastructure provision of overriding regional or national public interest. This policy will be implemented by the Council in so far as same can be practicably and reasonably achieved within the context of Strategic Infrastructure Projects including, but not restricted to, the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, the Bridgend to County border project scheme, the Buncrana Inner Relief Road and Greenways.*

***L-P-4:** To protect the character of the following approach roads to the Glenveagh National Park:*

- a. Glendowan to Doochary road*
- b. Dunlewey to Termon Road*
- c. Churchill to Termon*
- d. Muckish Gap to Calabber Bridge*

***L-P-5:** To protect views to and from St Johns Point.*

***L-P-6:** To safeguard prominent skylines and ridgelines from inappropriate development.*

***L-P-7:** To preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value and interest as identified on Map 11.1.*

***L-P-8:** To preserve scenic views between public roads and the sea, lakes and rivers. Such developments shall be considered on the basis of the following criteria.*

- a. whether the integrity of the view has been affected to-date by development;*
- b. whether the development would intrude significantly on the view; and*
- c. whether the development would materially alter the view.*

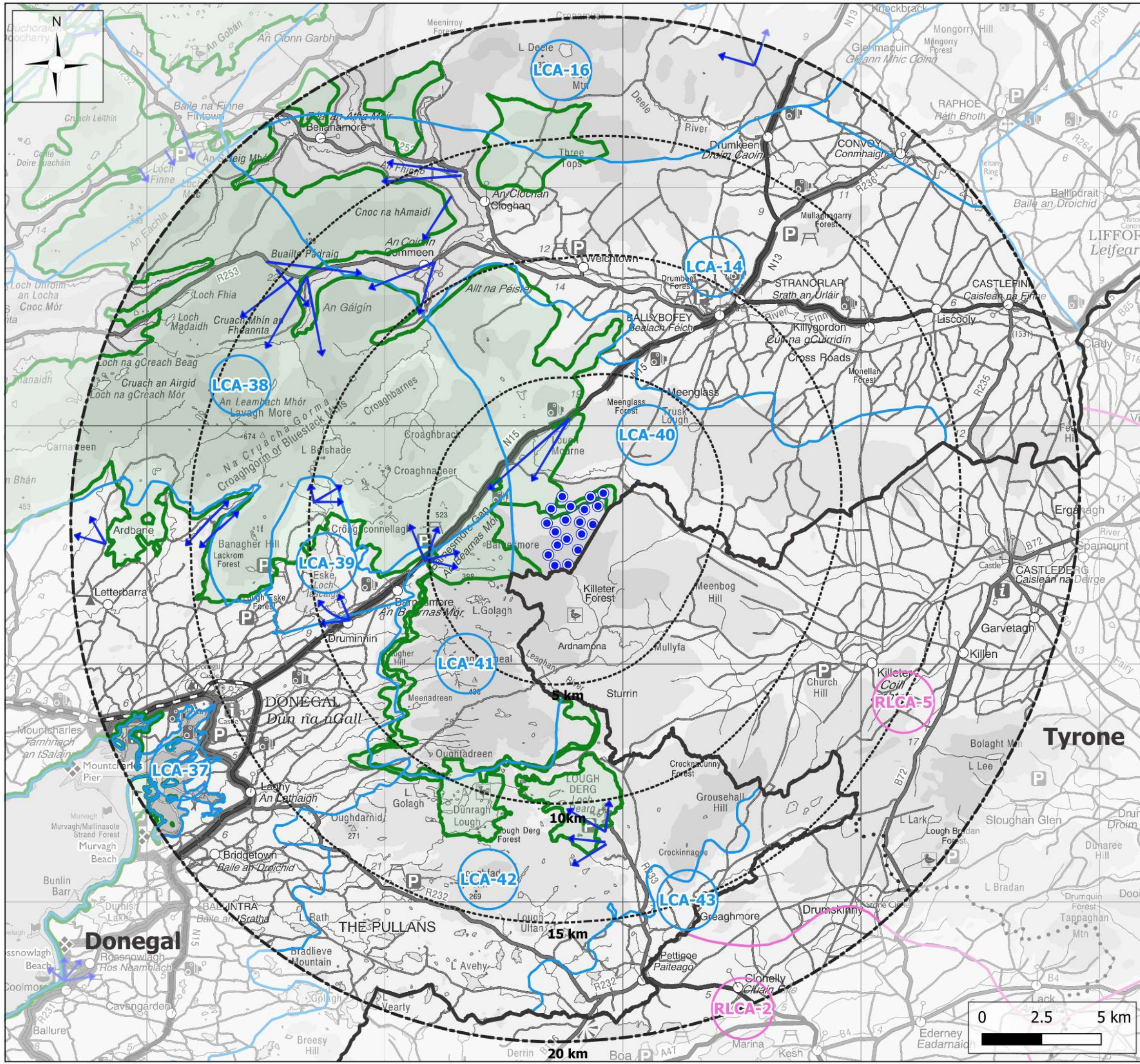
In operating this policy, a reasonable and balanced approach shall be implemented so as to ensure that the policy does not act as a blanket ban on developments between the road and the sea, lakes and river but also seeks to maintain existing landscape qualities in the area."

The following policies are not relevant to the Prospective Development and the LVIA Study Area, therefore they are not considered further in this LVIA:

- L-P-3 relates to protecting the character of the coastline – Given the set back and upland and inland context of the Prospective Development this policy is not relevant to the assessment.
- L-P-4 relates to protecting the character of four specific approach roads to Glenveagh National Park: Given these specific roads are not located in the LVIA Study Area this policy is not relevant to the assessment.
- L-P-5 relates to protecting views to and from St John Point: Given the set back and upland and inland context of the Prospective Development this policy is not relevant to the assessment.

This LVIA will address the impact of the Prospective Development in the context of policies L-P-6, L-P-7 and L-P-8. A particular focus is given to L-P-7 and LP-8 which relate to preservation of protected scenic views. As per Map 11.1 of the DCDP, all protected views and the high sensitivity EHSA

landscape classification areas in the LVIA Study Area are shown below in Figure 13-4. The protected views are illustrated by blue directional arrows in the DCDP, which show both the origin of the protected view and the direction or line of sight which is protected. These blue arrows are shown in the Landscape Policy Context Map below (Figure 13-5) which includes the LVIA Study Area, proposed turbines and ZTV map overlaid.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations

Landscape Receptors

- Donegal LCAs
 - LCA-14: Finn Valley
 - LCA-16: Carr Mountain and Upland
 - LCA-37: Donegal Bay Drumlins
 - LCA-38: Bluestack
 - LCA-39: Lough Eske
 - LCA-40: Cashelnavern Border & Uplands
 - LCA-41: Croaghnameal Border & Uplands
 - LCA-42: Lough Derg Uplands and Lakelands
 - LCA-43: Pettigo and Drumlins
- NI LCAs
 - RLCA-2: Lough Erne Lakeland
 - RLCA-5: West Tyrone Hills and Valleys
- Co. Donegal Scenic Views

Co. Donegal Landscape Classification

- Especially High Scenic Amenity

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-4

Landscape Policy Context

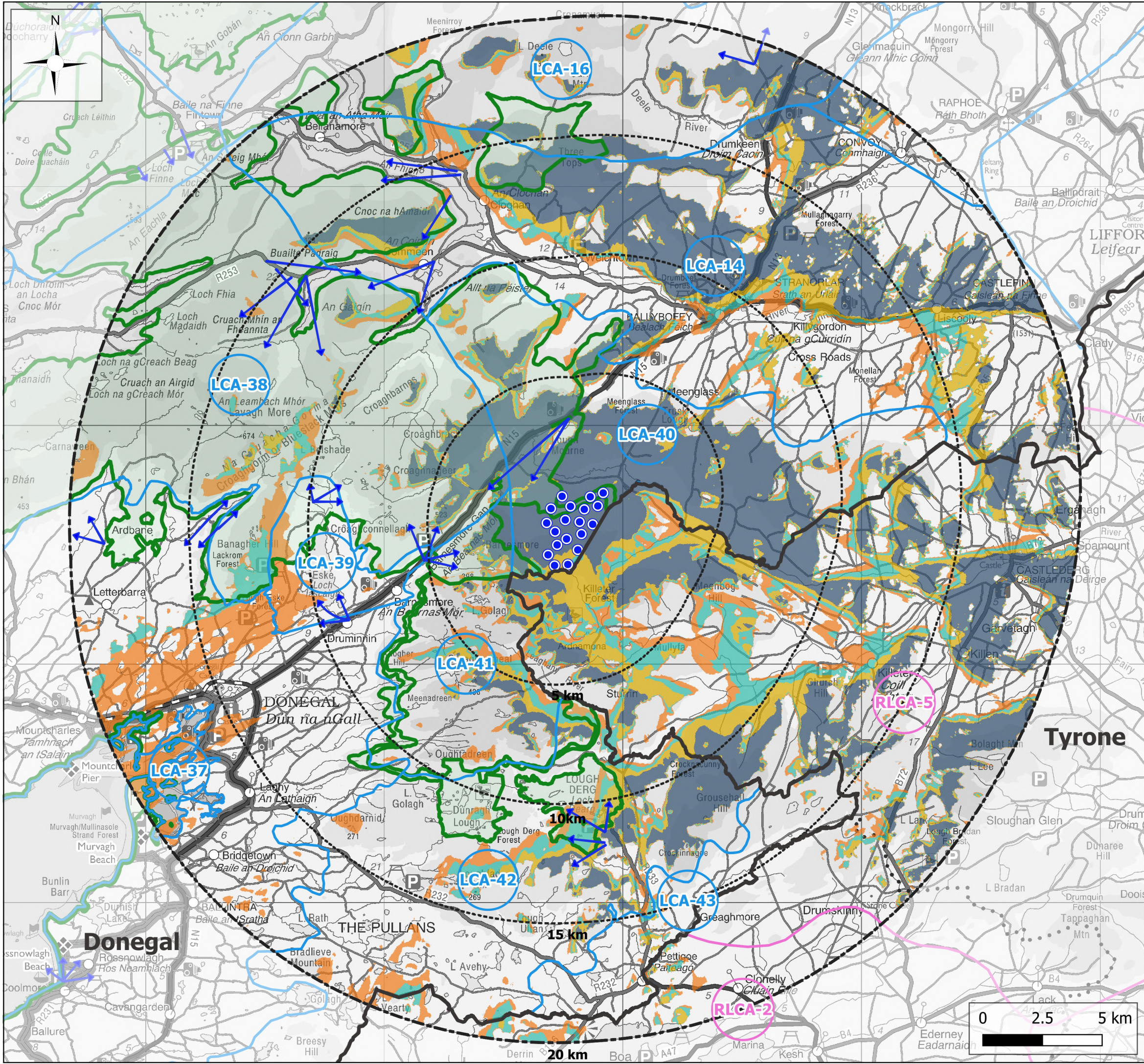
Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	20/02/2026	GL	JW



Planning and Environmental Consultants



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations

Landscape Receptors

- Co. Donegal Scenic Views
- Donegal LCAs
 - LCA-14: Finn Valley
 - LCA-16: Cark Mountain and Upland
 - LCA-37: Donegal Bay Drumlins
 - LCA-38: Bluestack
 - LCA-39: Lough Eske
 - LCA-40: Cashelnavern Border & Uplands
 - LCA-41: Croaghnameal Border & Uplands
 - LCA-42: Lough Derg Uplands and Lakelands
 - LCA-43: Pettigo and Drumlins
- NI LCAs
 - RLCA-2: Lough Erne Lakeland
 - RLCA-5: West Tyrone Hills and Valleys

Co. Donegal Landscape Classification

- Especially High Scenic Amenity

Half-Blade Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 1-5 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 6-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 11-15 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 16-19 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-5

Drawing Title

Landscape Policy Context with ZTV

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	20/02/2026	GL	JW



Planning and Environmental Consultants

As shown by the ZTV in Figure 13-5, there will be no theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines from most DCDP protected views in the LVIA Study Area. The protected views with no theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines are scoped out from further assessment. Protected views within the ZTV are listed below and are all addressed further in Section 13.5 - *Visual Baseline*. The protected views are not named or numbered in the DCDP and have no accompanying descriptions, therefore, for the purposes of this assessment the following names have been assigned to those assessed in the Visual Baseline:

- **‘South-West to the Barnesmore Gap from N15 North’**: Origin of this protected view is located approximately 3.2km north from the closest turbine (T18) of the Prospective Development, the map shows the protected views are directed south-west towards the Barnesmore Gap from the N15 National Road.
- **‘Lough Derg Station Island’**: Origin of this protected view is located approximately 11.3km south from the closest turbines (T01 and T02) of the Prospective Development, the map shows the protected views are panoramic, directed north, west and south-west across Lough Derg.

The protected views listed above are of a visual nature, representing visual receptors and views and are assessed further in Section 13.5 – *Visual Baseline*.

13.4.1.1.3 Wind Energy Strategy and Zoning in the DCDP

Section 9.2 of the DCDP outlines policies and objectives relating to wind energy developments. The DCDP identifies the following policy area designations as the means of determining the principle of the acceptability or otherwise of proposed wind farm developments:

***“Acceptable In Principle** - Wind farm developments shall be generally acceptable in principle in these areas*

***Open to Consideration** - Wind farm developments shall be generally open to consideration in these areas*

***Not Normally Permissible** -Like the other two designations, these areas were identified on foot of a comprehensive analysis of the environmental sensitivities and the wind energy potential of the County. On foot of this determination, and in-line with national guidelines, it follows that most windfarm developments will not normally be permissible. This should apply in particular to such proposals on previously undeveloped sites, inclusive of sites with a lapsed un-implemented permission (and where substantive works have not been undertaken). Notwithstanding, and having regard to previous planning assessments and decisions and the subsequent investment incurred, it is the position of Donegal County Council that a more balanced approach is required when dealing with windfarm proposals in these areas where, crucially, there is an already existing strong planning history. This refers to the following categories: Existing Windfarms; **Developments Under Construction**; Developments Where Permissions Have Lapsed But Where Substantial Works Have Been Completed; and Sites With a Live Permission but not yet started. For such sites, it is considered reasonable to allow for the consideration of proposals for the augmentation, upgrade and improvement of such developments in accordance with the details set out in Policy WE-P-1.”*

The policies relevant to this are set out below:

***“WE-P-1** - That the principle of the acceptability or otherwise of proposed wind farm developments shall be generally determined in accordance with the three areas identified in Map 9.2.1 ‘Wind Energy’ and as detailed below:*

- a. *Acceptable in Principle* Wind energy development shall be generally acceptable in these areas.
- b. *Open to Consideration* Wind energy development shall be generally open to consideration in these areas.
- c. *Not Normally Permissible* Windfarm development proposals on previously undeveloped sites, inclusive of sites with a lapsed un-implemented permission (and where substantive works have not been undertaken) will not normally be permissible.

WE-P-1A - The augmentation, upgrade, repowering and improvements of: existing windfarms; **windfarm developments under construction**; developments where permission has lapsed but substantial works have been completed, **or on sites with an extant planning permission** will be open to consideration in all three designated areas (‘Not Normally Permissible’, ‘Open to Consideration’, and ‘Acceptable in principle’) on Map 9.2.1 where such proposals shall be generally confined to the planning unit of the existing development, or where a modestly-proportioned projection (relative to the established unit) beyond the established site can be demonstrated to be essential and unavoidable for the project in terms of operational efficiencies, and can demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that all environmental issues can be adequately addressed.”

All proposed turbines are located within the ‘Not Normally Permissible’ Area in Map 9.2.1 of the DCDP. However, the Prospective Development fits within two of the categories set out in the exceptions cited above, as per WE-P-1A (highlighted in bold), it qualifies as ‘*Windfarm developments under Construction*’ (although construction is paused) and ‘*on sites with an extant planning permission*’ (Subject Development relates to the permitted Meenbog Windfarm (ACP Ref: 300460). The Prospective Development therefore qualifies for policy W-E-P-1A, and the appropriate designation for the Wind Farm Site is ‘Open to Consideration’.

Several other policies in the wind energy zoning specifically relate to landscape and visual receptors and the designations reported and discussed previously. These policies are set out below:

“WE-P-2 - That wind farm developments:

- a. Must not be located within the zone of visual influence of Glenveagh National Park;
- b. Must not be located within the following areas, subject to the possible exceptions set out in Policy WE-P-1A: i. the Gweebarra River Basin; ii. areas contained within ‘Especially High Scenic Amenity’ on Map 11.1 ‘Scenic Amenity’ and iii. St. John’s Point.

WE-P-3 - To ensure that the assessment of wind energy development proposals will have regard to the following:

- a. sensitivities of the county’s landscapes;
- b. visual impact on protected views, prospects, designated landscapes, as well as local visual impacts;
- c. impacts on nature conservation designations, archaeological areas, county geological sites, historic structures, public rights of way and walking routes;
- d. local environmental impacts, including those on residential properties, such as noise, shadow flicker and over-dominance;
- e. visual and environmental impacts of associated development, such as access roads, plant and grid connections from the proposed wind farm to the electricity transmission network;
- f. scale, size and layout of the project and any cumulative effects due to other projects;
- g. the impact of the proposed development on protected bird and mammal species;
- h. the requirements and standards set out in the DEHLG Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006, or any subsequent related Guidelines (or as may be amended).
- i. ‘The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009)’; and
- j. the protection of drinking water sources and public water services infrastructure.”

In relation to WE-P-2, both the Glenveagh National Park, St Johns Point and the Gweebarra River basin are all located outside the LVIA Study Area. A small section of the Wind Farm Site and small number of the proposed turbines are located within an area designated as EHSA, the impacts on this small area of EHSA are comprehensively assessed in this chapter.

The assessments in this EIAR address all the relevant points set out in policy WE-P-3, with the LVIA in this chapter specifically focussing on the following points, with references to each section in this Chapter:

- A - Landscape Sensitivities – Section 13.4.2
- B - Visual Impacts: protected views, designated landscapes and local visual impact
- C - LVIA has focus on the public rights of way and walking routes
- D - Visual impact on residential receptors
- E - Visual Impacts from associated development and grid infrastructure
- F - Scale Size and Cumulative Effects
- H - Adherence to standards and requirements set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and other relevant guidance

13.4.1.1.4 Donegal Landscape Character Areas

As previously reported, Donegal LCAs do not form part of the current landscape policy context. However, the LCACD published in 2016 is a useful tool to inform the baseline understanding, context and assessment of the receiving landscape. This includes the following LCAs including lands where the Wind Farm Site is located and its immediate surroundings, as well as areas with substantial areas of ZTV:

- LCA-14: Finn Valley – area with ZTV of the proposed turbines
- LCA-38: Bluestack – small portion of upgrades in the Wind Farm Site
- LCA-40: Cashelnavern Border & Uplands – the Wind Farm Site
- LCA-41: Croaghnameal Border & Uplands – small portion of upgrades in the Wind Farm Site

The character descriptions of these LCAs are set out below in Table 13-1, providing context for the LVIA.

Table 13-1 Description of LCAs from the LCACD

LCA	Description
LCA-14 – Finn Valley	<i>“Finn Valley LCA is dominated by the River Finn, its tributaries and associated valleys carved from the surrounding uplands. The LCA has 3 distinct areas within that change from west to east following the meandering River Finn through this LCA. In the west of this LCA the Rivers Finn and Reelan cut through highland bog areas creating 2 steep narrow river valleys that have an interesting rectilinear field pattern of strips extending from the river edge into the upland bog in a ‘rundale’ fashion.</i> <i>These smaller rivers converge as the River Finn close to Cloghan into a notably broader and more level valley of larger square agricultural fields overlooked by mountainous areas of upland bog. The landscape eastwards from Ballybofey Stranorlar towards Castlefinn is a fertile agricultural plain alongside the river within a wider gently undulating agricultural landscape of large square fields similar to the adjoining Laggan Valley and Foyle Valley LCAs. Finn Valley LCA borders Northern Ireland at its eastern extremity and abuts 2 separate LCAs</i>

	<i>within NI sharing a similar landscape type and character area. The local road network affords multiple physical linkages with the adjoining landscape in Northern Ireland.</i> <i>The eastern edge of this LCA borders Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Areas Foyle Valley (27) and Derg Valley (20), a continuum of the landscape type of the Finn Valley, namely good quality agricultural riverine lands of semi-improved geometric fields, with scattered farms, farmsteads and one off rural dwellings served by a number of rural villages and towns."</i>
LCA-38 – Bluestack	<i>"Bluestack LCA is a wholly inland landscape within the Gaeltacht dominated by the Bluestack Mountain Range, a vast area of upland mountains, bogs and lakes with dramatic and wide river valleys that form and frame all of the views into and within this LCA. A dispersed low density rural population live in isolated one-off dwellings on the lower slopes of the mountains and within the North-western area of this LCA on agricultural river plains."</i>
LCA-40 - Cashelnavern Border & Uplands	<i>"Cashelnavern Border & Uplands LCA is a vast, mountainous, remote and undeveloped upland area bordering Northern Ireland characterized by peat covered hills and the mountain lakes of Lough Mourne and Lough Carn. The N15, one of the major routes into and through the county travels along the valley floor of Barnesmore Gap alongside the freshwater Lough Mourne which providing water to much of east Donegal. There are isolated areas of semi-improved farmland nestled with single rural dwellings throughout this LCA, contrasting greatly with the many large swathes of geometric commercial forestry plantations on the lower slopes and shoulders of the hills."</i>
LCA-41 - Croaghnameal Border & Uplands	<i>"Croaghnameal Border & Uplands LCA is a remote area of primarily upland mountainous blanket bog and mountain lakes with significant areas of commercial forestry, particularly along the eastern boundary with Northern Ireland. The northern part of the LCA forms half of the iconic 'Barnesmore Gap', a steep sided and wide river valley through which the N15 and the old Donegal Railway line runs, and one of the main vehicular routes into Donegal from the south."</i>

13.4.1.2 Northern Ireland Landscape Policy Context

Each local council in Northern Ireland prepares a Local Development Plan (LDP). These LDPs apply national policy, as set out in the Regional Development Strategy, to the local level. LDPs are further split into a Plan Strategy and Local Policies Plan. Relevant landscape and visual policies are outlined in the Plan Strategy.

