

Quality Assurance

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The findings outlined within this report and the data we have provided are to our knowledge true and express our bona fide professional opinions. This report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) good practice guidelines. Where pertinent CIEEM Guidelines used in the preparation of this report include the *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing* (CIEEM, 2017a), *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals* (CIEEM, 2017b), *Briefing Paper: Biodiversity Enhancement for New Developments in Ireland* (CIEEM, 2023), and *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Land, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2024). CIEEM Guidelines include model formats for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Ecological Impact Assessment. Also, where pertinent, evaluations presented herein take cognisance of recommended Guidance from the EPA *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022), and in respect of European sites, a *100% of the total area of the site* (European Commission, 2018).

Due cognisance has been given at all times to the provisions of the *Nature Act, 1976* (2023), the *European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations*, the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2021*, EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species under *EU Regulation 1143/2014*, the *EU Birds Directive 2009/147/EC* and *Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*.

No method of assessment can completely remove the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise or incomplete information. Any limitation to the methods applied or constraints however are clearly identified within the main body of this document.

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Project Reference		2451	Title	
			Greenhills Energy Park Development Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan	

Notice

This Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) is produced by INIS Environmental Consultants Ltd. (INIS) on behalf of Orsted (hereafter known as the Developer) to accompany the Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Greenhills Energy Park Development. The purpose of this BEMP is to provide details of required enhancement to avoid significant adverse effects on biodiversity from the Greenhills Energy Park Development (hereafter referred to as the proposed Proposed Development) and to monitor and manage any effects on biodiversity arising from the proposed Proposed Development.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Ørsted commissioned Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd. (INIS) to complete a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) for a proposed solar farm site at Greenhills Energy Park Development (hŠ o Š ú Ů o Š Ů Š o o Š Š ú Ů ł σ ú .CŠrk ł o Ů μ Ů σ Š Š 5 Š Φ Š P Ů

This BEMP contains information which will facilitate the client in ensuring that biodiversity at the Proposed Development site is better after the development than it is currently through implementation of specific measures during the construction and operation phases. The purpose of these enhancement measures is to improve the condition and extent of certain habitats within the biodiversity enhancement management area and provide compensation for negative impacts of the Proposed Development on flora and fauna as identified within the accompanying Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Proposed Development. This document identifies the important habitats within the Proposed Development red line boundary and outlines all relevant information on enhancement and management measures in relation to biodiversity within the Proposed Development site.

The biodiversity enhancement management area is defined as the Proposed Development red line boundary, as seen in **Figure 1.1**. All proposed enhancement measures will be agreed with the individual landowners and will be implemented by the developer in conjunction with the relevant landowners in the presence of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECOW).

This aim of this BEMP is to enhance biodiversity over the lifetime of the development including measures for important habitats and species present within the Proposed Development site, the incorporation of pollinator protection measures per the guidelines set out by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan (AIPP) (National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC), 2021), the NBDC guidance on pollinator friendly management of solar farms (NBDC, 2023), inclusion of an Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP), and ensuring minimal disturbance to sensitive habitats and species within the Proposed Development red line boundary.

1.1 Statements of Authority

Katie Ruth Connolly MSc BSc (Assistant Ecologist, INIS) is an assistant ecologist on the Report Team at INIS and drafted this report. She is a Qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Katie has experience writing Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Invasive Alien Species (IAS) and baseline ecology reports, as well as SMPs, Environmental Management Plans (EMP) and Specific Environmental Control Plans (SSECP) for civil development projects since 2024.

Conor Daly MSc BSc ACIEEM (Ecologist, INIS) is the Report Team lead and reviewed this report. Conor has experience writing Preliminary Environmental Assessments (PEA), AA Screening, EIA and EIA reports since 2021 for small urban developments across Ireland involving sensitive receptors such as Lesser Horseshoe Bat, active badger setts and riverine habitats. He has also contributed to the drafting, finalising and issuing of EIA, EIA and NIS reports over 3 years on renewable energy projects.