Part of the LVIA Study Area lies within County Tyrone, covered in both the Fermanagh and Omagh Local Development Plan 2030 (FOLDP) and the Derry City & Strabane District Council Local Development Plan 2032 (DSLDP). These have been consulted to identify landscape designations existent in the LVIA Study Area.

13.4.1.2.1 Landscape Policy Designations

There are several classifications to identify areas of high landscape sensitivity in both the FOLDP and DSLDP.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) were designated to identify areas of high landscape quality under the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965 and the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Currently, there are eight AONBs in Northern Ireland, none of which fall within the LVIA Study Area.

Areas of High Landscape Importance (AHLIs) are defined in the DSLDP as *“a landscape area considered to be of high value and importance to its region.”* There are no AHLIs in the LVIA Study Area.

Wind Energy Capacity Areas (WECAs) are defined in the DSLDP as *“a designation designed to reflect certain local areas that are considered to be at or reaching capacity with wind turbines.”* All WECAs exist outside of the LVIA Study Area.

Areas of High Scenic Value (AoSHV) are identified in both the DSLDP and FOLDP. The FOLDP defines AoSHVs as *“an area that has been designated through the plan for protection because of its relatively unspoilt nature.”* These areas were first addressed in the Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment (NILCA) 2000 as Areas of Scenic Quality (ASQ) but have since been regarded as AoSHVs. There are no AoSHVs in the LVIA Study Area.

13.4.1.2.2 Northern Ireland Landscape Character Assessment 2000 (NILCA)

A Landscape Character Assessment was carried out for Northern Ireland in 2000 (hereafter referred to as the NILCA). This assessment subdivided Northern Ireland into 26 units of regional landscape character (RLCA) based on information on the combination of nature, culture, and perception which make each part of Northern Ireland unique. Two RLCA fall within the LVIA Study Area boundary:

- RLCA-2: Lough Erne Lakeland – over 16km away from the nearest proposed turbine, no ZTV, not considered further in this LVIA
- RLCA-5: West Tyrone Hills and Valleys – immediately adjacent to the Wind Farm Site, discussed below

RLCA-5 is located along the eastern and southern boundary of the Wind Farm Site, approximately 230m east of the nearest turbine (T09). Key characteristics of RLCA-5 West Tyrone Hills and Valleys are described in the NILCA as:

- *“Low, broad and rounded hills, occasionally merging into plateaux; occasionally more prominent hills adjoin lowland areas, such as Dooish, Mullyfa and Pollnalaght.*
- *Associated broad, shallow river valleys of the Derg and Fairy Water, including extensive lowland bogs, draining generally to the east.*
- *Hills are covered with moorland or are forested with exposed upland grazing and peat bogs. Important bog habitats are found over large areas.*
- *A sparsely populated rural area, though with farmed and settled pastoral valleys.*
- *The most extensive coniferous plantations in Northern Ireland at Killeter and Lough Bradan Forests, accessible but apparently seldom visited.*
- *A gold mining operation is active at Cavanacaw on the slopes of Pollnalaght.*
- *Remote and somewhat isolated western region of County Tyrone, associated with the pilgrimage to Lough Derg in County Donegal.*
- *Wind farms and commercial forests reduce the sense of tranquillity in this otherwise undeveloped landscape.”*

The Prospective Development is not located within RLCA-5 but will have potential to impact landscape character and is therefore comprehensively assessed later in this chapter.

13.4.2 Landscape Character and Sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site

‘Landscape character’ in this case refers to the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how people perceive that pattern. It reflects combinations of geology, human settlement, land use, landform, soils and vegetation, and creates the sense of place found in an area. This section describes the localised landscape character of the Wind Farm Site based on site visit findings from 2024 and 2025.

The landscape of the Wind Farm Site is that of a remote, marginal, upland landscape comprising a broad hilltop with its character strongly influenced by commercial forestry operations and the Existing Development. The Wind Farm Site is located within a large-scale mountainous landscape setting.

Figure 13-6 below shows an aerial map of the Wind Farm Site, the layout of the Prospective Development and components of the Existing Development. The landcover is a mosaic of conifer forest of various plantation age and degraded peat bog. The Wind Farm Site has been heavily modified by previous and current land use, it comprises the infrastructure of the Existing Development including turbine hardstand infrastructure, the existing onsite 110kV substation, internal site roads and supporting infrastructure, influencing landscape character. The internal site roads are made with a gravel surface and are lined with low fencing in some locations.

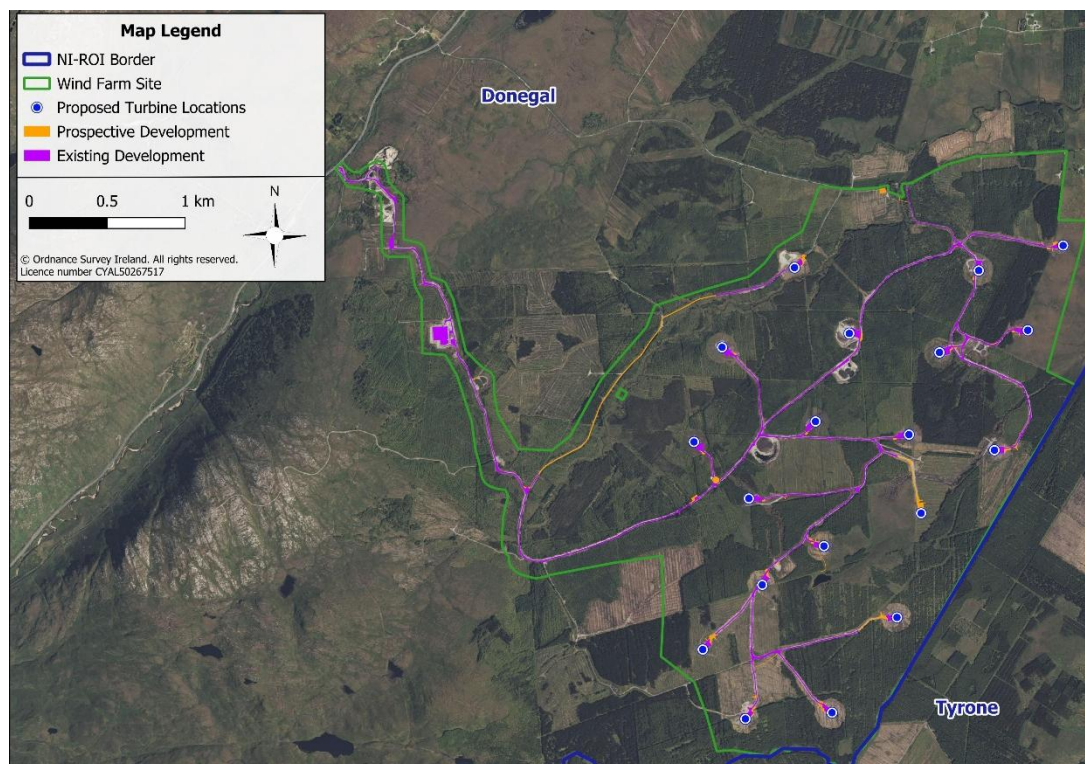


Figure 13-6 Aerial view of the Wind Farm Site with Existing Development and Prospective Development infrastructure

Plate 13-2 shows a view towards the hardstanding area of proposed turbine T10. As shown in this image, coniferous forestry surrounds the hardstanding area, which screens views from northwest towards the wider landscape.



Plate 13-2 View northwest toward proposed turbine T10 from an elevated point within the Wind Farm Site

Plate 13-3 below shows a view facing north from a road within the Wind Farm Site near the Wind Farm Site entrance off the N15 National Road. To the left background of this image, the rugged mountainous landscape beyond the N15 National Road is evident. Low-lying fencing on short wooden poles line both sides of this road, adding to the degree of human influence within the Wind Farm Site.



Plate 13-3 View facing north from a road within the Wind Farm Site near the entrance off the N15 National Road

Plate 13-4 below show a view of an internal site road within the Wind Farm Site. As seen in this image, coniferous forestry is located on both sides of the road and screen views from this road.



Plate 13-4 View facing southwest from a road within the Wind Farm Site in close proximity to T8

Plate 13-5 below shows a view facing south from a location to the south of the Substation. This image shows a typical example of the landcover of the Wind Farm Site which is comprised of peatland, coniferous forestry and infrastructure of the Existing Development on the Wind Farm Site.



Plate 13-5 View facing south from a road within the Wind Farm Site to the south of the Substation

Plate 13-6 below was captured from a road to the southwest of the Wind Farm Site. This image shows an example of the extent of vast coniferous forestry plantations currently within the Wind Farm Site.



Plate 13-6 View facing northeast towards the Wind Farm Site.

Plate 13-7 below shows a view facing northwest towards the Substation. This is the most visually prominent element of the Existing Development within the Wind Farm Site.



Plate 13-7 View facing northwest towards the Substation

The November 2020 Peat Slide occurred on the Wind Farm Site in 2020 which locally altered areas of the landscape comprising conifer plantations. Other minor peat movements of varying degrees occurred on the Wind Farm Site, as reported in Chapter 8 of the EIAR. The remnants of peat slippage is locally discernible in the areas where this occurred and contributes to the baseline character of the Wind Farm Site. The features of the landscape arising from the peat slippage are not visible or discernible from visual receptors in the public realm.

The BMEP includes the restoration of hen harrier habitat within two land parcels, as shown on Figure 13-6, located approximately 2.4km and 4.2km east of the nearest proposed turbine, T19. These parcels currently comprise commercial forestry and their character has been highly influenced and modified by past and existing forestry land use. Hen Harrier habitat restoration will involve the removal of commercial forestry and the establishment of a mosaic of open heathland and patchy scrub vegetation, with a small portion of the area being managed to restore wet peatland habitat. A detailed description of the BMEP Site is included in Appendix 6-4 of this EIAR.

As shown in Figure 13-7 below, the Wind Farm Site comprises a broad hilltop, with landform gently sloping downwards from a high point at the southern extent. The landscape surrounding the Wind Farm Site comprises irregular, undulating topography with the Barnesmore Gap a prominent landform feature shown to the west. As seen in Figure 13-7, the topography slopes down towards the north of the Wind Farm Site. The elevation of the Wind Farm Site ranges from approximately 150 metres to 320 metres.

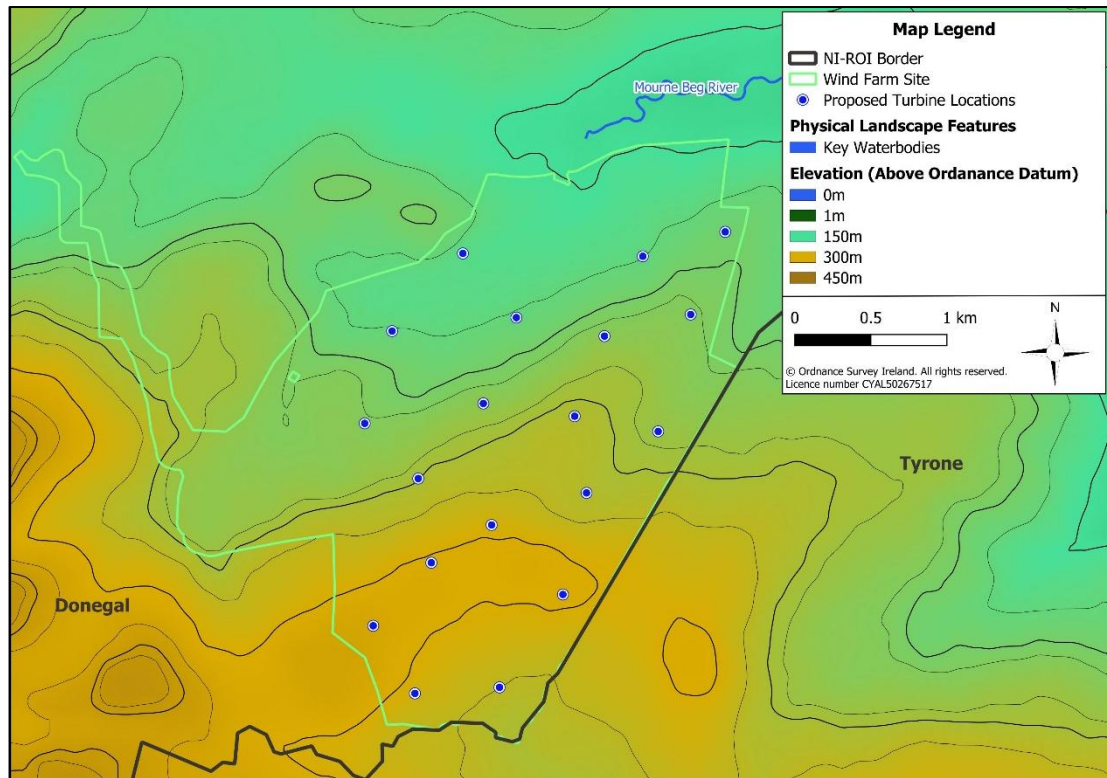


Figure 13-7 Topography of the Site with surrounding landscape features

13.4.2.1 Preliminary Assessment of Landscape Classifications and EHSA on the Wind Farm Site

As stated previously in Section 13.4.1.1.1, the Wind Farm Site comprises a mosaic of different Landscape Classifications across the three tiers of landscape sensitivity set out in the DCDP, essentially covering High, Medium and Low sensitivity. Previous discussion on this in Section 13.4.1.1.1 highlights that this classification was not the case in previous county development plans, and at the time of the previous EIAR for the Permitted Development, there was no EHSA designation pertaining to the Wind Farm Site, with the nearest high sensitivity designation incorporating the Bluestack Mountains to the west. It is not clear exactly why the policy and landscape sensitivity zoning for the Wind Farm Site has changed since the 2012-2018 CDP. A preliminary assessment reported below addresses why and how the sensitivity classification might have increased when the baseline landscape of the Wind Farm Site has not fundamentally changed across this period of time. This assessment has been informed by review of all relevant policy context, spatial analysis in GIS, and information gathered during site visits.

Policy Context Evolution

The zoning of landscape classification has evolved since the 2012-2018 CDP. Figure 13-8 below shows excerpts from Map 8 of the 2012-2018 CDP and is annotated to show the indicative location of the proposed turbines relative to the areas designated as EHSA which are coloured in yellow on Map 8.

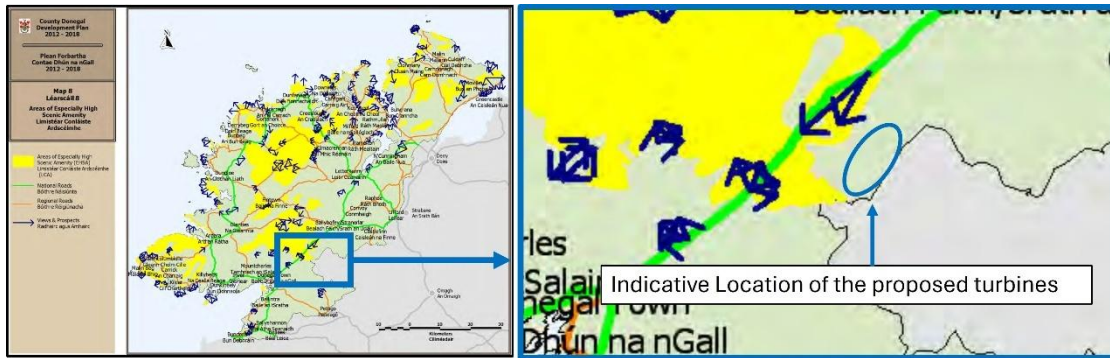


Figure 13-8 Indicative location of the proposed turbines overlaid the landscape sensitivity zoning from the 2012-2018 CDP.

The 2012-2018 CDP was superseded by the Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2024 (hereafter the '2018-2024 CDP'). The three tier 'Landscape Classification' which currently forms part of the DCDP was first categorised in Chapter 7 of the 2018-2024 CDP with the following statement:

"The landscape of the County has been categorised into three layers of value and are illustrated on Map 7.1.1 of this Plan."

The 2018-2024 CDP then defines the three tiers as they are in the currently set out in the DCDP and maps the areas as they are now (See Section 13.4.1.1.1 previously). Neither the current DCDP nor the 2018-2024 CDP provide any specific information on the criteria used to determine the distinction between the different classifications, except for the definitions themselves, which are relatively high level. As per the descriptions and definitions of EHSA, HSA, and MSA, the focus of these classifications is on the quality of 'Scenic Amenity' and the visual aesthetic within the landscape areas. Analysis of the DCDP and 2018-2024 CDP did not identify any information detailing how or why the landscape of the Wind Farm Site has been divided into the three separate classifications on the basis of landscape value, sensitivity or any specific scenic attributes.

Assessment of Landscape Classification on the Wind Farm Site from GIS analysis and Site Surveys

There are no obvious criteria governing the different Landscape Classifications added to the Wind Farm Site in the 2018-2024 CDP as they are not the subject or object of any new protected scenic views. Assessments during site visits and GIS mapping exercises were conducted to assess how the character of the landscape changes across the three separate Landscape Classifications in the Wind Farm Site to rationalise what would warrant a difference in landscape sensitivity. A particular focus is given to the area where 4 No. proposed turbines (T14, T15, T17 and T18) are now located in an EHSA.

Figure 13-9 below shows the different zoning across the Wind Farm Site overlaid on both an aerial map showing the landcover and a map showing topographic contours. The following observations are evident in Figure 13-9 and on the ground of the Wind Farm Site.

Landcover: Landcover in the EHSA to the west of the Wind Farm Site comprises the Barnesmore Gap and the eastern extent of the Bluestack Mountains, where the landcover is comprised of open moorland and is likely a contributor to the landscape classification, as well as the rugged and unspoilt upland terrain. The aerial map in Figure 13-9 shows landcover across the three classifications is very similar within the Wind Farm Site, predominantly comprising tracts of commercial forestry, occasional areas of peatland and the built infrastructure of the Existing Development. The area of EHSA in the Wind Farm Site does not have a distinctly different landcover, compared with the other areas. Analysis of the aerial imagery has determined that landcover itself cannot be the characteristic driving EHSA designation in the Wind Farm Site.

Landform and elevation: Figure 13-9 also shows contours at 20 metre intervals overlaid on the Landscape Classifications. The arm of EHSA, which bisects the Wind Farm Site and includes 4 No.

proposed turbines, is aligned with the landform and elevation, as represented by the contours, and may be a reason for the difference in classification. The relevance of how the change in elevation along these contours equates to a change in the scenic qualities of this specific area is not clear.

This linear section of EHSA follows specific contours in the Wind Farm Site, representing a very small and localised valley through conifer plantations. Site surveys did not identify any specific characteristics or features (e.g., no walking trail, watercourse, cultural heritage monument) within this area which would warrant an increase in landscape and visual sensitivity compared to the lands immediately north and south, besides the difference in elevation as shown by the contours.