Daelyn Purcell BSc (Ecologist, INIS) carried out invasive species surveys and field assessments which informed this report. He serves as Ecologist within Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd holding ł . { Ő ł Ů Ω σ Ω Ω ´ Ω P Š P Ω Ů Š . Ω Ů P Ů ° Ё Ů o Ů 4 Ω Ů Ё ł o Ł o σ Ů experience conducting various ecological surveys in line with best practice guidelines with various

ecological consultancies and has worked on several conservation projects with BirdWatch Ireland. Daelyn has particular expertise in ornithological surveys and has experience with terrestrial mammal surveys and habitat classification. Daelyn is also an Associate member of CIEEM

Dr Alex Copland BSc PhD MIEEM MSc (Technical Director, INIS) reviewed this report. He has over 30 years of professional experience working in both statutory and private companies, in third level research institutions and with environmental NGOs. He is a full member of the Institute of Environmental Sciences (IES) and the CIEEM. He is an expert in experimental design and data analysis and has managed several large scale, multidisciplinary ecological projects, managing staff and resources to meet budgetary constraints and the successful delivery of projects on time.

1.2 Legislative Context

This BEMP has been prepared in compliance with the Nature Restoration Regulation (European Union, 2024) and the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) (2023) (NBDC 2023). Of the five NBAP Objectives, **Objective 2: Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs** is most relevant to the Proposed Development site, as it highlights the importance of conservation and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem services countrywide.

Objective 2 of the NBAP has defined several targets with the goal of protecting the environment:

- By 2030, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the decline of pollinators is halted and reversed
- By 2027, optimised opportunities under agriculture, rural development, forestry and other relevant policies to benefit biodiversity are in place
- By 2024, ensure that the impact of water quality measures on biodiversity is minimised
- By 2027, optimised benefits in flood risk management planning and drainage schemes are in place and
- By 2030, IAS are controlled, managed, and where possible, eradicated

1.3 Information Sources

The primary documents used to inform this BEMP:

- Briefing Paper: Biodiversity Enhancement for New Developments in Ireland. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Amp (CIEEM, 2023);
- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2022-2025 (NBDC, 2021);
- 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP);
- Best Practice Planning Guidance Report for Large Scale Solar Energy Development in Ireland (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), 2023);
- Environmental and Planning Report Supporting Document: Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP);
- CEMP Appendix A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP);
- CEMP Appendix B Flood Risk Assessment (FRA);
- CEMP Appendix B Spoil Management Plan (SMP);
- CEMP Appendix D Resource and Waste Management Plan (RWMP);

- CEMP Appendix E Water Quality Monitoring Plan (WQMP);
- Invasive Species Report;
- CIEEM (2024) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.3. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester; and
- A Guide to the Habitats of Ireland, Kilkenny: The Heritage Council (Fossitt, 2000).

1.4 Proposed Development Overview

The Proposed Development comprises a solar farm, inverter/transformer stations, site entrances and access tracks, battery energy storage system (BESS), 220kV AIS substation and grid connection, and all ancillary development in the townlands of Knocknagappagh, Barnaviddane, Ballyneague, Ballydanie, Youghalpark, Ballydaheen and Cornaveigh in Co. Cork. A full description of the Proposed Development is provided in the accompanying Planning and Environment Report and the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

The Proposed Development is located 4.1km northwest of Youghal, Co. Cork and 6.5km northeast of Killeagh, Co. Cork. It is bounded by the R634 to the north, and the Park Hill road runs between the eastern and western areas of the site. The general location of the site is shown in Figure 1.1, where the study area is outlined in red. The Tourig River (18T03) (IE_SW_18T030700), Ballyneague River (18B47) (IE_SW_18T030700) and Knocknagappagh River (18K42) (IE_SW_18T030700) run through the Proposed Development site boundary to the west, the Youghal Park (18Y01) (IE_SW_18T030700) and Ballyglavin Rivers (18B67) (IE_SW_18T030700) flow south of the Proposed Development site southern boundary. The Carriganass River (18C30) (IE_SW_18T030700) flows through the Proposed Development from the north. These rivers are part of the Tourig_020 waterbody.