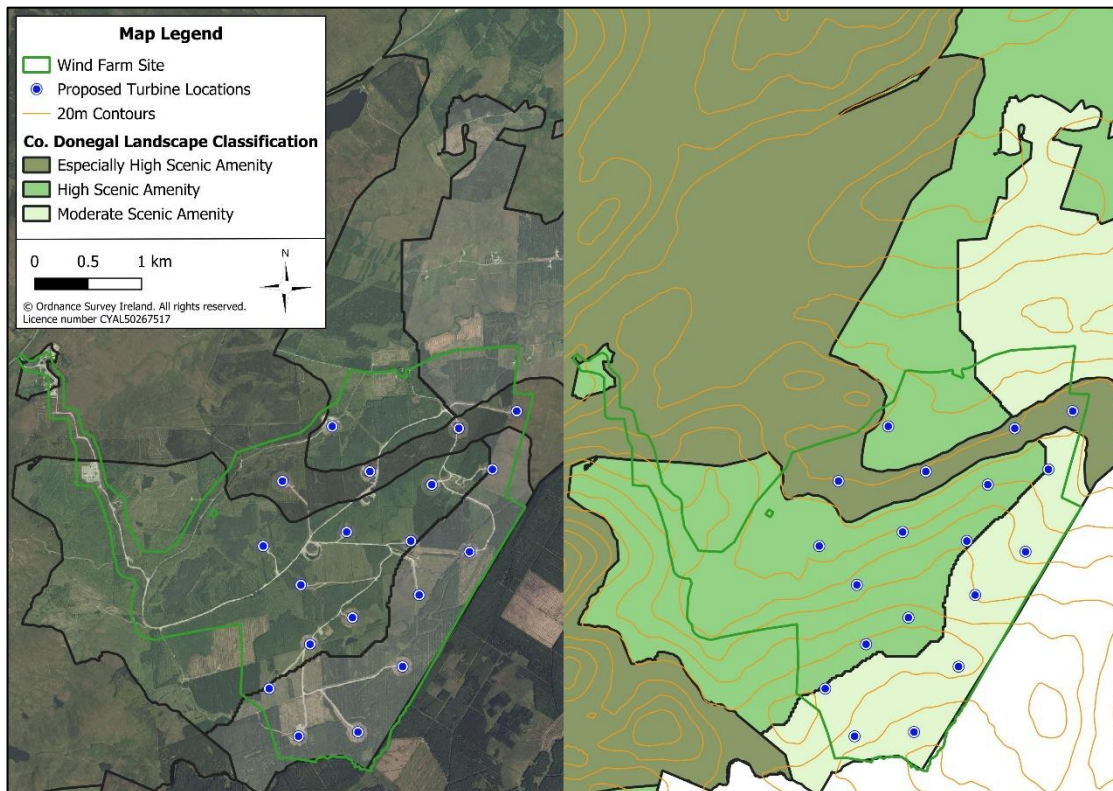


Figure 13-9 Landscape Classification on the Wind Farm Site overlaid aerial imagery and including contours.

Assessment of Landscape Classification on the Wind Farm Site Through Analysis of Photomontages.

Further assessment of this area of EHSA within the Wind Farm Site analysed photomontage visualisations to confirm if there are any visual attributes and qualities of the landscape in this specific area which are visually and aesthetically distinct to the other lands within the Wind Farm Site. Proposed turbines T14, T15, T17 and T19 are located in the area of EHSA within the Wind Farm Site. Figure 13-10 and Figure 13-11 were produced to illustrate this analysis, as they comprise extracts from the Photomontage Booklet with the aforementioned turbines identified by orange boxes in the wireline view annotations. These two viewpoints were selected to illustrate this exercise as they are two of the only views where all proposed turbines are visible and there is a relatively unobstructed view of the Wind Farm Site.

Figure 13-10 shows views from Viewpoint 5 on the N15 National Road to the north-west of the Wind Farm Site. Figure 13-11 shows views from Viewpoint 8 in the townland of Kinletter to the north-east of the Wind Farm Site.

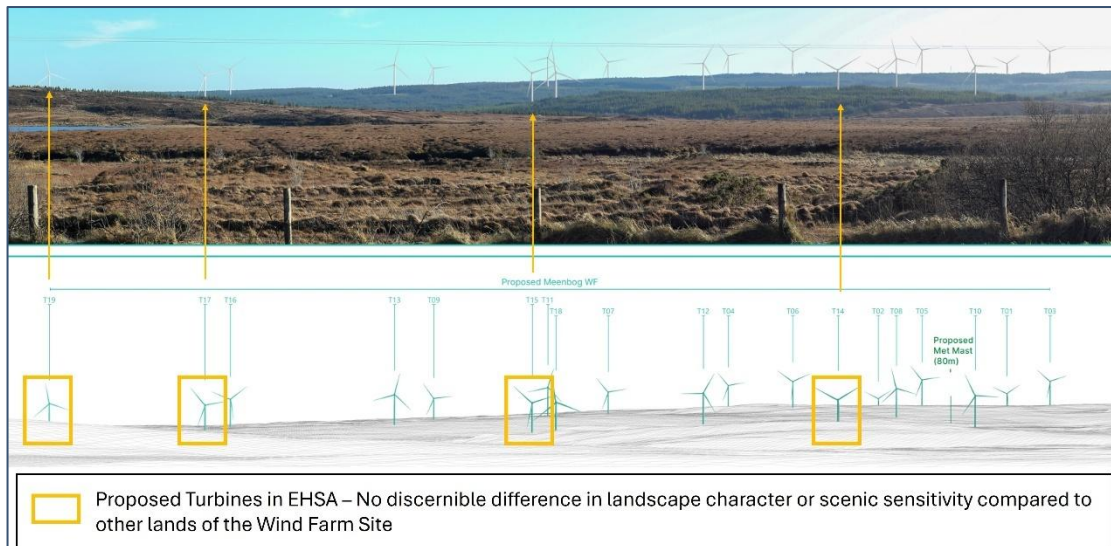


Figure 13-10 Annotated Extract from Viewpoint 5 in the Photomontage Booklet on the N15 National Road to the north-west of the proposed turbines

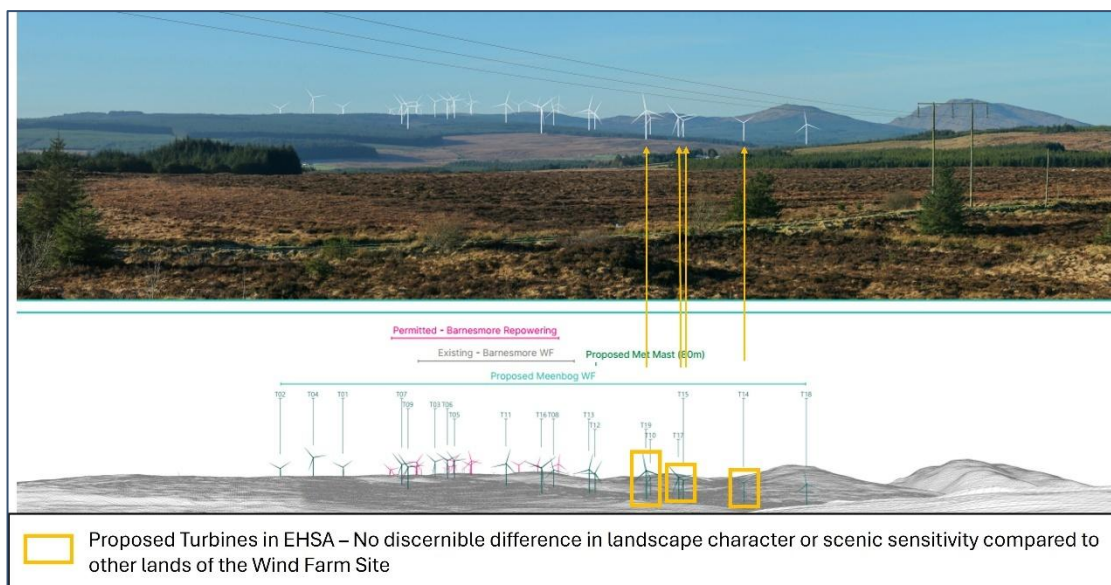


Figure 13-11 Annotated Extract from Viewpoint 8 in the Photomontage Booklet to the north-east of the proposed turbines

Figure 13-10 and Figure 13-11 above show that the turbines in the EHSA are in the same landscape of marginal upland and commercial forestry as the rest of the Wind Farm Site. There are no distinctive visual features or characteristics which warrant a different landscape and visual sensitivity classification compared to the lands immediately north or south of these proposed turbines, as is indicated by the mapping in Figure 13-9 previously.

In conclusion, the Landscape Classification amendments on the Wind Farm Site brought about in the evolution of the planning policy between the 2012-2018 CDP and the 2018-2024 CDP do not equate to any material change in the physical or visual landscape. Given the absence of any clear rationale for the amendment in the local planning policy, the assessments reported here indicate the EHSA within the Wind Farm Site is an arbitrary designation made on the basis of topographic contours and do not relate to any unique special landscape and visual qualities within the definition for EHSA. Furthermore, this arm of the EHSA in the Wind Farm Site is not distinctly part of the Barnesmore Gap, Bluestack Mountain, nor the other unspoilt “*natural landscapes*” EHSA. Thus, assessment of the overall landscape sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site in the following section acknowledges the EHSA designation but instead focusses on the information gathered during the site surveys.

13.4.2.2

Landscape Sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site

The landscape sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site is determined by combining assessments of landscape value and susceptibility to change. Landscape value considers designations, landscape quality, scenic qualities, and other indicators of how the landscape is valued by society. Susceptibility considers the ability of the landscape to accommodate the proposed type of development without undue consequences for its character.

Table 13-2 below assesses indicators of landscape value for the Wind Farm Site. The Wind Farm Site's susceptibility to change and overall sensitivity rating are then determined based on this assessment of value, the existing landscape character, and the nature of the Prospective Development.

Table 13-2 Indicators of Landscape Value on the Wind Farm Site

Features & Attributes of Landscape Value	Description
Landscape Designations	A variety of the three tier landscape designations in Co. Donegal: EHSA, HSA, and MSA are located within the Wind Farm Site. As comprehensively reported in the previous section (Section 13.4.2.1) there is no rationale nor evidence supporting the area of recently designated EHSA as a distinctly scenic and sensitive area compared to the other areas of the Wind Farm Site.
Landscape Elements Quality / Condition	The physical condition and quality of the Wind Farm Site is relatively poor due to the high degree of historic modification arising from its use as a forestry plantation and the Existing Development. The landscape is strongly influenced by human interventions and current land uses. The Wind Farm Site is well maintained and organised.
Scenic / Aesthetic Qualities	Scenic and Aesthetic qualities are very limited within the Wind Farm Site due to the dense forestry. There are some aesthetic qualities attributed to the remote nature of the location and open and long-ranging vistas of the remote upland area where they occur from occasional vantage points.
Perceptual Qualities (Tranquillity / Wilderness / Naturalness)	Due to the relatively remote upland location and landscape setting, there is a degree of isolation associated with the Wind Farm Site. However, given the very strong influence of commercial forestry and the nearby N15 National Road, qualities such as tranquillity, wilderness and naturalness are not present.
Rarity / Conservation Interests	There are no distinctive landscape rarity or conservation interests. The landcover of the Wind Farm Site is primarily conifer plantation (WD4), blanket bog (PB2) / (PB4), wet grassland. (GS4) and scrub vegetation (WS1). A comprehensive impact assessment of ecological sensitivities on the Wind Farm Site is included in Chapter 6 – <i>Biodiversity</i> .
Cultural Meaning / Associations	There is no significant cultural heritage meaning associated with the Wind Farm Site. A comprehensive impact assessment of cultural heritage sensitivities is included in Chapter 14 – <i>Cultural Heritage</i> .
Recreational Values	The Wind Farm Site comprises private lands and does not currently have any recreational value. A local walking trail, The North West Cycle Trail, is located to the north of the Wind Farm Site, approximately 570m north of the nearest proposed turbine at its closest point. The proposed

	Barnsemore Gap Greenway is located approx. 2km to north-east from the nearest proposed turbine. These provides some recreational value to the local area.
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Based on the assessment of value indicators above, the landscape value of the Wind Farm Site is Low. The receiving landscape of the Wind Farm Site is an area of sparsely settled remote marginal upland, and it is a broad hillside which is not a unique or highly distinctive feature of the landscape. The landscape type and its specific characteristics are considered highly suitable and appropriate for accommodating the proposed turbines. The Wind Farm Site's susceptibility to the Prospective Development is Low particularly considering that the Existing Development is already built and, therefore, limited direct alterations to the landscape are required to get the Subject Development operational.

Combining assessments of value and susceptibility, the overall landscape sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site is assessed as 'Low'.

13.4.3 Guidance for the Design of Wind Farms in Specific Landscape Types from the Wind Energy Development Guidelines

In policy 'W-E-P-3' point 'h', the DCDP states that the assessment of wind energy proposals shall have regard to the requirements and standards set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019). In alignment with this policy, this section considers the design of the Prospective Development relative to the siting and design guidance in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019) with respect to specific landscape character types defined by the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006).

Section 6.9 (6.10) of the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019) is called '*Landscape Character Types as a Basis for Guidelines*' and offers guidance for the siting and design specifically of wind energy developments in multiple landscape contexts, defining six landscape character types representing most situations where wind turbines may be proposed. These are:

- 'Mountain Moorland' – **category selected by this assessment**
- 'Hilly and Flat Farmland'
- 'Flat Peatland'
- 'Transitional Marginal Landscape'
- 'Urban/Industrial'
- 'Coastal'

The guidance is intended to be indicative and general and notes that it represents the 'best fit' solutions to likely situations. The guidance notes that, in the case where a wind energy development is located in one landscape character type but is visible from another, it will be necessary to decide which of the landscape types more strongly influences the approach adopted for the LVIA. Based on information gathered during site visits (see previous section) and visualisations presented in the Photomontage Booklet as well as from other mapping and imagery present in this Chapter, the Prospective Development was considered to be a cross between either 'Mountain Moorland' Landscape Character Type and/or 'Transitional Marginal' Landscape Character Type.

Site visits determined that while individual turbines may be located within areas exhibiting characteristics of both Mountain Moorland and Transitional Marginal landscapes, the entire visual unit(s) in which the proposed turbines are viewed and should be taken into consideration (the Guidelines, DoEHLG, 2006, page 46). The Wind Farm Site and its surrounds are strongly influenced by the extensive covering of commercial forestry plantations. However, the wider landscape context is of a large-scale upland area and the unenclosed character of the Mourne Beg Valley where the Wind

Farm Site is located more strongly influences the approach to siting and design. Therefore, the siting and design guidance for Mountain Moorland landscape type is the most relevant consideration to this assessment, as it best reflects the landscape of the Wind Farm Site and the visual unit(s) in which it is viewed in.

The following excerpts are cited from the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) detailing guidance for siting and design in Mountain Moorland Landscape Types:

- **“Location:** *It may be acceptable to locate wind energy developments on ridges and peaks. They may also be appropriate, in certain instances, in a saddle between two peaks where they will be partially contained or “framed”. A third acceptable location is lower down on sweeping mountainsides”.*
- **Spatial Extent:** *Given the typical extensive areas of continuous unenclosed ground, larger wind energy developments can generally be accommodated because they correspond in terms of scale. However, the spatial extent of a wind energy development would need to be reduced where a suggestion of smaller scale is provided by nearby landscape features.”*
- **Spacing:** *All spacing options are usually acceptable. Where a wind energy development is clearly visible on a crest or ridge there is considerable scope to vary the rhythm, though on simple ridges, regular spacing may be more appropriate. On sweeping and continuously even areas of mountain moorland or upland plateaux regular spacing may be most desirable.”*
- **Layout:** *All layout options are usually acceptable. However, the best solutions would either be a random layout, and clustered where located on hills and ridges, or a grid layout on sweeping and continuously even areas of moorland or plateaux. Where a wind energy development is close to a linear element, such as a river, road or long escarpment, a corresponding linear layout or staggered line might be most desirable.*
- **Height:** *There would generally be no height restrictions on mountain moorlands as the scale of landscape is so great. However, shorter turbines may be more appropriate where they are located on small peaks and outcrops in order to maintain an appropriate scale. Profile, whether even or uneven, is dependent on topography: the more rugged and undulating (e.g., knolls and crags) the more uneven it will be. The profile of the wind energy development should not necessarily run in parallel to that of the topography.*
- **Cumulative:** *The open expanse of such landscapes can absorb a number of wind energy developments, depending on their proximity. The cumulative impact will also depend on the actual visual complexity of landform, whether steeply rolling, undulating or gently sweeping. The more varied and undulating an area is topographically, the greater its ability to absorb and screen wind energy developments. The aesthetic effect of wind energy developments in these landscapes is acceptable where each one is discrete, standing in relative isolation.*

The proposed turbines are sited in a cross between a clustered and grid layout on the northern slopes of a sweeping hillside with relatively continuous and even landform. The assessments reported in this LVIA considers the design and layout of the proposed turbines with respect to the factors cited above and have determined the following:

- Location – acceptable on a sweeping mountainside
- Spatial Extent – spatial extent is acceptable given the scale of the landscape
- Spacing – all spacing options are acceptable
- Layout – all layout options are acceptable with the clustered and grid form appropriate for the receiving landscape
- Height – no height restrictions for this landscape type
- Cumulative – the open expanse and scale of the landscape has the capacity accommodate the proposed turbines and other cumulative turbines, a factor which is comprehensively assessed later in this LVIA

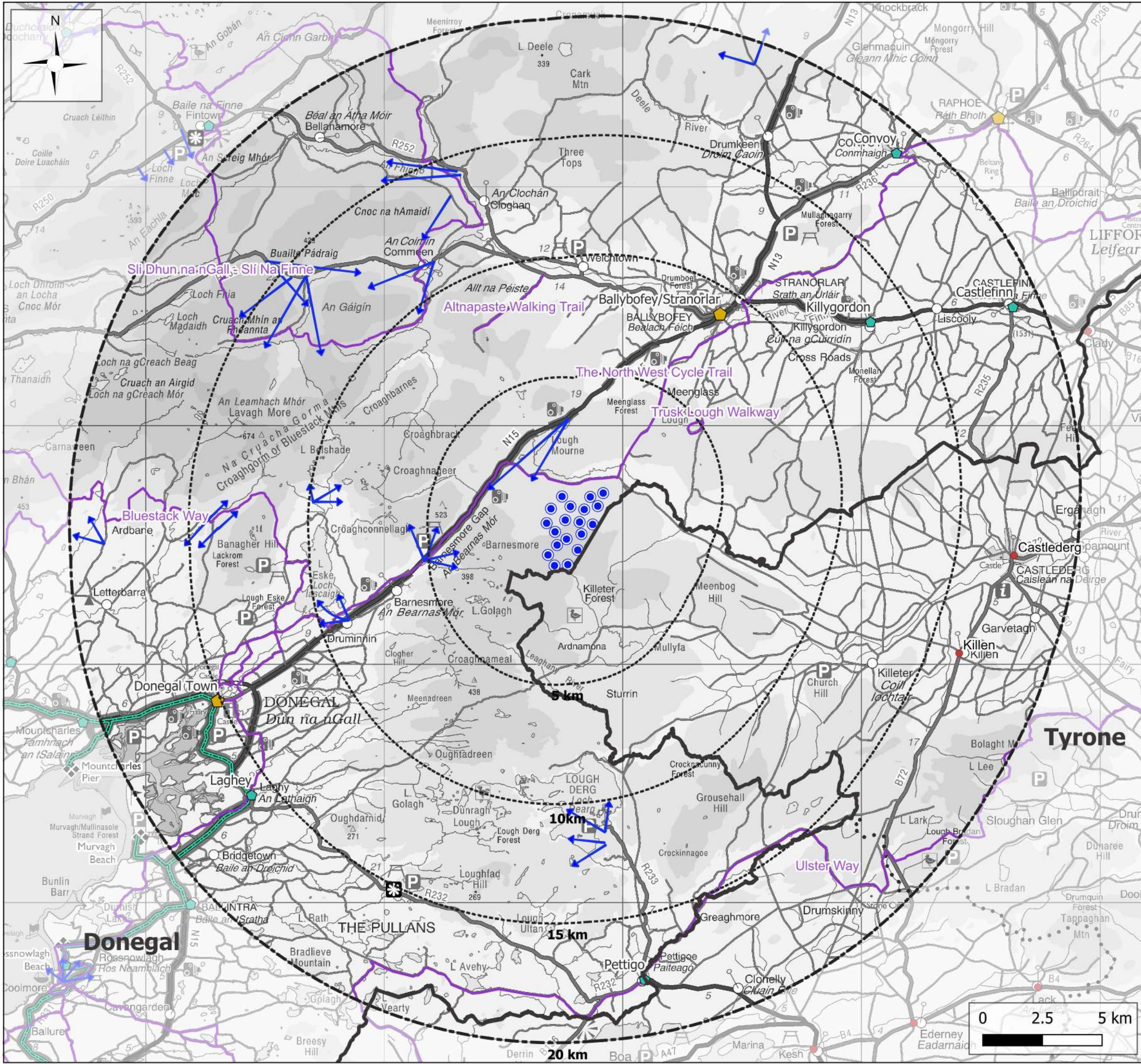
Overall, the LVIA has determined that the design of Prospective Development is acceptable and appropriate for Mountain Moorland landscape type. Also, the proposed turbines exceed the minimum 500 metre set back distance from residential receptors set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and adheres to the 4 times tip height set back distance from residential receptors advised by the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019) that is specifically provided for protection of residential visual amenity.

13.5 Visual Baseline

Review of the DCDP, desk-based analysis, site visits, as well as the review of information gathered during the many site visits and assessments conducted for the 2017 EIAR Landscape and Visual Assessment, have been taken into consideration in the current assessment given that the proposed turbines haven't changed location or height. The following types of receptors were identified:

- Designated Protected Views
- OSI Viewing Areas
- Settlements
- Recreational Routes:
 - Waymarked Walking Routes
 - Cycle Routes
 - Tourist Routes
- Residential Receptors

These receptors have been considered in the scoping exercise set out in the subsections below.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations
- Co. Donegal Scenic Views
- N. Ireland Key Settlements

Co. Donegal Settlements

- ★ Strategic Town
- ◆ Rural Towns & Open Countryside

Visual Receptors

- Recreational Trails
- The Wild Atlantic Way
- ★ OSi Viewing Points

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-12

Drawing Title

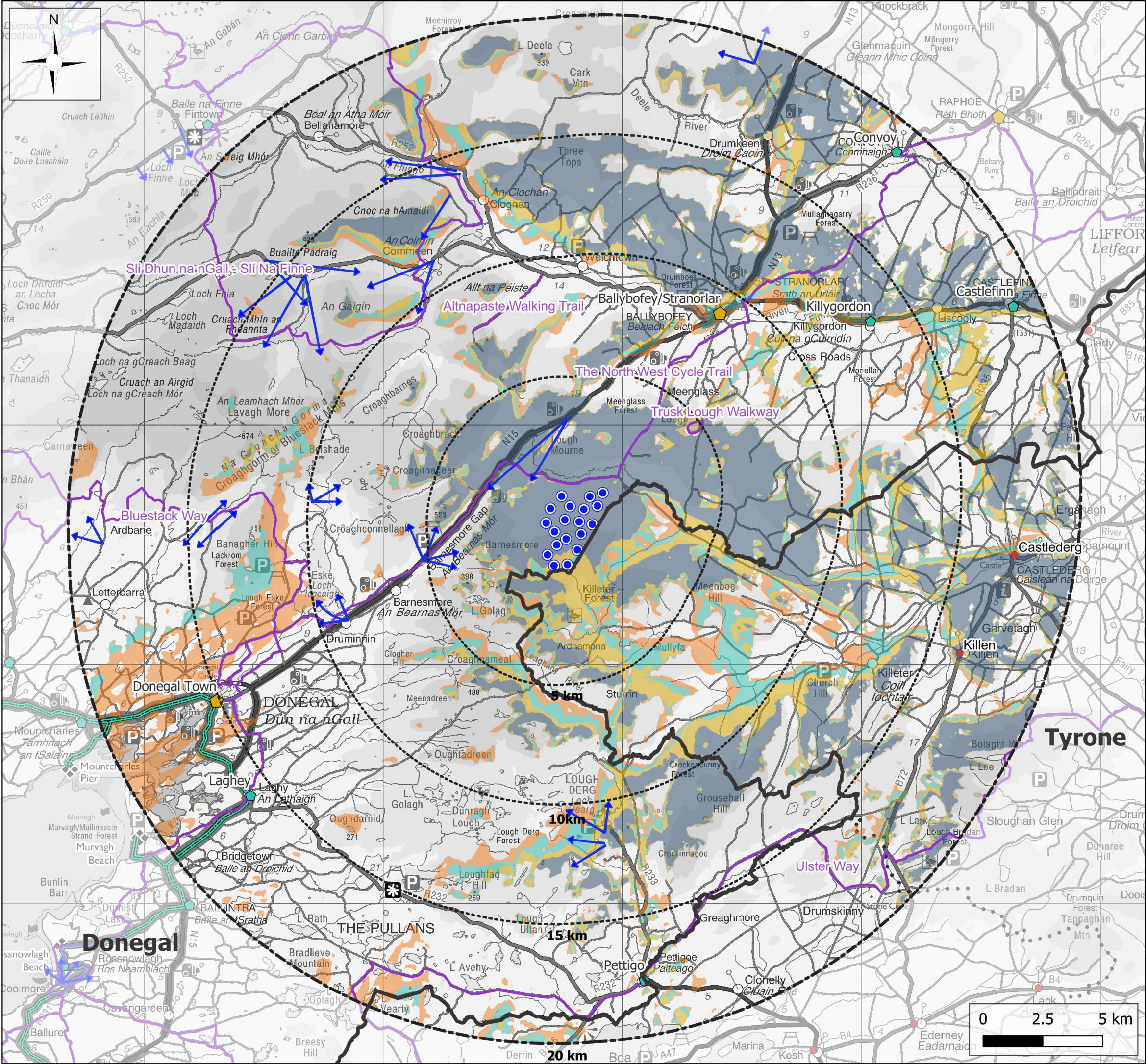
Visual Baseline

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	20/02/2026	GL	JW

MKO Planning and Environmental Consultants



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations
- Co. Donegal Scenic Views
- N. Ireland Key Settlements
- Co. Donegal Settlements**
 - Strategic Town
 - Rural Towns & Open Countryside
- Visual Receptors**
 - Recreational Trails
 - The Wild Atlantic Way
 - OSi Viewing Points
- Half-Blade Zone of Theoretical Visibility**
 - 1-5 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 6-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 11-15 Turbines Theoretically Visible
 - 16-19 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-13

Drawing Title

Visual Baseline with ZTV

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	20/02/2026	GL	JW



Planning and Environmental Consultants

13.5.1 Visual Receptors Scoped in for Assessment

The following receptors identified in the LVIA Study Area were scoped in for assessment in the LVIA and are mapped above in Figure 13-12. See the full detailed methodology in Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology* for the analysis of scoping receptors in and out of assessment.

Table 13-3 Visual Receptors Scoped in for Further Assessment in this LVIA

Receptor	Description	Direction of View	Theoretical Visibility (TV)	On-site Visibility appraisals	Section Addressed in / Photomontage Viewpoint No.
Up to 5km					
Protected Views	South-West to Barnesmore Gap from N15 North	South-west	Full TV	Potential for visibility at this location	VP07
Recreational Routes	<i>Proposed</i> Barnesmore Gap	N/A	Partial TV on some areas along the route.	Potential for visibility in areas of full TV	VP3, VP4, VP5, VP6, and VP7
	Northwest Cycle Trail	N/A	Full TV on some areas along the route.	Potential for visibility, primarily in close proximity to the proposed turbines	VP01, VP02, VP03, VP04
	Trusk Lough Walkway	N/A	Full – Partial TV on some areas along the route.	Some potential for visibility in areas of full TV	VP08
Up to 10km					
Settlements	Ballybofey/Stranolar	N/A	Partial	Potential at some locations	Addressed in Section 13.7.3.2.3
Recreational Routes	Alt na Peist Walking Trail	South-east	Partial TV- some areas along the route have no TV, some have full Tv	Some areas of full TV	VP11
Up to 15km					

Protected Views	Lough Derg Station Island	North, West, and South-west	Partial TV	Potential for visibility at this location	Addressed in Section 13.7.3.2.3
Settlements	Killygordon	N/A	Partial	Potential at some locations	Addressed in Section 13.7.3.2.3
Recreational Routes	Bluestack Way	East	Partial TV	Partial TV at some locations	VP12
Up to 20km					
Settlements	Castlefin	N/A	Partial	Potential at some locations	Addressed in Section 13.7.3.2.3
	Castlederg	N/A	Partial	Potential at some locations	VP14
	Killen	N/A	Partial	Potential at some locations	VP14

13.5.2 Visual Receptors Scoped Out for Assessment

In some cases, specific receptors are scoped out where there is no potential for significant visual effects to occur on account of combination of factors such as distance, visual screening, direction of views and the nature and sensitivity of the receptors at a particular location. The following receptors have been scoped out from further analysis:

- All other designated protected views and OSI Viewpoints within the LVIA Study Area (no theoretical visibility and/or views directed away from the proposed turbines - as seen in Figure 13-13)
- All other settlements within the LVIA Study Area (no theoretical visibility - as seen in Figure 13-13)
- Recreational Routes (no theoretical visibility - as seen in Figure 13-13, or further visual screening from dense vegetation where significant visual effects are not likely to occur).

13.6 Cumulative Context: Other Wind Farms

This Chapter assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts of the Prospective Development, both independently, as well as in combination with all other existing and operational wind farm developments in the LVIA Study Area. In this section, all existing wind farm developments in the LVIA Study Area, which potentially contribute to assessment of cumulative and in-combination landscape and visual effects, are identified. In addition, this section assesses the Prospective

Development in combination with all 'likely future receiving environments' according to the EPA, 2022 in the LVIA Study Area, which includes other permitted and proposed wind farm developments.

All wind farm developments in the LVIA Study Area are identified in this section and each is categorised as one of the following:

- **Existing:** Wind energy developments that are currently operational in the baseline landscape at the time of conducting this LVIA.
- **Permitted:** Wind energy developments that are permitted (consented) at the time of conducting this LVIA. These developments have a high probability of being operational in a future receiving environment.
- **Proposed:** All well-developed wind farm proposals with project specifications in the public domain at the time of conducting this LVIA. Cumulative effects between the Prospective Development and other proposed projects within this category are inherently uncertain and are reliant on the outcome of the planning and consenting system (amongst other factors).

A description of how the various cumulative categories are presented in the Photomontage Booklet is comprehensively reported in Appendix 13-1: *LVIA Methodology* (Section 1.6: Photomontage Visualisations). The above categories are a useful guide to enable understanding and structure when viewing the Photomontage Booklet and identification of the developments listed in this section. However, irrespective of how a development is categorised, the assessments of cumulative landscape and visual effects include all other wind farm developments.

The effects reported both in this Chapter and within the assessment appendix (Appendix 13-2: *Photomontage Visual Impact Assessment Tables*) uses appropriate and logical narrative to discuss cumulative interactions between the Prospective Development and all other wind energy developments irrespective of which category they occur. Whilst the categories provide clarity in the presentation of visuals with respect to the scope of potential development in this landscape, discussion of cumulative interactions on specific landscape and visual receptors is relative to the effects on each receptor and is proportionate to the likelihood of significant landscape and visual effects occurring on that receptor.

In terms of cumulative landscape and visual effects, only other wind energy projects have been considered, as only these development types can be described as having very tall, vertical elements in the landscape (i.e., turbines) and, therefore, have the most potential to give rise to 'Significant' cumulative landscape and visual effects. These other wind energy developments within 20km of the proposed turbines were identified by searching past planning applications lodged through the online planning portals of relevant planning authorities (i.e. An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP), Donegal County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Councils).

The information identified in the initial planning search was then used to verify, by means of a desk-based study and ground-truthing, whether the permitted wind energy developments had been constructed. The list of existing, permitted, and proposed wind turbines present within the LVIA Study Area are listed below in

Table 13-4.

Table 13-4 Cumulative Wind Farms Identified in the LVIA Study Area

Other Wind Farms	County	Status	No. of Turbines	Distance from Nearest Proposed Turbine
Up to 5km				

Other Wind Farms	County	Status	No. of Turbines	Distance from Nearest Proposed Turbine
Straness Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	21	3.5km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine T01.
Barnesmore Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	25	2.1km southwest from the nearest proposed turbine T03.
Barnesmore Repowering	Donegal	Permitted	13	2.1km southwest from the nearest proposed turbine T03.
Meenakeeran Wind Farm	Tyrone	Proposed	5	3km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Up to 10km				
Meenadreen Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	4	6.7km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine T01.
Meenadreen Wind Farm Ext.	Donegal	Existing	2	6.7km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine T01.
Lough Cuill Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	8	6.2km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine T01.
Croaghanmeal Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	7	6.3km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine T01.
Crighshane Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	14	8.3km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Pullytean Wind Farm	Tyrone	Proposed	7	9.3km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Up to 15km				
Tievenameenta Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	15	10.5km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Church Hill Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	8	11.3km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T04.

Other Wind Farms	County	Status	No. of Turbines	Distance from Nearest Proposed Turbine
Church Hill Wind Farm Ext.	Tyrone	Permitted	1	12km south east from the nearest proposed turbine T04
Crilly Wind Farm	Donegal	Permitted	4	13.9km south east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Gronan Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	4	12.1km south east from the nearest proposed turbine T04.
Seegronan Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	6	13.1km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T04.
Seegronan Wind Farm Ext.	Tyrone	Existing	3	11.8km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T04.
Meenamullan Wind Farm	Tyrone	Proposed	6	12.6km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Altlow Turbine	Donegal	Existing	1	13.2km west from the nearest proposed turbine T3.
Meenatilta Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	3	13km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Meenatilta Wind Farm Ext. (2)	Donegal	Existing	3	12.8km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Meenatilta Wind Farm Ext. (3)	Donegal	Existing	4	12.5km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Meenahorna Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	7	13.6km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Meentycat Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	9	14.9km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Culliagh Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	18	14.9km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.

Other Wind Farms	County	Status	No. of Turbines	Distance from Nearest Proposed Turbine
Culliagh Wind Farm Ext.	Donegal	Existing	3	14.5km north from the nearest proposed turbine T18.
Meenalaban Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	7	14.1km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Up to 20km				
Bin Mountain Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	6	18.2km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T09.
Lough Hill Wind Farm	Tyrone	Existing	6	19km south-east from the nearest proposed turbine T09.
Anarget Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	3	17.8km west from the nearest proposed turbine T10.
Anarget Wind Farm Ext.	Donegal	Existing	3	17.8km west from the nearest proposed turbine T10.
Ballystrang Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	6	17km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Lenalea Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	7	17.4km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Drumnahough Wind Farm	Donegal	Permitted	12	16.2km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Cark Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	25	16.8km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Cark Wind Farm Ext.	Donegal	Existing	4	16.7km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.
Cark/Largymore Wind Farm	Donegal	Existing	9	16.8km north from the nearest proposed turbine T19.

Other Wind Farms	County	Status	No. of Turbines	Distance from Nearest Proposed Turbine
Altgolan Wind Farm	Tyrone	Proposed	5	15.6km southeast from the nearest proposed turbine T02.
Graffy Wind Park	Donegal	Proposed	8	19.3km northwest from the nearest proposed turbine T14.

Within the LVIA Study Area, 30 no. existing wind farms, 4 no. permitted, and 5 no. proposed wind farms have been identified. The locations of these wind farms and corresponding wind turbines are mapped below in Figure 13-14. In cases where turbines of these other wind farms are visible in combination with the proposed turbines they are included in the Photomontage Booklet. Detailed discussions of cumulative landscape effects are included below in Section 13.7.3.1.4 and discussion of cumulative visual effects are included in Section 13.7.3.2.6: Cumulative Visual Effects. The likely cumulative visual effects are assessed in the photomontage assessment tables in Appendix 13-2: *Photomontage Visual Impact Assessment Tables*.

The assessment of cumulative landscape and visual effects must be proportional, meaning that the focus of the assessment is on the extent to which the Prospective Development contributes toward cumulative effects on the particular receptors under assessment. These contributions are clearly explained in the narrative on cumulative impact assessment included in this Chapter (Section 13.7.3.2.6) as well as in the impact assessment Appendix (Appendix 13-2).

13.6.1 Atypical Scenario: Existing Barnesmore / Barnesmore Repowering

As outlined in Appendix 13-1: Methodology, the Prospective Development is assessed in combination with the 'likely future receiving environment', in accordance with EPA, 2022 guidance. This includes all **existing** and **permitted** wind energy developments within the LVIA Study Area.

At the time of writing this EIAR, a specific and atypical planning scenario arises in respect to the Barnesmore Wind Farm. The existing Barnesmore Wind Farm is currently operational and forms part of the baseline receiving environment. The original grant of planning permission (Donegal County Council ref 95/914) did not include a condition limiting the operational lifespan of the development. However, wind farms constructed during this period typically have an anticipated technical operational lifespan of up to 30 years, following which decommissioning is expected to occur.

Separately, a planning application for the repowering of the Barnesmore Wind Farm (Barnesmore Repowering) was granted a ten-year planning permission by An Coimisiún Pleanála (ABP Pl. Ref PA05E.306303) in 2021. However, it remains uncertain whether the permitted repowering scheme for Barnesmore Wind Farm will proceed. Should it proceed, it would replace the existing wind farm, however it may be several years from the time of writing before this takes place. If it does not proceed, the existing wind farm would likely be decommissioned at the end of its operational life, and no replacement development will be constructed.

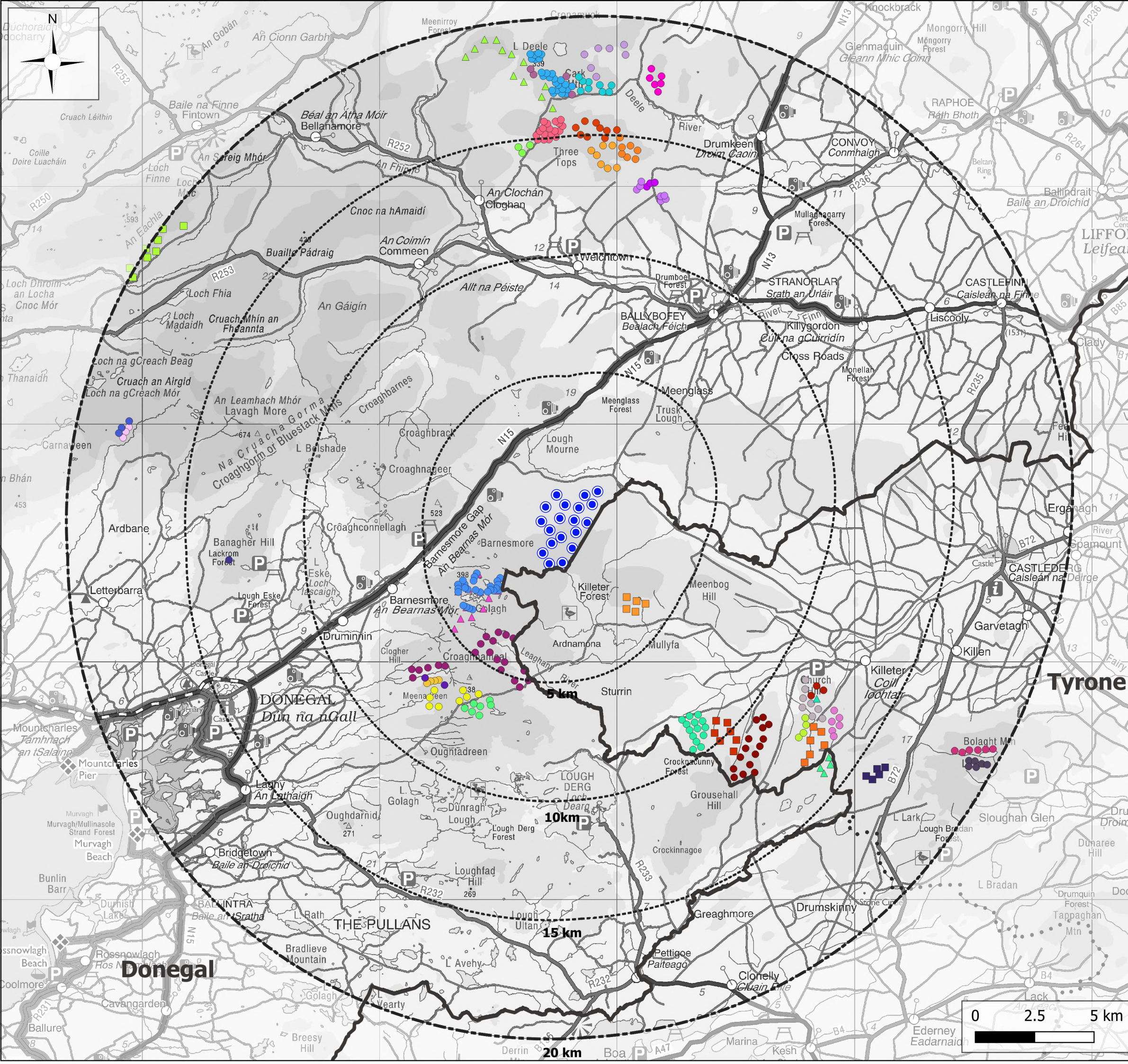
Accordingly, two potential future scenarios exist:

- **Scenario 1:** Existing Barnesmore Wind Farm remains visible in the landscape as it is currently.

- **Scenario 2:** Decommissioning of the Existing Barnesmore Wind Farm and subsequent construction of the Permitted Barnesmore Repowering scheme. Under this scenario, the existing turbines would be removed and replaced with the consented repowering turbines.

In order to ensure a robust, transparent cumulative assessment, both the Existing Barnesmore turbines and the Permitted Barnesmore Repowering turbines are included within the Photomontage Booklet and are assessed in this Chapter. The rationale for this approach is to consider that either scenario could occur. Even though this visual scenario would never occur in reality, this approach within the Photomontage Booklet enables the assessor to see all potential turbines within the landscape in combination with the proposed turbines.

When the term ‘Barnesmore Wind Farm’ is used in this LVIA in the discussion of cumulative effects, it refers to both Scenario 1 and Scenario 2. In this regard, when this term is used, it is assessing cumulative effects with regard to the presence of a wind farm in that location within the landscape, either the existing turbines or the permitted repowering turbines. However, the assessment of cumulative visual effects reported in Section 13.7.3.2.6 also considers and describes the difference in scale and layout of the existing Barnesmore turbines compared to the permitted repowering Barnesmore turbines, and how this relates to cumulative effects with the proposed turbines.