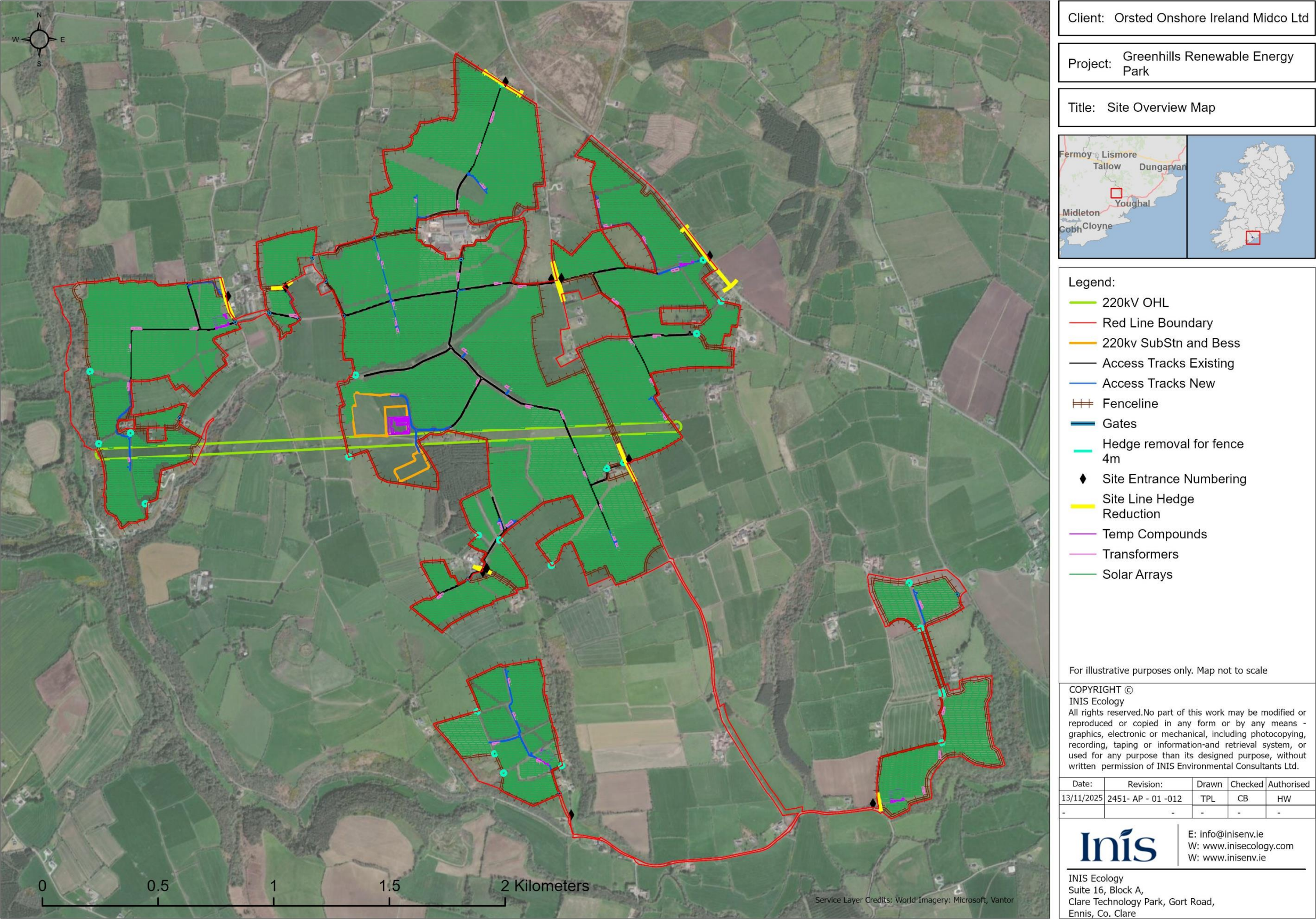


Figure 1.1: Proposed Development site overview map.