Map Legend

NI-ROI Border

Proposed Turbine Locations

Wind Farms within 20km

- Altgolan Wind Farm (proposed)
- Altilow Turbine (existing)
- Anarget Wind Farm (existing)
- Anarget Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Ballystrang Wind Farm (existing)
- Barnesmore Repowering (permitted)
- Barnesmore Wind Farm (existing)
- Bin Mountain Wind Farm (existing)
- Cark Wind Farm (existing)
- Cark Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Cark/Largymore Wind Farm (existing)
- Church Hill Wind Farm (existing)
- Church Hill Wind Farm Extension (permitted)
- Crighshane Wind Farm (existing)
- Crilly Wind Farm (permitted)
- Croaghanmeal Wind Farm (existing)
- Culliagh Wind Farm (existing)
- Culliagh Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Drumnahough Wind Farm (permitted)
- Graffy Wind Park (proposed)
- Gronan Wind Farm (existing)
- Lenalea Wind Farm (existing)
- Lough Cuill Wind Farm (existing)
- Lough Hill Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenadreen Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenadreen Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Meenahorna Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenakeeran Wind Farm (proposed)
- Meenalaban Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenamullan Wind Farm (proposed)
- Meenanilta Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenanilta Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Meentycat Wind Farm (existing)
- Pullytean Wind Farm (proposed)
- Seegronan Wind Farm (existing)
- Seegronan Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Straness Wind Farm (existing)
- Tievenameenta Wind Farm (existing)

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-14

Cumulative Wind Farms

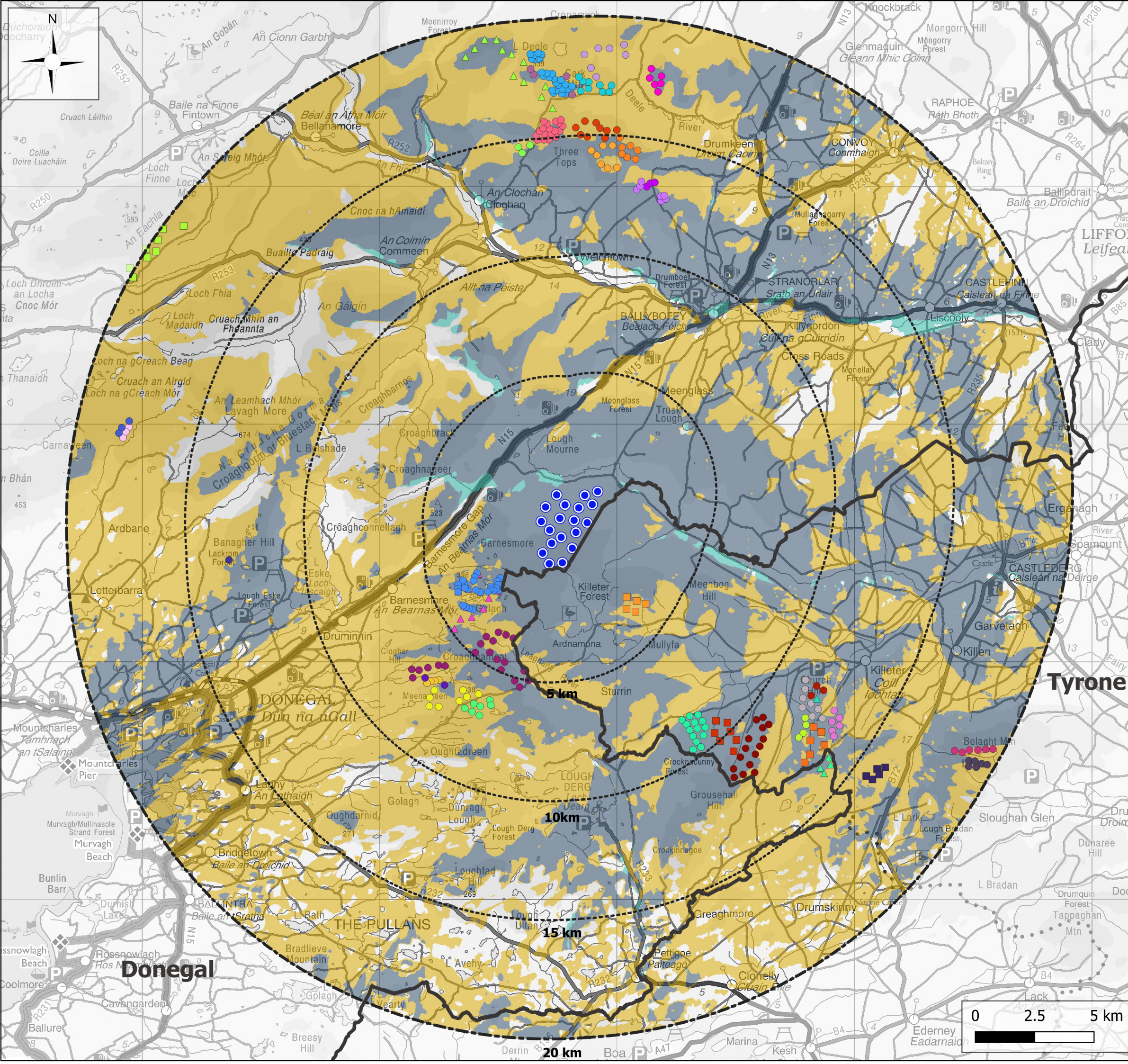
Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:150,715	240505	24/03/2026	GL	JW

MKO

Planning and Environmental Consultants



Map Legend

NI-ROI Border

Proposed Turbine Locations

Wind Farms within 20km

- Altgolan Wind Farm (proposed)
- Altilow Turbine (existing)
- Anarget Wind Farm (existing)
- Anarget Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Ballystrang Wind Farm (existing)
- Barnesmore Repowering (permitted)
- Barnesmore Wind Farm (existing)
- Bin Mountain Wind Farm (existing)
- Cark Wind Farm (existing)
- Cark Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Cark/Largymore Wind Farm (existing)
- Church Hill Wind Farm (existing)
- Church Hill Wind Farm Extension (permitted)
- Crighshane Wind Farm (existing)
- Crilly Wind Farm (permitted)
- Croaghanmeal Wind Farm (existing)
- Culliagh Wind Farm (existing)
- Culliagh Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Drumnahough Wind Farm (permitted)
- Graffy Wind Park (proposed)
- Gronan Wind Farm (existing)
- Lenalea Wind Farm (existing)
- Lough Cuill Wind Farm (existing)
- Lough Hill Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenadreen Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenadreen Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Meenahorna Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenakeeran Wind Farm (proposed)
- Meenalaban Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenamullan Wind Farm (proposed)
- Meenanilta Wind Farm (existing)
- Meenanilta Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Meentycat Wind Farm (existing)
- Pullytean Wind Farm (proposed)
- Seegronan Wind Farm (existing)
- Seegronan Wind Farm Extension (existing)
- Straness Wind Farm (existing)
- Tievenameenta Wind Farm (existing)

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-15

Cumulative Comparative

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:150,716	240505	24/03/2026	GL	JW

MKO

Planning and Environmental Consultants

13.7 Likely Significant Landscape and Visual Effects

13.7.1 'Do-Nothing' Scenario

The 'Do-Nothing' alternative is an alternative scenario to retaining and regularising the Existing Development. If the Prospective Development was not to proceed, the Wind Farm Site will continue to function as it does at present, with no changes to the current land-use, except for the natural revegetation processes that would continue across the Site. In this scenario, the Existing Development will remain in-situ as an unauthorised and partially completed wind farm, which is, in effect, the "Do-Nothing" alternative insofar as it represents the current situation as at the date of the application for substitute consent.

There would be no direct negative environmental effects as a result of implementing the "Do-Nothing" alternative. However, by implementing this 'Do-Nothing' alternative, the opportunity to capture a significant part of the country's renewable energy resource by completing the Meenbog Wind Farm (subject to appropriate planning consents) would be lost, as would the opportunity to contribute to meeting Government and EU targets for the production and consumption of electricity from renewable resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The opportunity to generate local employment, local authority development contributions, rates and investment in the local area would also be lost. Furthermore, the opportunity to implement the proposed biodiversity enhancement measures would be lost. Please see Prospective Development EIAR, Appendix 6-4 Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan of the EIAR for details. Under the "Do-Nothing" alternative the opportunity to put in place the community benefit scheme proposed as part of the Prospective Development would also be lost.

13.7.2 Construction Phase Effects

It is estimated that the construction phase of the Prospective Development will last approximately 12 months. Construction of the development will involve the installation of the 19 no. turbines with a maximum blade-tip height of 156.5m and all associated works.

The Prospective Development aims to utilise the existing infrastructure within the Wind Farm Site, where already constructed. The proposed turbines are to be located in the same location as those identified in the 2017 EIAR, thereby enabling the use of the Existing Development.

13.7.2.1.1 Landscape Effects during Construction Phase

The earthworks such as cut and fill required to facilitate construction of the Prospective Development will have the greatest potential for direct landscape effects where the physical fabric of the landscape is materially altered. Where excavation is required, existing land cover, vegetation, and spoil will be removed during the construction phase. The character of the BMEP Site will be altered by the removal of commercial forestry and the establishment of a mosaic of open heathland and patchy scrub vegetation. In most instances, groundworks and excavation trenches will be re-instated upon completion of construction. Where spoil arising from construction activities is managed within the Prospective Development, the vegetative top-soil layer will be removed and re-instated following spoil management taking place. The construction activities may potentially cause temporary impacts on the landscape, such as the creation of temporary structures, dust, minor soil erosion and minor alterations to drainage. It is considered that this is a 'Short-term', 'Negative', 'Slight', effect in terms of landscape effects. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

The Prospective Development makes use of the existing infrastructure of the Existing Development. This reduces the requirement for new internal site roads, grid infrastructure, new borrow pits, or new hardstands, thereby reducing the extent of direct Landscape Effects on the Wind Farm Site. The

construction works will be 'Temporary' / 'Short-Term' in nature and completed as soon as practically possible. All construction activities will follow best practice methods to reduce impacts upon the environment and landscape of the Wind Farm Site. Further details are contained in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) contained in Appendix 4-3 of this EIAR.

13.7.2.1.2 **Visual Effects during Construction Phase**

Proposed Turbines

The most substantial visual effects will arise from the requisite construction activities at the Prospective Development, such as assembling tower sections and erecting the proposed turbines and proposed met mast. There will be temporary scenarios during the construction phase in which the proposed turbines will be partially constructed and may be seen as either stand-alone tower sections, or incomplete turbines where only one or two blades are visible. The equipment and vehicles required to transport and erect the wind farm components include large cranes and large haulage vehicles. The visual effects arising from the construction of the proposed turbines and the construction and upgrading of ancillary infrastructure such as the hardstands to service and build turbines will be experienced by a range of visual receptors in the landscape surrounding the Prospective Development, with most visibility occurring within 5km of the proposed turbines. These construction activities will cause 'Slight', 'Short-term', 'Negative' visual effects. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

General housekeeping measures, necessary for Health and Safety requirements, will ensure that the active construction areas will be kept tidy, mitigating localised visual impacts during the construction phase. A detailed description of the Prospective Development is included in Chapter 4 of this EIAR. The following sections assess the visual effects associated with the construction phase of the other (non-turbine) components of the Prospective Development.

Turbine Delivery Route (TDR) Accommodation Works

Works such as road widening are sometimes required along proposed turbine transport routes to accommodate the large vehicles used to transport turbine components to Prospective Development. In some instances, minor temporary alterations will be required to the existing streetscape, temporary local road widening, temporary relocation of some signs and street furniture. Full details of the assessment are included as part of the traffic impact assessment set out in Chapter 15 of this EIAR. The areas of accommodation works are deemed to have a 'Slight' sensitivity and the change to occur will be concentrated along the local road network as well as the N56, and N15 National Roads. These works are likely to be 'Temporary', 'Slight', 'Negative' visual effects. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Construction / Upgrades to Site Access Roads and Hardstand Areas

The proposed access roads and hardstand areas are flat features and will be most visible within their immediate surroundings, within the Wind Farm Site where there are no sensitive visual receptors. A full description of the additional and existing road and hardstand infrastructure layout is included in Figure 4.1 within Chapter 4 of this EIAR. Every use will be made of the existing wind farm access roads, other existing roads and hardstands on the Wind Farm Site. Some roads will be upgraded appropriately whilst several stretches of new internal roads will need to be constructed. The impact of the construction of these flat and hard surfaces will be very localised. The visual effects arising from the access roads and hardstand areas on visual receptors in very close proximity and considered to be highly localised, 'Short-term', 'Negative', and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Meteorological (Met) Mast

One met mast is proposed as a part of the Prospective Development. This will be a slender structure, 80 metres in height, and will not be an imposing structure in terms of visual impact. The visual effects of the construction of the proposed mast will be localised, considering that construction activities related to this will be most visible within their immediate surroundings. Within the Wind Farm Site and its immediate landscape setting, the visual effects arising from the construction of the met mast on visual receptors in the immediate vicinity is considered to be of highly localised 'Negative', 'Short-Term', 'Slight' effects. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Proposed BMEP Site – Landscape and Visual Effects

Section 13.4.2 describes the character of the BMEP Site. As reported in Section 13.4.2, these lands are highly influenced and modified by past and existing forestry land use, and therefore the landscape sensitivity of the BMEP is 'Low'. The character of the BMEP Site will be altered by the removal of commercial forestry and the establishment of a mosaic of open heathland and patchy scrub vegetation. The magnitude of change is deemed to be 'Slight' and highly localised. The visual effects that will arise will be highly localised, 'Negative', 'Short-Term', and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3 Operational Phase Effects

This section reports the landscape and visual effects anticipated during the operational lifetime of the Prospective Development. This section is organised as follows:

- **Landscape Effects:** Reporting landscape effects for the Prospective Development
- **Landscape Effects on Designated Landscapes:** Reporting landscape effects on Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and designated EHSA.
- **Photomontage Viewpoint Assessment Outcomes:** A summary of the visual impact assessment outcomes in the (20km) LVIA Study Area for each photomontage as is comprehensively reported in Appendix 13-2: *Photomontage Visual Impact Assessment Tables*
- **Visual Effects: Receptors:** Discussion of visual effects on the specific visual receptors selected for assessment within the visual baseline exercise (Section 13.5) with reference to photomontages
- **Residential Visual Amenity:** Discussion of visual effects on residential receptors within close proximity to the Prospective Development
- **Cumulative Effects:** Discussion of landscape and visual effects expected to occur in combination with the Prospective Development, and all identified existing, permitted and proposed wind farms identified in the LVIA Study Area.

13.7.3.1 Landscape Effects (Operational Phase)

13.7.3.1.1 Landscape of the Wind Farm Site

The proposed turbines will be a 'Substantial' magnitude of change to the character of the Wind Farm Site. In a local context, the Wind Farm Site is located in a remote, upland, marginal landscape. Commercial forestry is the dominant landcover within the Wind Farm Site. As outlined in Section 13.4.2.2 above, the landscape value and sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site is deemed to be 'Low'. Low sensitivity balanced with a 'Substantial' magnitude of change amount to 'Long-Term', 'Negative' landscape effects of 'Moderate' significance to the landscape of the Wind Farm Site (See LVIA Methodology, Appendix 13-1).

Mitigation of Landscape Effects within the Landscape of the Wind Farm Site

The following measures have been included in the Wind Farm Site design to avoid or reduce direct effects on landscape receptors (individual landscape features and the landscape character of the Wind Farm Site as a whole) on the Wind Farm Site:

- The Prospective Development makes use of the following existing infrastructure of the Existing Development, to minimise direct landscape effects on the physical fabric of the landscape:
 - The internal site road layout makes use of the existing roads, to minimise requirement for new tracks within the Wind Farm Site.
 - The Prospective Development utilises the 18 No. existing turbine hardstands within the Wind Farm Site, to reduce the extent of ground disturbance and associated direct effects on the physical fabric of the landscape.
- To minimise cut and fill activities required to construct the Wind Farm Site, the proposed upgrades to the access roads, and other infrastructure have been designed to align with the existing terrain within the landscape of the Wind Farm Site.
- In all circumstances, excavation depths and volumes will be minimised, and excavated material will be re-used where possible.

Residual Landscape Effects

Considering the mitigation measures above, the overall residual effects upon the landscape of the Wind Farm Site are deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3.1.2 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)

Whilst the DCDP does not include specific policy relating to the protection of designated LCAs, a precautionary approach has been taken in this LVIA and an impact assessment of the five relevant LCAs scoped in for assessment is reported below.

Co. Donegal – LCA 40 'Cashelnavern Border & Uplands'

The Wind Farm Site is located within the southernmost extent of LCA 40 – Cashelnavern Border & Uplands, and therefore this LCA will experience direct effects as a result of the Prospective Development.

The Wind Farm Site is located in a landscape which is very large scale and exposed. The primary land cover is peat and upland bog with extensive large blocks of coniferous forestry. Views are expansive and long distance where not contained by plantation woodland. To the west of the Wind Farm Site is an EHSA and the protected view towards the Barnesmore Gap from the N15 National Road. Amenity/recreational value is limited to some footpaths for walkers. Overall, the landscape sensitivity to wind farm development for this LCA is deemed to be 'Medium'.

The magnitude of change on this LCA as a result of the Wind Farm Site is deemed to be 'Moderate', because of the changes to character of a localised area of the LCA within the Wind Farm Site. The addition of the proposed turbines into the landscape will impact some of the perceptual characteristics of local landscape character where views of the turbines are available. Within the immediate vicinity of the turbines, visibility would be largely restricted by forestry, limited to only partial visibility from limited open areas/tracks would be possible. Only from the immediate north would close proximity views be possible from an open landscape around the Prospective Development. From these open areas the scale of change would be large, however the geographic extent of such change would be limited.

With increasing distance, beyond approximately 3-4km from areas to the north and west, visibility would become limited to higher ground due to intervening topography. From these more distant areas of higher ground the array would be seen in the context of extensive upland landscapes and the turbines would accord with the larger scale attributes of the landscape and landform as illustrated by VP11. Overall, residual landscape effects on LCA 40 as a result of the Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Co. Donegal – LCA 38 'Bluestack Mountains'

LCA 38 – Bluestack Mountains is located approx. 1.9km west from the nearest proposed turbine (T14). This LCA is fully comprised of a designated EHSA, and therefore the sensitivity of this LCA to wind farm development is deemed to be 'Very High'.

As shown by the ZTV Map in Figure 13-5, there would be only very limited potential for any theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines to occur from the Bluestack LCA due to the topography of the mountains. Whilst from the easternmost tip the turbines would be seen in relatively close proximity, they would be seen in long distance elevated easterly views.

The magnitude of change on this LCA as a result of Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Slight'. The proposed turbines would be perceived within a very large-scale landscape and would not significantly affect the key characteristics of the landscape or conflict with the scale of landscape. The geographic extent of area from where visibility would be possible would be very limited. Overall, residual landscape effects on LCA 38 as a result of the Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative', and 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Co. Donegal – LCA 41 'Croaghnameal Border & Uplands'

LCA 41 – Croaghnameal Border & Uplands is located approx. 1.5km south-west from the nearest proposed turbine (T10). This LCA is characteristic of a remote landscape of primarily upland mountainous blanket bog and mountain lakes, with extensive large blocks of coniferous forestry. Overall, the landscape sensitivity to wind farm development for this LCA is deemed to be 'Low'.

As illustrated by the ZTV Map in Figure 13-5, theoretical visibility of the proposed turbines would be limited to the eastern edge of the LCA due to topography. Whilst from the easternmost edges the western cluster of turbines would be seen in relatively close proximity, they would be seen in long distance elevated north easterly views. The proposed turbines would be seen in the context of the existing Lough Golagh turbines.

The proposed turbines would be perceived within a very large-scale landscape and would not significantly affect the key characteristics of the landscape (which already include the presence of large-scale turbines) or conflict with the scale of landscape. The magnitude of change on this LCA as a result of Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Slight'. Overall, residual landscape effects on LCA 41 as a result of the Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative', and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Co. Donegal – LCA 14 'Finn Valley'

LCA 14 'Finn Valley' is located approx. 4.7km north from the nearest proposed turbine (T19). This is a good quality agricultural riverine landscape of small scale semi-improved agricultural fields, farmsteads and one-off rural dwellings served by a number of rural villages and towns. The Finn Valley LCA is dominated by the River Finn, its tributaries and associated valleys carved from the surrounding uplands. The western parts of this LCA comprise areas of an EHSA and protected views, however, these are not close to or orientated towards the proposed turbines. Overall, the landscape sensitivity to wind farm development for this LCA is deemed to be 'Medium'.

As illustrated by the ZTV Map in Figure 13-5, visibility is primarily confined to the south facing northern slopes. At these distances, the proposed turbines would comprise only a minor feature of the view as illustrated by VP13. The magnitude of change on this LCA as a result of Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Slight'. Overall, residual landscape effects on LCA 14 as a result of the Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Co. Tyrone – RLCA 5 'West Tyrone Hills and Valleys'

RLCA 5 'West Tyrone Hills and Valleys' is located approx. 270km east from the nearest proposed turbine (T09). This is a strongly rural and relatively remote landscape. Hills are covered with moorland or are forested with exposed upland grazing and peat bogs. The most extensive coniferous plantations in Northern Ireland are found at Killeter and Lough Bradan Forests. Overall, the landscape sensitivity to wind farm development for this RLCA is deemed to be 'Medium/Low'.

Whilst the ZTV map (Figure 13-5) identifies areas of theoretical visibility, the extensive forestry and intervening topography across the landscape provides substantial visual screening. As such, visibility will be greatest within the immediate vicinity of the Wind Farm Site; however, at greater distances, particularly beyond 5km, visibility decreases. Consequently, there would only be very limited locations within this RLCA where the Prospective Development would influence the landscape character.