1.5 Ecological Baseline

Detailed information on the ecological baseline of the Proposed Development with regard to Key Ecological Receptors (KERs) provided in the accompanying EclA and summarised below.

1.5.1 Linear Habitats

Baseline (pre-construction) linear habitats within and adjacent to the Proposed Development (this BMP) are summarised in Table 1.1 with main habitats considered to be KERs (i.e. those with a woody component such as hedgerows or treelines) described below. The habitat lengths are measured in metres (m). All figures and relevant data for habitats are detailed in the baseline section of the EclA.

1.5.1.1 Hedgerows (WL1)

Hedgerow is the only linear habitat identified as a KER that will be subject to habitat loss arising from the Proposed Development. These habitats are narrow strips of shrubs and occasionally low scrub, often with occasional trees, typically forming field boundaries. Common species recorded include Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. A total area of 17,67m of this habitat was located within the Proposed Development boundary, not including hedgerow present onsite as part of a mosaic habitat.

All figures and relevant data for habitats are detailed in the accompanying EclA.

Table 1.1: Baseline linear habitats within the Proposed Development site and extent of habitat loss. Habitats identified as KERs are in bold.

Habitat (Fossitt Code)	Preconstruction extent within the Proposed Development site (m)	Extent of habitat loss (m)
Stone walls and other stonework (BL1)	18	-
Stone walls and other stonework/Hedgerows (BL1/WL1)	63	-
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	12,566	-
Eroding/upland rivers (FW1)	1,538	-
Depositing/lowland rivers (FW2)	7	-
Drainage ditches (FW4)	127	-
Hedgerows (WL1)	11,767	395
Hedgerows/Stone walls and other stonework (WL1/BL1)	224	-
Hedgerows/Buildings and artificial surfaces (WL1/BL3)	195	-
Hedgerows/Drainage ditches (WL1/FW4)	2,081	-
Hedgerows/Treelines (WL1/WL2)	7,303	-
Hedgerows/Treelines/Drainage ditches (WL1/WL2/FW4)	616	-
Treelines (WL2)	918	-
Treelines/Stone walls and other stonework (WL2/BL1)	52	-
Treelines/Hedgerows (WL2/WL1)	5,680	-
Treelines/Hedgerows/Stone walls and other stonework (WL2/WL1/BL1)	122	-
Treelines/Hedgerows/Drainage ditches (WL2/WL1/FW4)	573	-
Scrub (WS1)	636	-

1.5.2 Non-linear Habitats

No nonlinear habitats identified as KERs will be subject to habitat loss arising from the Proposed Development. All figures and relevant data for habitats are detailed in the accompanying EclA.

Table 1.2: Baseline habitats within the Proposed Development site and extent of habitat loss. Habitats identified as KERs are in bold.

Habitat (Fossitt Code)	Preconstruction extent within the Proposed Development site (ha)	Extent of habitat loss (ha)
Arable crops (BC1)	33.09	11.12
Tilled land (BC3)	8.45	4.20
Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)	2.37	-
Buildings and surfaces/Amenity grassland (improved) (BL3/GA2)	0.005	-
Spoil and bare ground/Recolonising bare ground (ED2/ED3)	0.63	-
Improved agricultural grassland (GA1)	291.10	143.00
Recolonising bare ground (GA2)	0.002	-
Recolonising bare ground/Scrub/Scattered trees and parkland (GA2/WS1/WD5)	0.29	-
(Mixed) broadleaved woodland (WD1)	3.26	-
(Mixed) broadleaved woodland/Scrub (WD1/WS1)	2.65	-
Conifer plantation (WD4)	0.03	-
Hedgerows/Treeline (WL1/WL2)	0.0004	-
Scrub (WS1)	2.65	-
Scrub/Improved agricultural grassland (WS1/GA1)	0.07	-