Overall, the magnitude of change on this RLCA as a result of Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Moderate'. These changes will only occur for a limited extent of this RLCA, and the Prospective Development will not affect the key characteristics of this landscape. Overall, residual landscape effects on RLCA 5 as a result of the Prospective Development is deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3.1.3 Effects on Designated Landscape Areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSAs)

The DCDP classifies its most scenic and high sensitivity landscapes as EHSAs. Areas of EHSA scoped in for assessment are lands to the west of the Wind Farm Site encompassing the Bluestack Mountains and includes the Barnesmore Gap.

The proposed turbines are nearby the Bluestack Mountains and the Barnesmore Gap but are seen within a separate visual unit in marginal uplands comprising commercial forestry. The iterative design of the Permitted Development, now adopted as part of the Prospective Development, specifically ensured an appropriate degree of physical and visual set back from the Barnesmore Gap. The assessments in this chapter have determined that the proposed turbines will not significantly impact the landscape setting or key distinctive characteristics of the Barnesmore Gap, the Bluestack Mountains and the surrounding areas of EHSA. The proposed turbines have greatest potential to impact the character of Barnesmore Gap when perceived from the north-east (Viewpoint 8), a perspective which does not show the defining and distinctive qualities of Barnesmore Gap – which is the two landforms standing either side of the steep and narrow valley forming 'the Gap'.

A full assessment of visual effects arising from southbound visual receptors travelling on the N15 National Road is included later in Section 13.7.3.2.3 supported by photomontages. The visual impact assessment is relevant in that it shows the proposed turbines do not significantly impact the key scenic sensitivities of the EHSA landscape from this road. Overall, residual effects on the character of this EHSA landscape in the Bluestack Mountains and Barnesmore Gap is 'Slight', 'Long-Term' and 'Negative'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Section 13.4.2.1 previously reports a preliminary assessment of the EHSA areas within the Wind Farm Site. As detailed previously, the EHSA designation within the Wind Farm Site was introduced in the 2018-2024 CDP and represents a change from previous planning policy when the Wind Farm Site had

no high sensitivity designation. Comprehensive analysis through GIS mapping, site surveys, and photomontage assessment of the area containing turbines T14, T15, T17, and T18 found no material differences in landcover, visual characteristics, or landscape quality between the EHSA-designated areas and adjacent HSA/MSA lands within the Wind Farm Site. The designation appears to follow topographic contours through commercial forestry with no distinctive visual features, cultural heritage elements, or scenic qualities that would warrant the elevated classification. Given the absence of clear rationale in the DCDP for this designation change and the lack of physical evidence supporting a higher sensitivity classification, the EHSA designation within the Wind Farm Site is considered arbitrary and not reflective of the unique landscape qualities defined in the DCDP. Therefore, while the designation is acknowledged, no significant landscape impact on this EHSA area is anticipated, as the assessment is based on the observed landscape character and sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site rather than the mapped classification alone. Landscape effects on the Wind Farm Site are reported previously in Section 13.7.3.1.1 – Landscape of the Wind Farm Site.

13.7.3.1.4 Cumulative Landscape Effects

The Wind Farm Site will contribute to cumulative effects on the landscape of this area in Donegal where there are a number of other existing, permitted, and proposed wind energy developments. This section describes the cumulative effects on relevant landscape receptors (EHSAs, and HSAs).

The wider landscape of the LVIA Study Area includes several other existing, permitted, and proposed wind energy developments that contribute to the cumulative baseline. These other developments are listed and mapped previously in Section 13.6, and Figure 13-14. It is highlighted that although the LVIA Study Area includes many cumulative wind farms, many of which are existing and permitted, the likelihood of proposed or pre-application wind cumulatively impacting specific landscape receptors is uncertain and is dependent on a range of factors, most notably the outcome of the planning process.

Figure 13-14 shows all the other turbines in the LVIA Study Area. There are many other developments broadly grouped into three separate areas of the landscape which are discussed below:

- Croaghnameal Uplands south-west of the Wind Farm Site – 7 No. wind farms (including extensions and repowering turbines), 80 No. turbines total
- Cark Mountains to the north of the Wind Farm Site – 14 No. wind farms (including extensions), 117 No. turbines total
- West Tyrone Uplands to the south-east of the Wind Farm Site – 14 No. wind farms (including extension), 90 No. turbines total
- Croaghgorm / Bluestack Mountains to the west of the Wind Farm Site – 3 No. wind farms (including extension), 1 no. singular turbine; 15 No. turbines total

Croaghnameal Uplands to the South-West

A grouping of 5 No. wind farms is located within the Croaghnameal Uplands to the south-west of the Prospective Development. The closest of these are Barnesmore Wind Farm turbines. Given their proximity to the proposed turbines the likely cumulative landscape effects of the Barnesmore turbines are discussed separately below specifically in relation to the Barnesmore Gap. Excepting the Barnesmore developments, the proposed turbines are well set back from the various wind farms in the Croaghnameal Uplands separated by many substantial ridgelines which mitigate potential for cumulative effects on landscape character with the Prospective Development. Particularly, as the proposed turbines have limited theoretical visibility from the Croaghnameal Uplands and mostly no theoretical visibility from surrounding visual receptors in the lower valleys where experience of cumulative change to landscape character is very limited.

Barnesmore Gap

The proposed turbines, proposed Meenakeeran turbines, and Barnesmore Wind Farm turbines (both existing and permitted) are located to the east of Barnesmore Gap, separated by a ridgeline that runs south-east from Croaghonagh, which forms the eastern enclosing landform of Barnesmore Gap.

The proposed turbines are set back and physically separated from the Meenakeeran Wind Farm by undulating landforms and intervening forestry (Killeter forest). The Barnesmore Wind Farm is similarly physically separated from the proposed turbines by a series of undulating landforms and well-defined ridgelines on the southern side of the hill where the proposed turbines are located. The Barnesmore Wind Farm, and proposed Meenakeeran turbines are well set back from the Gap, and like the proposed turbines, are screened from view within the Gap and are visually separated from it when looking at it from most sensitive perspectives and orientations.

The proposed turbines and these other cumulative wind energy developments have greatest cumulative effects on landscape character when perceived from the north-east (Viewpoint 8), where the proposed turbines and Barnesmore turbines are seen within the same field of view as the proposed turbines, as a single collective cluster of turbines on the marginal uplands, with Meenakeeran Wind Farm visible to the far left. This perspective, as shown in Viewpoint 8, does not show the defining and distinctive qualities of Barnesmore Gap – which is the two landforms standing either side of the steep and narrow valley, known as ‘the Gap’.

The proposed turbines and Barnesmore Wind Farm (and proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm) turbines cumulatively effect the marginal landscape to the east of Barnesmore Gap but do not significantly impact the setting, characteristics, key qualities and scenic sensitivities of Barnesmore Gap. The wider landscape nearby Barnesmore Gap is of large scale, comprising marginal upland and a sparse settlement pattern. This large-scale, expansive landscape is effectively capable of accommodating the proposed turbines in combination with other wind energy developments.

Cark Mountains to the North

A large collection of wind farms are located within the Cark Mountain uplands to the north of the Finn River and Ballybofey/Stranorlar. This cluster of wind farms forms part of the wider cumulative wind energy context as experienced from locations across the LVIA Study Area and is located approx. 13km north of the Prospective Development at its closest point.

The proposed turbines may be experienced with these other windfarms from locations between the Wind Farm Site and the lands north of Balleynofey, whether in succession (where the proposed turbines and cumulative wind farms are experienced in opposing directions) or in combination - the proposed turbines would become a noticeable component of the distant landscape and would therefore contribute to cumulative perceptual change in overall landscape character but do not cumulatively effect the character of the Cark Mountains themselves.

West Tyrone Uplands to the South-East

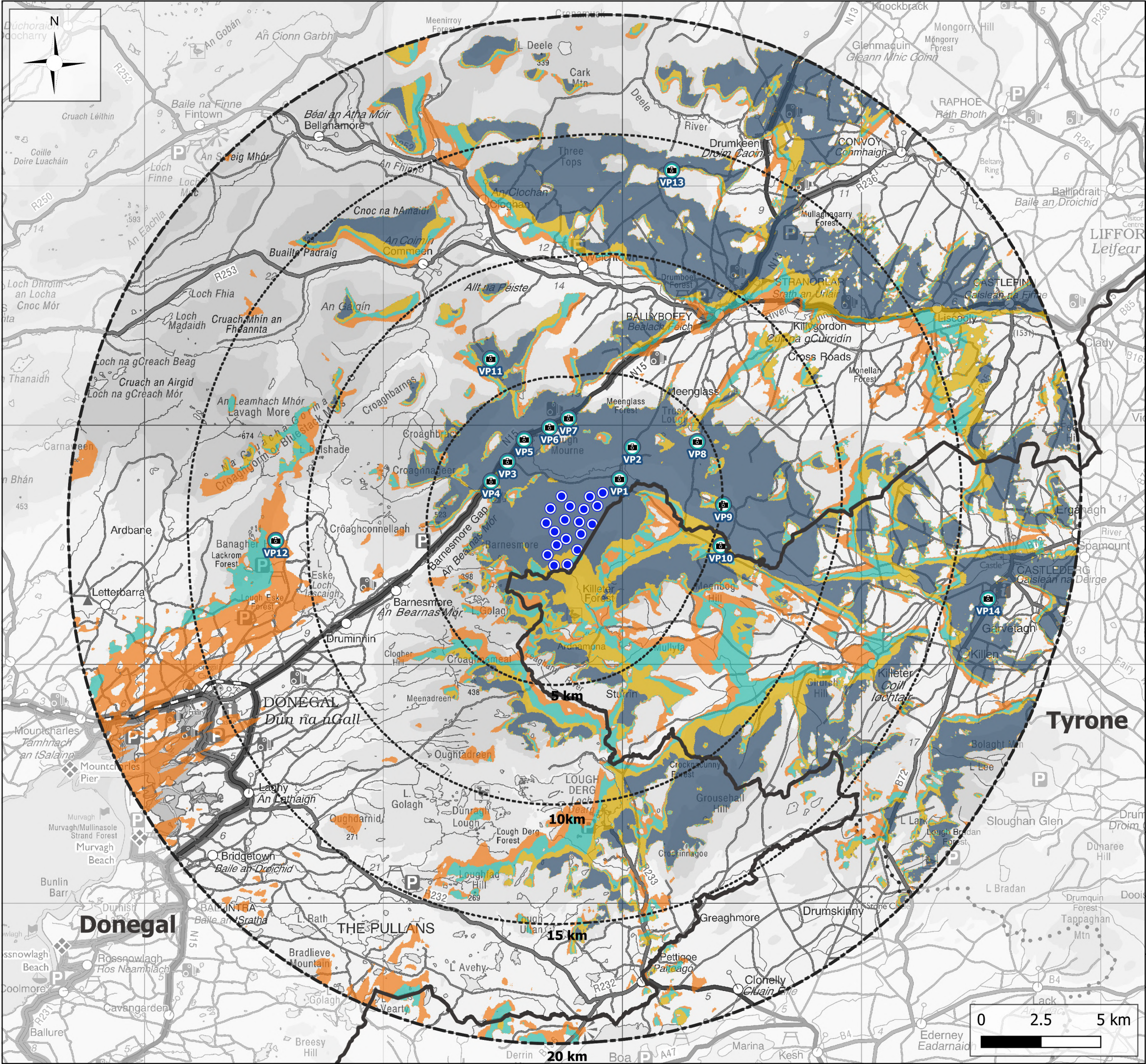
Further east from the proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm, a collection of wind farms is located within the uplands to the far east, south of River Derg. This cluster of wind farms form part of the wider cumulative wind energy context, physically separated by undulating landforms and ridgelines. The proposed turbines are likely to be seen in succession or in combination with these other wind farms from occasional remote elevated vantage point and contribute to cumulative landscape effects on overall change in landscape character but do not cumulatively affect the character of the West Tyrone Uplands themselves. Any potential cumulative effects on landscape character with these other windfarms to the south-east is likely to be very intermittent and only perceived from very isolated locations as a result of the elevated topography which encloses the proposed turbines to the east and the nature of the undulating landscape in this direction.

13.7.3.2 Visual Effects (Operational Phase)

13.7.3.2.1 Selection of Photomontage Viewpoints

Photomontages were used to assess the visual effects arising as a result of the proposed turbines from 14 No. viewpoint locations, which are presented in EIAR Volume 2: Photomontage Booklet. These 14 No. viewpoint locations are on the A0 Map in Appendix 13-3: *A0 LVIA Baseline Map* and on Figure 13-16 below. The locations chosen for photomontages follow a detailed and extensive process including review of baseline information, as well as the 2017 EIAR of the Permitted Development, site visits and high-quality photo taking at multiple locations within the LVIA Study Area.

Review of the 2017 EIAR of the Permitted Development, as well as multiple on-site surveys and visibility appraisals conducted throughout the years 2024 and 2025 determined that visibility of the proposed turbines is greatest from the locations in close proximity to the Wind Farm Site due to the characteristics of the surrounding landscape. Due to this, viewpoint selection was particularly focused on locations proximate to the proposed turbines. In this regard, it is important to note that the visual impact of the proposed turbines shown in the photomontages selected for the EIAR Volume 2: Photomontage Booklet is not entirely representative of visual effects in the wider landscape of the 20km LVIA Study Area, where in reality very little visibility occurs.



Map Legend

- LVIA Study Area
- ▭ NI-ROI Border
- Proposed Turbine Locations
- 📷 Photomontage Viewpoints

Half-Blade Zone of Theoretical Visibility

- 1-5 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 6-10 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 11-15 Turbines Theoretically Visible
- 16-19 Turbines Theoretically Visible

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Drawing No.

Figure 13-16

Photomontage Viewpoints with ZTV

Project Title

Meenbog Wind Farm

Scale	Project No.	Date	Drawn By	Checked By
1:155,000	240505	20/02/2026	GL	JW



Planning and Environmental Consultants

13.7.3.2.2 **Photomontage Viewpoint Assessment Outcomes**

Visual effects were assessed using the assessment methodology described in Appendix 13-1. Each viewpoint location is shown in Figure 13-16 above. The individual, comprehensive, and detailed assessment from the 14 No. viewpoints are presented in Appendix 13-2: *Visual Impact Assessment of Viewpoints* and summarised in Table 13-5 below. Appendix 13-2 should be read in conjunction with the photomontage booklet forming Volume 2 of the EIAR.

The visual effect of the proposed turbines was assessed from each viewpoint in terms of the sensitivity of the visual receptors, along with the magnitude of change, as recommended in GLVIA3. This, in conjunction with a detailed review of the photomontages, themselves, as well as the likely visibility of the proposed turbines within the LVIA Study Area, informed the assessment of visual effects.

Visualisations such as photomontages are tools that can represent the likely effect of a development and are used to inform the reader's prediction of how that development will appear in the landscape. In terms of the predicted visual quality of the proposed turbines, however, whether a visual effect is deemed to be positive, negative, or neutral, this involves a degree of subjectivity. What appears to be a positive effect to one viewer could be deemed to be a negative effect by another viewer. All predicted visual effects of the viewpoints below are Long-Term and Direct effect.

Table 13-5 Summary of Viewpoint Impact Assessment Results

No.	Description	Grid Ref.	Sensitivity of Receptor(s) (at Viewpoint)	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Residual Visual Effect
VP01	View from the L-6554 Local Road in the townland of Meenbog. Located approximately 910m north-east of the nearest proposed turbine (T19).	E: 609,819 N: 887,793	High	Moderate	Moderate
VP02	View from the L-3014 Local Road in the townland of Taughboy. Located approximately 2.2km north-east of the nearest proposed turbine (T19). This viewpoint is located on the North West Cycle Trail.	E: 610,361 N: 889,126	Medium	Slight	Slight
VP03	View from the N15 National Road in the townland of Croghanagh. Located approximately 2.6km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T14).	E: 605,136 N: 888,519	Medium	Moderate	Moderate
VP04	View from the N15 National Road in the townland of Croghanagh. Located approximately 2.7km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T18).	E: 604,449 N: 887,695	Medium	Negligible	Imperceptible
VP05	View from the N15 National Road in the townland of Cashelnavean. Located approximately 2.8km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T18).	E: 605,834 N: 889,444	Medium	Moderate	Moderate
VP06	View from the N15 National Road in the townland of Cashelnavean. Located approximately 2.9km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T18).	E: 606,899 N: 889,950	High	Slight	Slight

No.	Description	Grid Ref.	Sensitivity of Receptor(s) (at Viewpoint)	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Residual Visual Effect
VP07	View from the N15 National Road in the townland of Meenacrumlin. Located approximately 3.2km north of the nearest proposed turbine (T18). This viewpoint is from a Designated Protected View.	E: 607,690 N: 890,330	High	Negligible	Imperceptible
VP08	View from the L-2974 Local Road in the townland of Kinletter. Located approximately 4.5km north-east of the nearest proposed turbine (T19).	E: 613,081 N: 889,353	Medium	Moderate	Slight
VP09	View from the L-6524 Local Road in the townland of Meenreagh. Located approximately 5km east of the nearest proposed turbine (T19).	E: 614,168 N: 886,718	Medium	Slight	Slight
VP10	View from the L-2984 Local Road in the townland of Meenablagh, County Tyrone. Located approximately 5.5km east of the nearest proposed turbine (T09).	E: 614,058 N: 884,993	Low	Negligible	Imperceptible
VP11	View from the L7013 in the townland of Altnapaste. Located approximately 6.4km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T18). This viewpoint is located on the Alt na Peist Walking Trail.	E: 604,433 N: 892,815	High	Slight	Slight
VP12	View from the L-6335 Local Road in the townland of Greenan. Located approximately 11.3km west of the nearest proposed turbine (T10). This viewpoint is located on the Bluestack Way Walking Trail.	E: 595,441 N: 885,216	High	Negligible	Imperceptible
VP13	View from the L-2744 Local Road in the townland of Magheravall. Located approximately 13.8km north of the nearest proposed turbine (T19).	E: 612,008 N: 900,712	Low	Slight	Not Significant

No.	Description	Grid Ref.	Sensitivity of Receptor(s) (at Viewpoint)	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Residual Visual Effect
VP14	View from the B72 Class B Road in the townland of Castlegore, County Tyrone. Located approximately 16.8km east of the nearest proposed turbine (T09).	E: 625,248 N: 882,788	Low	Slight	Not Significant

The significance of the residual visual effect was not considered to be Profound, Very Significant or Significant, at any of the 14 viewpoint locations. The residual effects were found to be Moderate (3), Slight (4), Not Significant (3) and Imperceptible (4).

The viewpoint assessment results (see Appendix 13-2) will be summarised and discussed in more detail in the following sections.

13.7.3.2.3 Discussion of Visibility and Visual Effects of Specific Receptors in the LVIA Study Area

The following section discusses the visual effects arising at key sensitive visual receptors within the zone of theoretical visibility and scoped in for assessment previously in Section 13.5 – Visual Baseline.

Designated Protected View – Views South-West to the Barnesmore Gap from N15 North / Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway

Section 13.4.1.1.2 identifies ‘Views South-West to the Barnesmore Gap from N15 North’ as a protected view from Map 11.1 of the DCDP. Protected views are illustrated by a blue directional arrow in Map 11.1 of the DCDP which shows both the origin of the protected view and the direction or line of sight which is protected; these blue arrows are shown in Figure 13-4 previously. The origin of this protected view is located approximately 3.2km north from the nearest proposed turbine (Viewpoint 8). Map 11.1 of the DCDP and Figure 13-4 clearly show the protected views are directed south-west across Lough Mourne towards the Barnesmore Gap from the N15 National Road. Excepting the arrows in Map 11.1, the DCDP does not explicitly define the area of focus for the protected view. The object of the protected views is clearly the Barnesmore Gap considering the direction of the arrows and the dramatic landforms which create this distinctive and dramatic landscape feature, and which is a focal point of all the views on the N15 National Road. This assertion is clearly supported by the planning history of the Permitted Development and was also confirmed during recent site visits and assessments for this LVIA.

Figure 13-17 below shows the field of view towards the Barnesmore Gap from the N15 National Road marked by the white field of view. The field of view shows the line of sight towards the peaks of the two distinct landforms defining the Barnesmore Gap. Figure 13-17 also shows the location of 5 No. photomontage viewpoints, which have been captured on the N15 National Road (the Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway) and the directional field of view towards the proposed turbines. Figure 13-17 demonstrates that the proposed turbines are located within a differing line of sight and in the far periphery of any views in the direction of the Barnesmore Gap, a factor considered throughout this impact assessment. The photomontages show that visibility of the proposed turbines is very limited at the northern stretch of N15 National Road (the Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway) - Viewpoint 8, then where greatest visibility occurs from the N15 National Road (the Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway) - e.g., Viewpoint 5, the views are very much perpendicular to the road and the direction of travel of visual receptors. The angle of view towards the proposed turbines from each viewpoint is considered in the following discussion of visual effects from the N15 National Road (the Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway), as illustrated by Figure 13-17 below.

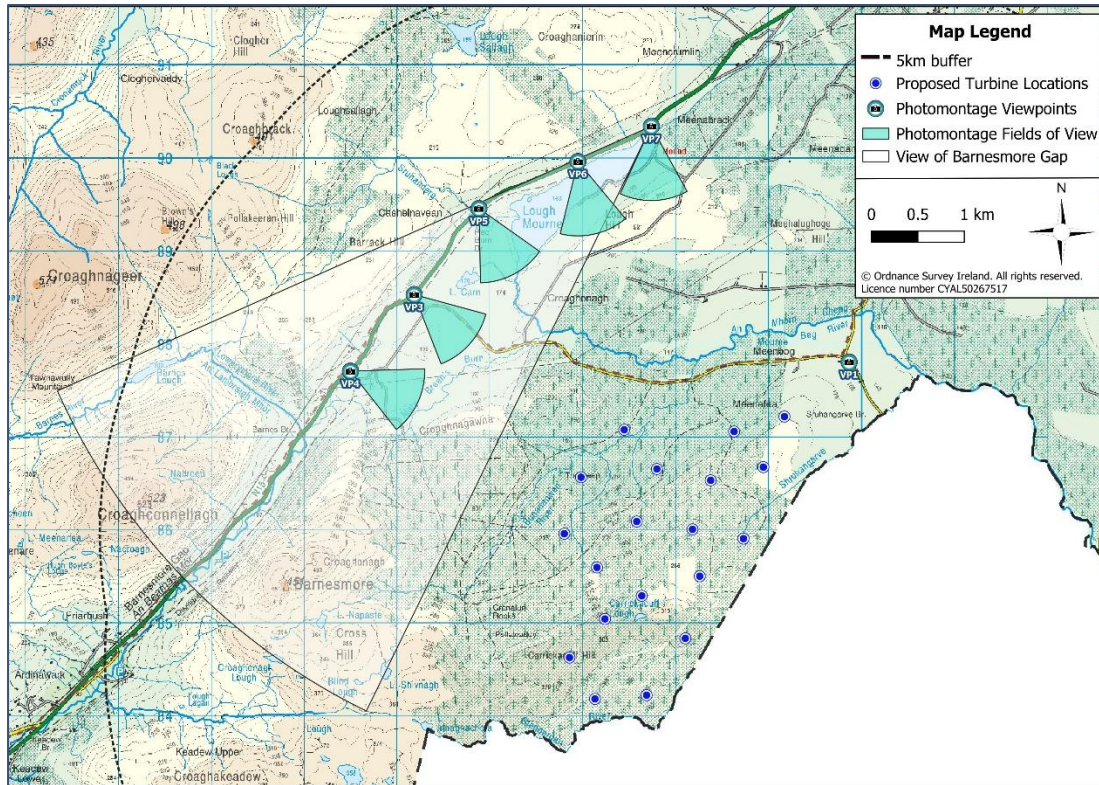


Figure 13-17 Directional Fields of View towards both the Barnesmore Gap and the proposed turbines from the N15 National Road and Donegal Protected View.

There is no specific viewing area on the N15 National Road, therefore, the visual receptors include motorised traffic travelling the route. Given the protected view and the EHSA designation of this area, visual receptors are considered to be of 'High' sensitivity. Visual effects are likely to be greatest for receptors travelling south bound on the N15 National Road / Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway. Visual effects for receptors north bound are expected to be very limited.

The following subsections assess the journey scenario for receptors travelling in a south-west direction, as well as receptors travelling north bound, in order to consider visibility and visual effects in both scenarios.

South-Bound Receptors (Travelling North to South)

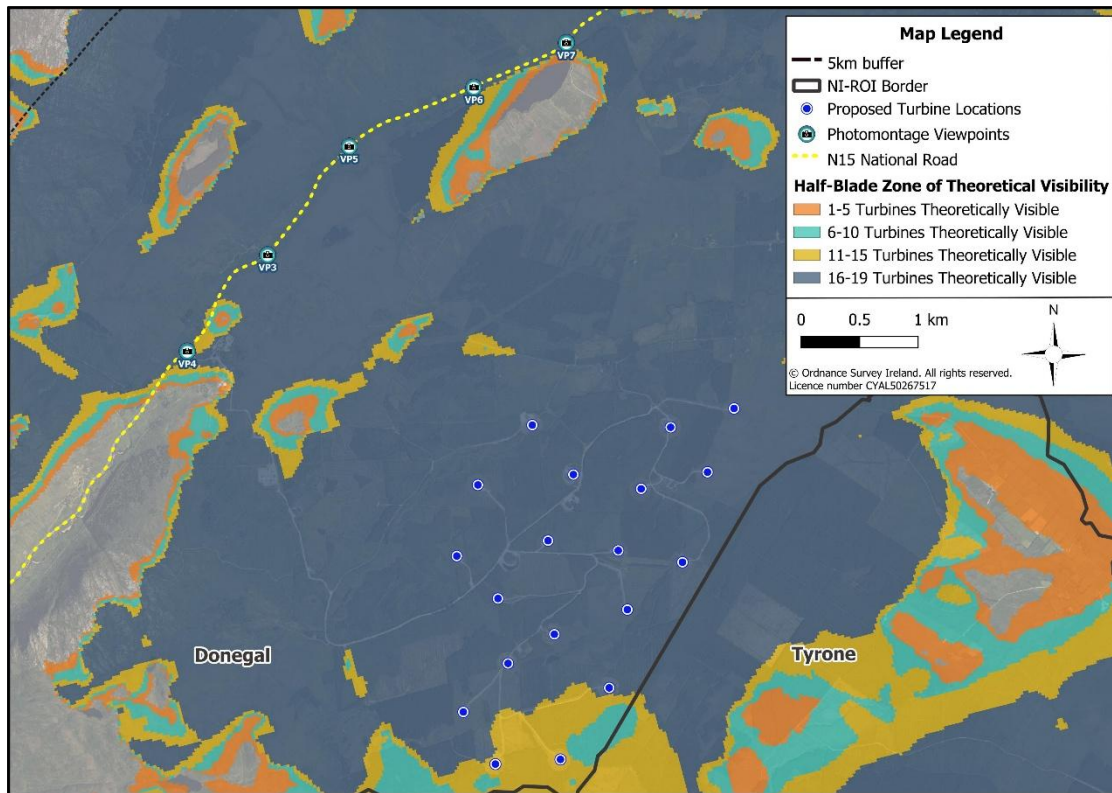


Figure 13-18 Photomontage Viewpoints on the N15 National Road directed towards the proposed turbines

Viewpoint 07 was captured to represent the origin of the protected view in the DCDP. It shows view towards the Barnesmore Gap from the north overlooking Lough Mourne. As discussed in Appendix 13-2, from this location, the turbines would be largely screened by intervening landform and seen in the context of the infrastructure around Lough Mourne. A residual visual effect of 'Imperceptible' was deemed to arise at this viewpoint, where only blades of the proposed turbines would be partially visible beyond the ridgeline.

It is also noted that Inspector's Report for the 2017 EIAR of the Permitted Development, in relation for the exact viewpoint states:

"Although some of the blade tips would be visible from this location, the impact on visual amenity would not be significant and the Protected View would not be adversely affected."

As reiterated throughout this chapter, the proposed turbines of the Prospective Development follow the same siting and overall height as the turbines of the 2017 EIAR for the Permitted Development. As such, it is reiterated that significant visual effects will not arise at this protected view and that the visual effects are deemed to be acceptable.

The opportunity for unrestricted views in both directions to the Barnesmore Gap and towards the proposed turbines would only be possible from locations further south-west of VP07 and the origin of the protected view as a receptor travels along the N15 National Road / Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway. VP06 and VP05 are representative of views towards the proposed turbines as experienced further south-west along the N15 National Road / Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway, where the most open views in the direction of the proposed turbines occur. Residual visual effects as outlined in Appendix 13-2 were deemed to be 'Slight' and 'Moderate,' respectively. The proposed turbines do not encroach into the protected view towards the Barnesmore Gap as shown by these photomontage viewpoints, as there is considerable angle or distance of separation. The dramatic views towards the Barnesmore Gap would remain unchanged. The proposed turbines would be seen in an opposing field of view to the direction of the protected view and would therefore be seen in the far periphery of the views protected by policy.

As illustrated by VP05, as well as VP03 located further south-west, in views to the south-east, the layout achieves a balanced composition of well-spaced turbines. There would be limited potential for overlapping blades to be seen and the array would appear legible and would not add excessive visual clutter into the view. The separation between the turbines and the protected view and the simple legible layout would allow the turbines to be present without detracting from the views towards the Gap. As detailed in Appendix 13-2, residual visual effects at VP03 are deemed to be 'Moderate'.

It is also noted that Inspector's Report for the 2017 EIAR of the Permitted Development, in relation to these exact viewpoint states:

"none of the views are protected... there would be no significant adverse impacts on the view of Barnesmore Gap"

It is also important to recognise that whilst the protected view as per the DCDP is shown as a fixed point, there is no formal viewpoint on the side of the N15 National Road for visual receptors to stop and appreciate the view towards the Barnesmore Gap. The view is experienced primarily from vehicles as road users travel along the N15 in a south-westerly direction. This section of the N15 National Road is maximum speed limit zone (100km/h). When travelling anything close to this speed the view would be fleeting and of short duration and often be partially screened by roadside vegetation as the road winds along its route.

As the road user travels further south-west towards the Barnesmore Gap, the Gap itself would increase in prominence, and the proposed turbines would move further out of the peripheral vision to being perpendicular to the direction of travel until it would be behind the direction of travel (in the opposing direction to the peaks of Barnesmore Gap).

Furthermore, the Prospective Development is line with DCDP **Policy LP-6**, and **Policy LP-7**, as the proposed turbines are located perpendicular to the line of sight and the principle field of view associated with the protected view.

Overall, the Inspector's Report for the 2017 EIAR for the Permitted Development concludes that:

"the various views of turbines from along the N15 when travelling SW towards Barnesmore Gap are considered acceptable as they would not interfere with the character and setting of the Gap to any significant extent, and they would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the wider area"

On balance, residual visual effects at the protected view are deemed to be 'Imperceptible', while residual visual effects along the Barnesmore Gap range from 'Imperceptible' to 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

North-Bound Receptors (Travelling South to North)

For visual receptors travelling in a north-bound direction, there is no visibility of the proposed turbines along a substantial stretch of the N15 National Road / Proposed Barnesmore Gap Greenway when travelling in a north-easterly direction, as illustrated by the ZTV Figure 13-13. Visibility first occurs at VP04, where the proposed turbines would be partially visible beyond the intervening ridgeline and experienced only briefly as the receptor travels along the route. As set out in Appendix 13-2, the residual visual effect at VP04 was deemed to be 'Imperceptible'.

Beyond VP04, at VP03 (where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Moderate,' as outlined in the subsection above), the proposed turbines would be perceived in the rear periphery of views and would not form part of the primary field of view in the direction of travel.

Overall, as a visual receptor travels along the Barnesmore Gap in a south-north direction, residual visual effects range from 'Imperceptible' to 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Designated Protected View – Lough Derg Station Island

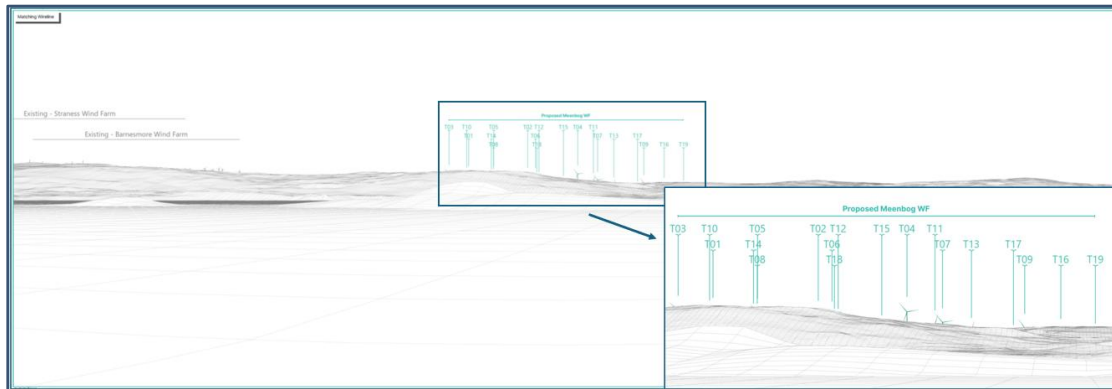


Figure 13-19 Indicative Wireline View from Lough Derg Station Island – for Visual Context Only

A wireline view was prepared from Lough Derg Station Island to provide visual context and determine the potential visibility of the proposed turbines. As illustrated in Figure 13-19, only turbine T04 and the blades of turbines T07 and T09 would be discernible beyond the distant ridgeline in the distant background. Visibility would be further restricted by intervening vegetation, resulting in a very limited visibility from this location. Overall, residual visual effects are deemed to be ‘Long-Term’, ‘Negative’ and ‘Not Significant’. On balance, these effects are not considered significant. The Prospective Development is line with DCDP **Policy LP-8**, as the proposed turbines will not result in significant visual effects from this location.

Settlements

Co. Donegal – Ballybofey/Stranolar, Killygordon and Castlefin

The settlements of Ballybofey/Stranolar, Killygordon and Castlefin are all located along the base of the Finn Valley in Co. Donegal. As illustrated by the ZTV map in Figure 13-13, theoretical visibility towards the proposed turbines will be very limited. On-site appraisals have determined that visibility will be further restricted by tree cover across the landscape. Overall, visual effects arising at these settlements is deemed to be ‘Long-Term’, ‘Negative’ and ‘Imperceptible’. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Co. Tyrone - Castlederg and Killen

The settlements of Castlederg and Killen are located beyond 15km to the east of the proposed turbines. At this distance, as seen in VP14, views would again be largely restricted by landform and vegetation, with only limited visibility possible. The turbines would be seen over 15km west as very minor components of the view. As discussed in Appendix 13-2, residual visual effects at VP14 were deemed to be ‘Not Significant’. Overall, residual visual effects arising at these settlements is deemed to be ‘Long-Term’, ‘Negative’ and ‘Not Significant’. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Recreational Routes

Northwest Cycle Trail

The Northwest Trail is a long-distance cycle trail that passes through the Barnesmore Gap to the west of the Wind Farm Site, through Ballybofey/Stranolar, where it exists the LVIA Study Area travelling towards Strabane, past Castlederg to the south-east, and re-enters the LVIA Study Area to the south-west.

Travelling in a north-east direction, the proposed turbines would first be visible as the receptor passes through the Barnesmore Gap on the N15 National Road as illustrated by the ZTV Map as seen in Figure 13-13. The proposed turbines would initially appear partially screened by foreground established tree cover as seen in VP04 and would have a limited impact upon views along this short stretch of the route due to the short duration

for which they'd be visible. As discussed in Appendix 13-2, residual visual effects arising at VP04 are deemed to be 'Imperceptible'.

The route then turns off the N15 National Road south-east towards the turbines. VP03 was captured to represent views at this location, where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Moderate'. The turbines would briefly be seen clearly in open views before the views are restricted as the route passes through forestry and then turns north towards Ballybofey/Stranorlar. Whilst, when visible, the turbines would result in up to a large scale of change, the duration and extent of the route over which this change would be experienced would be very limited. Once the route turns north towards Ballybofey/Stranorlar the turbines would be behind the direction of travel so no further effects would occur.

Travelling south-westerly direction, the proposed turbines would first come into view approximately 3km north-east of the Wind Farm Site. They would be seen in the context of commercial forestry as seen in VP02, where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Slight'. They would increase in prominence as the route approaches and passes the array, as seen in VP01. The scale of change would increase to large, however the extent of the route over which such change would be experienced would be very short. As detailed in Appendix 13-2, residual visual effects at VP01 were deemed to be 'Moderate'.

Overall, visual effects on the Northwest Cycle Trail range from 'Imperceptible' to 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Trusk Lough Walkway

The Trusk Lough Walkway is a short circular walk around Trusk Lough, located approx. 4km north-east of the nearest proposed turbine (T19). From this walkway, the proposed turbines would appear as a legible and simple composition in the distance, similar to views represented in VP08, where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Slight'. The turbines would be visible, perceived in the context of the simple upland landscape. Overall, visual effects on the Trusk Lough Walkway are deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Alt na Peist (Altnapaste) Walk

The Alt na Peist Walking Trail is a hill walk up Altnapaste, located approx. 6.3km north-west of the nearest proposed turbine (T18). From this walk, the proposed turbines would appear as small elements relative to the landscape in the distant background of the view, similar to views represented in VP11 where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Slight'. The turbines would be visible, perceived in the context of an open, large-scale landscape. Overall, visual effects on the Alt na Peist Walk are deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Slight'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

Bluestack Way

The Bluestack Way is a long-distance walking trail through the Bluestack Mountains. At its closest point, the Bluestack Way is located approx. 10km west of the nearest proposed turbine (T03). There are only very limited instances where there is potential for theoretical visibility along this walking route. Where visibility does occur, primarily at mountain peaks, the proposed turbines would appear as very minor elements relative to the landscape in the distant background, or be entirely visually screened by topography, similar to views represented in VP12 where residual visual effects were deemed to be 'Imperceptible'. The turbines would largely not be visible, and, where seen, will be perceived in the context of a large-scale, open upland landscape. Overall, visual effects on the Bluestack Way are deemed to be 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Imperceptible'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3.2.4 Residential Receptors

This section of the LVIA firstly states how design measures have been used to mitigate the potential for significant visual effects on residential receptors, then gives an overview of the residential context in terms of population density in the surrounding area and the geographic arrangement of residential receptors in close

proximity to the Wind Farm Site. Finally, a visual impact assessment of each cluster of residences is reported, these assessments use analysis of aerial maps, photomontages with the intention of identifying the worst-case scenario for potential visual effects on these residential receptors in close proximity to the Wind Farm Site.

The design of the Wind Farm Site has been informed by industry best practice set-back distances, with regard to the siting of the proposed turbines relative to residential receptors, including the following measures:

- All proposed turbines exceed the mandatory 500m set-back distance from residential receptors set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006).
- All proposed turbines exceed the recommended 4-times-tip-height set-back distance from third-party receptors for residential visual amenity as prescribed by the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019).

Residential Context: Population Density and Arrangement of Dwellings

As previously reported in the landscape baseline (See previous Section 13.4), the Wind Farm Site is located within a remote, marginal upland landscape. The surrounding area, where the proposed turbines are visible, is a very sparsely populated landscape. It is not a densely populated area, with residential receptors primarily located outside 5km from the proposed turbines.

The Residential Visual Amenity Map (See Figure 13-20 below) illustrates how the proposed turbines are set-back from residential receptors in the surrounding landscape with respect to distances compliant with guidance in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019). There are only 20 residential receptors located within 3 km of the proposed turbines. Of these, 4 No. are involved landowners, and 2 No. are derelict houses. The closest residential receptor is located approximately 752m from the nearest proposed turbine (T17) i.e. greater than the minimum recommended setback as identified in the DoEHLG (2019) of 4 x maximum tip height ($156.5 \times 4 = 626\text{m}$).

Assessment of Residential Amenity – Photomontages

Photomontages are just one of the tools employed during the LVIA that was conducted to inform the assessment of landscape and visual effects. The visual impact assessment is strongly informed by site visits and the reading of the landscape on the ground. It would be a disproportionate measure to include an individual photomontage from every residential receptor, and this is not required to conduct a thorough and robust assessment of landscape and visual effects. In line with the guidance laid out in GLVIA3, the viewpoints selected for the LVIA conducted were informed by a range of factors including the *“ZTV analysis, by fieldwork, and by desk research”* (para 6.18, GLVIA3). Furthermore, GLVIA3 states that representative viewpoints are *“selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, where larger numbers of viewpoints cannot all be included individually and where the significant effects are unlikely to differ”* (para 6.19 GLVIA3). The viewpoints used in the conduct of the LVIA particularly in very close proximity to the proposed turbines are sufficient to represent the residential receptors within the LVIA Study Area, including the *“distribution of population”* (para 6.18, GLVIA3).

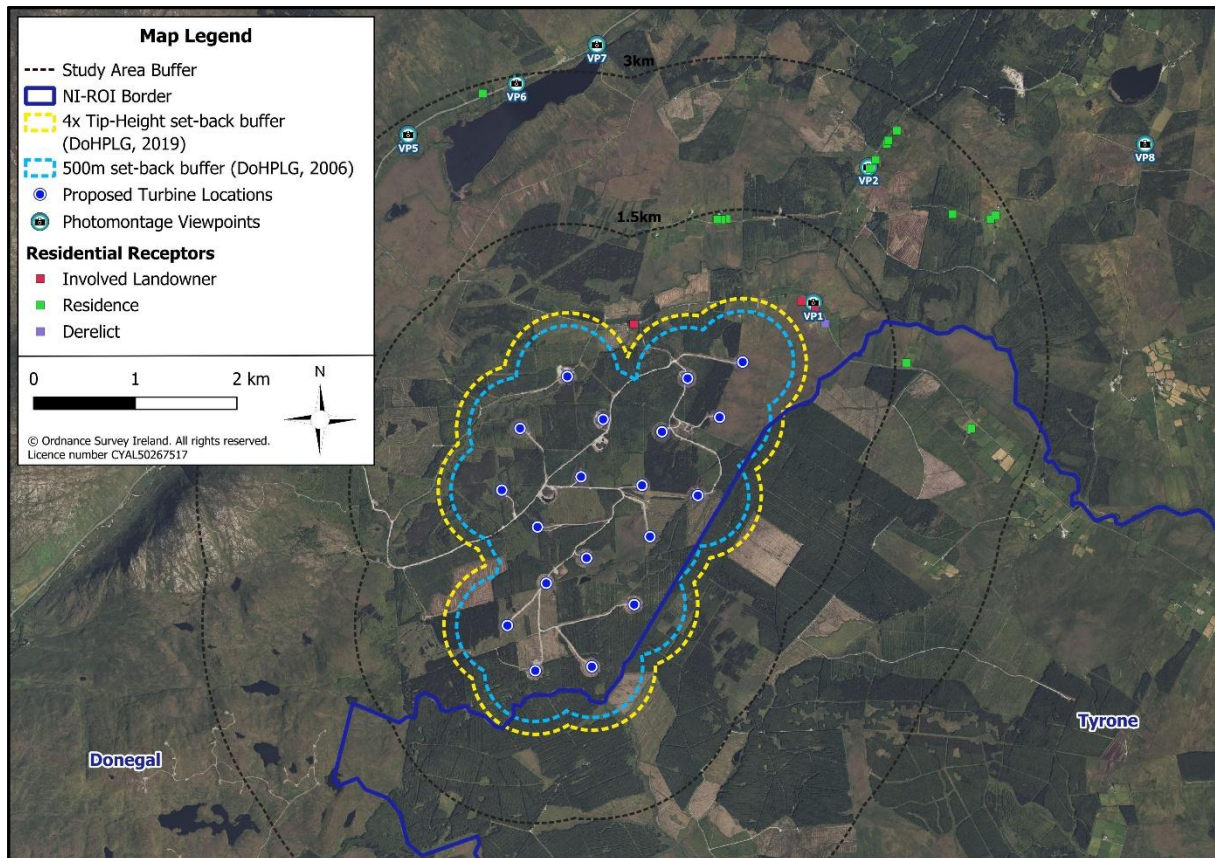


Figure 13-20 Residential Receptors

Assessment of Residential Receptors

As discussed previously, the Wind Farm Site is located within a remote, marginal upland landscape. The surrounding area is very sparsely populated. As shown in Figure 13-20 above, all residential receptors within 3km of the proposed turbines are confined to the northern extent of the Wind Farm Site. No other residential receptors are located elsewhere within this 3km buffer.

Within 1.5km, visibility towards the proposed turbines from residential dwellings would be limited to varying levels of screening from forestry or tree cover. Furthermore, the closest dwellings are also orientated away from the Wind Farm Site, so that primary views from the dwellings would be orientated away from the proposed turbines. VP01 is located approx. 921m north-east of the nearest proposed turbine and is representative of the residential receptors in closest proximity to the Wind Farm Site (>1.5km). In relation to these receptors, the Wind Farm Site exceeds the mandatory 500m set-back distance from residential receptors set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and the recommended 4-times-tip-height set-back distance from third-party receptors for residential visual amenity as prescribed by the Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019). The sensitivity of this viewpoint was deemed to be 'High' on account of the residential receptors near the proposed turbines, and the magnitude of change was deemed to be 'Moderate'. A residual visual effect of 'Moderate' was deemed to arise in relation to the receptors located adjacent to the viewpoint, which comprise very few residential receptors. It is also noted that whilst the proposed turbines do constitute a 'Moderate' magnitude of change, they do not comprise a large horizontal extent of views (approx. 43° of 360°, equating to 12% of the horizontal field of view).

Beyond 1.5km, visibility reduces with distance, as well as due to visual screening provided by intervening landform and tree cover surrounding individual dwellings and across the wider landscape. Where visibility does occur, the proposed turbines would be seen within an expansive upland landscape, predominantly characterised by commercial forestry. VP02 is located approx. 2.3km north-east of the nearest proposed turbine and is representative of the residential receptors at this distance. VP02 was assigned 'Medium' sensitivity. The proposed turbines, whilst visible, are largely screened by the tract of commercial forestry and are set-back from

the viewpoint. As discussed in Appendix 13-2, residual visual effects at this viewpoint were deemed to be 'Slight'. In a general sense, where visibility does occur at distances beyond 1.5km, the proposed turbines would be perceived in the context of an expansive upland landscape and extensive commercial forestry, such that their scale would accord with the expansive, large-scale character of the receiving landscape.

Overall, effects on residential receptors ranges from 'Imperceptible' to 'Moderate'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3.2.5 **Proposed BMEP Site – Landscape and Visual Effects**

Section 13.4.2 describes the character of the BMEP Site. As reported in Section 13.4.2, these lands are highly influenced and modified by past and existing forestry land use, and therefore the landscape sensitivity of the BMEP Site is 'Low'. The character of the BMEP Site will be altered by the removal of commercial forestry and the establishment of a mosaic of open heathland and patchy scrub vegetation. The magnitude of change is deemed to be 'Slight' and highly localised. Once the clearing of forestry has been implemented, landscape effects on the BMEP Site will be Positive, Long-Term and 'Not Significant'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

The local road network, and a cluster of residential dwellings are located adjacent to the BMEP Site. These residential receptors are of 'High' sensitivity. The visual changes to the landscape include changes to landcover arising from deforestation of forestry. An overall 'Negligible' magnitude of change is deemed to arise for these receptors. The overall residual visual effects arising from the proposed measures within the BMEP Site are deemed to be Positive, Long-Term and 'Not Significant'. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.3.2.6 **Cumulative Visual Effects**

As discussed previously, within the LVIA Study Area (20km radius), there 30 no. existing wind farms, 4 no. permitted wind farms, and 5 no. proposed wind farms, which are listed in Table 13-4 previously.

The discussion of cumulative visual effects in this section uses the term

- **'In combination'** where the proposed turbines will be seen with other turbines from a particular vantage point representing visual receptors.
- **In combination 'simultaneous'** visual effects occur where the proposed turbines are seen with other cumulative turbines within the same or similar field of view.
- **In combination 'successional'** visual effects occur where the proposed turbines are seen with other turbines from the same viewpoint but in an alternative field of view where the receptor will need to turn to face a different direction to experience cumulative effects.

The below subsections discuss the cumulative visual effects that occur with other wind energy developments for the most sensitive views and receptors identified in this LVIA.

Visual Receptors approaching Barnesmore Gap from the North on the N15 National Road – Journey Scenario

In a journey scenario, visual receptors at the protected view at N15 National Road, commuters along the N15, and receptors along the North West Cycling Trail, may experience views of the Barnesmore Wind Farm (both existing and permitted), and the proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm in combination with the proposed turbines. The cumulative interactions are illustrated in the photomontages, and discussed in Appendix 13-2, with a summary provided below:

- **VP07 Meenacrumlin** – Visual receptors at the protected view, and the receptors travelling along the N15 National Road, would experience in combination simultaneous cumulative visual effects, as the Barnesmore Wind Farm (both existing and permitted) would be visible in the distant background, to

the right of the proposed, appearing as a standalone unit, separate to the proposed turbines. There is visual separation between the proposed turbines and the Barnesmore Wind Farm.

- **VP06 Cashelnavean East** – Receptors travelling along the N15 National Road, would experience in combination simultaneous cumulative visual effects, as the Barnesmore Wind Farm (both existing and permitted) are visible beyond the ridgeline, to the right-hand side of the proposed turbines. There is visual separation between the proposed turbines and the Barnesmore Wind Farm.
- **VP05 Cashelnavean West** – Receptors travelling along the N15 National Road, would experience in combination visual effects with the proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm in an uncertain future receiving environment. Visual receptors would also experience in combination simultaneous cumulative visual effects as the Barnesmore Wind Farm (both existing and permitted) would be visible in the distant background, beyond a distant ridgeline, to the right of the proposed turbines. There is visual separation between the proposed turbines and the Barnesmore Wind Farm (both existing and permitted).
- **VP03 Croaghonagh North** – Receptors travelling along the N15 National Road, would experience in combination simultaneous cumulative visual effects as the blades of the Proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm would be seen in the same line of sight as the proposed turbines in an uncertain future-receiving environment. The existing Barnesmore Wind Farm and the permitted Barnesmore Repowering turbines are not visible in the photomontage. However, they would be visible beyond the distant ridgeline to the far right from this viewpoint (beyond the 90° field of view). In combination successional visual effects would occur where the Barnesmore turbines would be visible with the proposed turbines but within a different field of view.
- **VP04 Croaghonagh South** – No other wind energy developments are visible from this viewpoint, therefore, no cumulative visual effects will occur.

In a general sense, cumulative visual effects will occur for visual receptors on approach to Barnesmore Gap from the north, where the proposed turbines would be seen in combination with the Barnesmore Wind Farm and the proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm in sequential views along the N15 National Road (i.e. cumulative visual effects occur at are visible at VP07, VP06, VP05, and VP03, whilst no cumulative visual effects occur at VP04 on closer approach to the Gap). From these locations, the proposed turbines, the proposed Meenakeeran Wind Farm, and the Barnesmore Wind Farm are in the very periphery of the views and do not impact the key scenic sensitivities, which are the views of Barnesmore Gap itself.

Overview of Cumulative Visual Effects with Barnesmore Wind Farm; Existing and permitted Repowering Scenarios

Excepting views from the N15 National Road, there are other occasional instances within 5km of the proposed turbines where cumulative visual effects, as experienced by visual receptors such as residential receptors, local road users, and users of walking trails occur, where the proposed turbines would be seen in combination with Barnesmore Wind Farm. These instances are limited to remote, elevated vantage points.

The greatest cumulative visual effects occur from VP08, a perspective representing visual receptors to the north-east of the Wind Farm Site. From VP08, all turbines are seen within the same field of view, as a single collective cluster of turbines on the marginal uplands. These cumulative effects have been considered in the overall assessment of VP08.

From VP08, the nature of cumulative visual effects slightly differs depending on the scenario with the Barnesmore Wind Farm. When considering cumulative effects in a scenario where the existing turbines are visible in combination with the proposed turbines, there is a large difference in scale that does not occur when considering a scenario with the permitted repowering turbines. When considering cumulative visual effects where the permitted repowering turbines are visible in combination with the proposed turbines they are seen to be more visually connected with the Prospective Development in terms of scale and location, but slightly more visual stacking occurs. Overall, the outcome of the impact assessment for VP08 ('Slight') does not change, irrespective of the cumulative scenario where the Barnesmore Wind Farm turbines are visible in combination with the proposed turbines.

Cumulative Visual Effects in the Wider LVIA Study Area

Beyond 5km of the Wind Farm Site, cumulative visual effects as experienced by visual receptors, including residential receptors, local road users, and users of walking trails, where the proposed turbines may be seen in combination or in succession with other wind energy developments are primarily confined to occasional, elevated vantage points within the wider LVIA Study Area. In these instances, the proposed turbines would be visible in the distant background, where they would be perceived as small-scale elements relative to the landscape (as seen in VP13).

Where cumulative visual effects do occur, the receiving landscape from these elevated vantage points is viewed as a vast, expansive landscape, which has the capacity to accommodate multiple wind energy developments. The proposed turbines and other developments are effectively absorbed into the landscape.

13.7.4 Decommissioning Phase Effects

The landscape and visual effects during the Decommissioning Phase are anticipated to be of a similar nature as those occurring during the construction phase.

The important elements of decommissioning from an LVIA perspective are the dismantling and removal of the wind turbines, met mast and site signage. This will occur for a limited period of time and will predominately involve cranes adjacent to the turbines during the dismantling process. Upon decommissioning of the Prospective Development, the turbines and met mast will be disassembled in reverse order to how they were erected. The turbines will be disassembled with a similar model of crane that was used for their erection. The turbines and met mast will likely be removed from the Wind Farm Site using the same transport methodology adopted initially for delivery to the Site.

Turbine and met mast foundations would remain in place underground and would be covered with earth and reseeded as appropriate. This naturalisation process shall revert the landscape of the Wind Farm Site back to a condition similar to the landscape baseline before the installation of the proposed turbines.

Additionally, the underground cabling connecting the turbines and met mast to the onsite 110kV substation will be removed from the cable ducts. The cabling will be pulled from the cable ducts using a mechanical winch which will extract the cable and re-roll it on to a cable drum. This will be undertaken at the original cable jointing pits which will be excavated using a mechanical excavator and will be fully re-instated once the cables are removed. The cable ducting will be left in-situ as it is considered the most environmentally prudent option, avoiding unnecessary excavation and soil disturbance. The cable materials will be transferred to a suitable recycling or recovery facility.

Removal of the turbines and ancillary infrastructure (as outlined above) from the Wind Farm Site during decommissioning will result in 'Short-Term', 'Slight', 'Negative' visual effects. On balance, these effects are not considered significant.

13.7.5 In Cumulation Landscape and Visual Effects

This section considers the in-cumulation impact of the combination of the Existing Development and Prospective Development (the Subject Development).

In terms of potential for in-cumulation landscape and visual effects it is relevant that the Existing and Prospective Developments differ in nature in the context of landscape and visual effects. Visibility associated with the Existing Development is much more restricted i.e. the potential for visual receptors to perceive the Existing Development (ground level or close to ground level components) is limited to localised areas whereas this is not necessarily the case for the Prospective Development (tall structures, i.e. proposed turbines). The potential for in-cumulation effects arising from the interaction of the Existing Development and the Prospective Development is summarised in Table 13-6 Assessment of potential In-Cumulation Effects of the Subject Development below.

Table 13-6 Assessment of potential In-Cumulation Effects of the Subject Development

Topic	Prospective Development	Existing Development	Subject Development
Landscape Effects	The Prospective Development includes for some additional groundworks and the erection of tall structures i.e. proposed turbines and met mast. Where practicable, the Prospective Development will utilise the footprint of the Existing Development, limiting direct landscape effects. The characteristics of the receiving landscape are appropriate for accommodating the proposed turbines. Residual landscape effects arising from the Prospective Development are not considered significant.	The extent of landscape effects from the Existing Development are limited in that it comprises ground-level changes. The impact assessment in the rEIAR for the Existing Development concluded that there are no significant negative on-going residual landscape effects.	From an LVIA perspective, the essential elements of the Subject Development will be the proposed turbines and the proposed met mast of the Prospective Development, and the Existing Development is already in place. The residual effects of the Prospective Development on the landscape are not considered significant. The residual landscape effects from the Existing Development are not considered significant. The potential for in-cumulation landscape effects from the Subject Development is not considered significant.
Visual Effects	The proposed turbines and met mast are the most essential aspects of the Prospective Development, and therefore are the most visually prominent features. The Prospective Development design mitigates the potential for significant visual effects on visual receptors. Overall, residual visual effects are not considered significant.	The remote nature of the Existing Development and its surrounding topography and vegetation generally limit potential visual effects. The impact assessment in the rEIAR for the Existing Development concluded that there are no significant negative on-going residual visual effects.	From an LVIA perspective, the essential elements of the Subject Development will be the proposed turbines and the proposed met mast of the Prospective Development, and the Existing Development is already in place. The residual effects of the Prospective Development on visual receptors are not considered significant. The residual visual effects from the Existing Development are not considered significant. The potential for in-cumulation visual effects from the Subject Development is not considered significant.

13.7.6 Cumulative Effects – Subject Development

Cumulative effects of the Subject Development considers the discreet cumulative effects arising both from Existing Development, as well as that of the Prospective Development. However, the approach of cumulative landscape and visual effects of the Subject Development primarily aligns with that applied to the Prospective Development, as outlined in Section 1.10 of Appendix 13-1 (*LVIA Methodology*), where the cumulative assessment focuses on wind energy developments, as only these would be described as very tall vertical elements in the landscape and therefore have the most potential to give rise to significant cumulative effects. On this basis, the potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects for the Prospective Development is the same

as the potential for cumulative landscape and visual effects for the Subject Development. The assessment of cumulative effects has been integrated within the visual impact assessment tables included in Appendix 13-2.

13.7.7 Transboundary Landscape and Visual Effects

The Subject Development is on the border between ROI and NI, therefore receptors on both sides of the border have been assessed in this LVIA within the preceding sections. This includes RLCA 5 - West Tyrone Uplands, which was discussed in Section 13.7.3.1 Landscape Effects, resulting in a residual landscape effect of 'Long-Term', 'Negative' and 'Moderate'. The assessments in this LVIA determined that the relevant section of the border running alongside the Wind Farm Site comprises a ridgeline through blocks of remote upland commercial forestry, and the landscape either side of the border does not fundamentally change in terms of landscape character, sensitivity and composition. Whilst the proposed turbines are seen from NI, they are seen within an upland landscape type of similar character and sensitivity as exists on the eastern side of the border (in NI). Ultimately, no significant transboundary landscape effects occur. A full assessment of effects of the Prospective Development on visual receptors in NI are presented in Section 13.7.3.2, including Photomontage viewpoints 10 and 14.

13.8 Conclusion

This chapter reports the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the Prospective Development, focusing on the likely significant effects on landscape and visual amenity within a 20km LVIA Study Area. Although all elements of the Prospective Development are assessed, the chapter focusses upon the proposed turbines and met mast, as they are deemed to be the primary essential aspects of the proposal under assessment from a landscape and visual perspective. The Wind Farm Site has been the subject of previous planning applications, most recently the Permitted Development, which comprised the same optimised turbine layout and height of turbines as the Prospective Development. The assessments were informed by site visits, verified photomontages, ZTV mapping, and an impact assessment methodology which follows best practice guidance for LVIA of wind farms.

The proposed turbines are located within a sparsely settled remote marginal upland landscape, and on a broad hillside, which is not a unique or highly distinctive feature of the landscape. The landscape type and its specific characteristics are considered highly suitable and appropriate for accommodating the proposed turbines. The Wind Farm Site's susceptibility to the Prospective Development is also considered to be Low, particularly considering that the Existing Development is already built and, therefore, limited direct alterations to the landscape are required to get the Subject Development operational.

The ZTV and Topographical mapping shows that the proposed turbines are sited on the northern slopes of a series of undulating landforms which comprise Meenbog Hill to the south-east, Killeter Forest to the south and Barnesmore to the south-west. These landforms act a visual barrier, enclosing the proposed turbines, and restricting visibility of the proposed turbines to the south-east, south and west, effectively visually screening the proposed turbines from vast areas of the LVIA Study Area in these directions. As a result, visibility of the proposed turbines is predominantly confined to 5km of the proposed turbines. Beyond 5km, photomontage visualisations and site visits determined that visibility of the proposed turbines is mostly limited to elevated vantage points within the wider LVIA Study Area.

In terms of location, spatial extent, spacing and layout, the siting and design of the proposed turbines adheres to the guidance for the siting of wind farms in Mountain Moorland Landscape Types, whilst also adhering to the minimum set back distance requirements, including 500 meters from residential dwellings and four times the turbine tip height from third-party properties as set out in the Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2006) and Draft Guidelines (DoHPLG, 2019) respectively.

The overall landscape value and sensitivity of the Wind Farm Site is deemed to be 'Low', and the overall residual effects upon the physical fabric of the landscape of the Wind Farm Site, as well as effects on its perceptual and aesthetic character and qualities are deemed to be 'Moderate'.

The Wind Farm Site is located within LCA 40 – Cashelnavern Border & Uplands, an LCA of ‘Medium’ landscape sensitivity to wind farm development. The LVIA determined a ‘Moderate’ residual effect on this LCA’s landscape character. No significant landscape effects are deemed to occur in any LCAs assessed in this LVIA. No significant landscape effects were deemed to arise on any designated landscape areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity (EHSAs) located within the LVIA Study Area. There are 30 no. existing, 5 no. proposed, and 4 no. permitted wind farms within 20km from the proposed turbines, with the greatest cumulative landscape effects occurring in LCA 40.

The assessment of visual effects was primarily informed by photomontage visualisations, and observations recorded during site visits. Imagery was captured from 14 viewpoints within the LVIA Study Area. The assessment concluded that no ‘Profound’, ‘Very Significant’ or ‘Significant’ effects are predicted to occur at any of the 14 photomontage viewpoints. The residual effects were found to be Moderate (3), Slight (4), Not Significant (3) and Imperceptible (4).

While an entirely new assessment was undertaken for the Prospective Development, a key consideration throughout this LVIA chapter included being cognisant of the Permitted Development, which was permitted by ACP in 2018 and in which the Inspector reported acceptable levels of landscape and visual impacts. Landscape and visual receptors have not materially changed in the intervening period. Accordingly, the Inspector’s previous conclusions in respect of the Permitted Development are of direct relevance to the current assessment of the Prospective Development, particularly given that the turbine height and layout remain consistent with those of the Permitted Development. On this basis, the findings of this LVIA are aligned with and reinforce the established principle of acceptability of the development of a wind farm at the Wind Farm Site from a landscape and visual perspective.

In conclusion, this LVIA has demonstrated that the Prospective Development can be effectively accommodated within the landscape without any significant landscape or visual effects arising on landscape and visual receptors within the 20km LVIA Study Area. The assessments have determined that the Wind Farm Site is capable of effectively accommodating the Prospective Development.