2 MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this BEMP is to prescribe detailed mitigation, enhancement and monitoring approaches to achieve enhancements for the species and habitats present onsite notably for hedgerow and treeline habitats, birds, bats, and pollinators. As such, taking into consideration the ecological baseline and the potential effects on ecological features identified in the accompanying EclA, the primary objectives of the BEMP are:

- To retain and maintain existing hedgerows where possible such that commuting and foraging habitat is not lost during construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development;
- To ensure onsite replacement of equivalent lengths/areas and species compositions of hedgerows and treelines following the removal of such habitats, such that commuting and foraging habitat is not lost during construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development;
- To ensure a minimum 20% net increase of KER habitats;
- To create and maintain shelter belts of native woodland to provide commuting and foraging corridors for wildlife;
- To create and maintain native wildflower meadow onsite to provide foraging habitat for birds and pollinators;
- To retain and maintain existing scrub onsite to provide commuting and foraging habitat for wildlife; and
- To place and monitor artificial Otter *Lutra lutra* holts to encourage establishment of Otter in the area, which may in turn act as biological control for the invasive American Mink assumed to be present onsite.

In addition to these key management objectives, management measures should seek to deliver enhancements for other KERs identified in the accompanying EclA. Where the opportunity arises, to maximise the biodiversity benefit provided by the Proposed Development this includes eliminating the use of pesticides and herbicides onsite and allowing the areas of grassland between the solar arrays to grow unmanaged during the peak season for pollinators (March to October), per AIPP guidelines (NBDC, 2021).

2.1 Ecological Context

In order to meet the management objectives, the ecological requirements of target species and habitats must be understood. As the dominant habitat types onsite are improved agricultural grassland (GA1) and arable crops (BC1), the goal of this BEMP is to improve biodiversity onsite within these habitats and improve overall connectivity between areas of high biodiversity value.

3 ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

3.1 Maintain and create native flowering hedgerows

A total of 11.77km of lineahedgerow is currently present within the ecological baseline of the Proposed Development that is impacted by the construction phase work. Existing areas of hedgerow will be retained within the Proposed Development boundary where possible. An additional 16,857km of hedgerow mosaic habitats will be managed via underplanting, limited cutting to facilitate it grow up to 4m and general maintenance in managing hedgerows for biodiversity per AIPP guidance for solar farms (NBDC, 2023). In areas where the extent of hedgerow is limited, additional hedgerow will be created through active management. In particular, hedgerow management should seek to ensure the greatest likelihood of successful growth and maximise the surface area of this habitat to provide the greatest possible extent of suitable commuting and foraging habitat to increase biodiversity onsite.

A total of c. 395m of hedgerow is proposed to be lost in small sections across the site part of the construction phase of the Proposed Development (Figure 3.1), 1,400m of hedgerow is proposed to be planted to account for this loss (Figure 3.2). Native hedgerow planting will follow the guidelines set out in the NBDC guidance for solar farms (NBDC, 2022). Therefore, hedgerows will be planted with native flowering species such as Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and only cut back and maintained between November and February. Hedgerow cutting will be a 3 cycle where feasible, where not feasible it is recommended that maintenance be staggered across the areas of hedgerow (cutting one third of hedgerow every year instead of cutting back all at once) to allow for a constant food source for pollinators. When maintaining the hedgerows, the hedgerow base should be cut lower than at the top. Cuttings should be piled into heaps and left to decay naturally. Hedgerows be allowed to grow to 4m in height. A small area of south or east-facing exposed earth at the base of the hedgerows will be left bare to provide areas for mining solitary bees to nest, encouraging increased pollinator biodiversity onsite (NBDC, 2021).

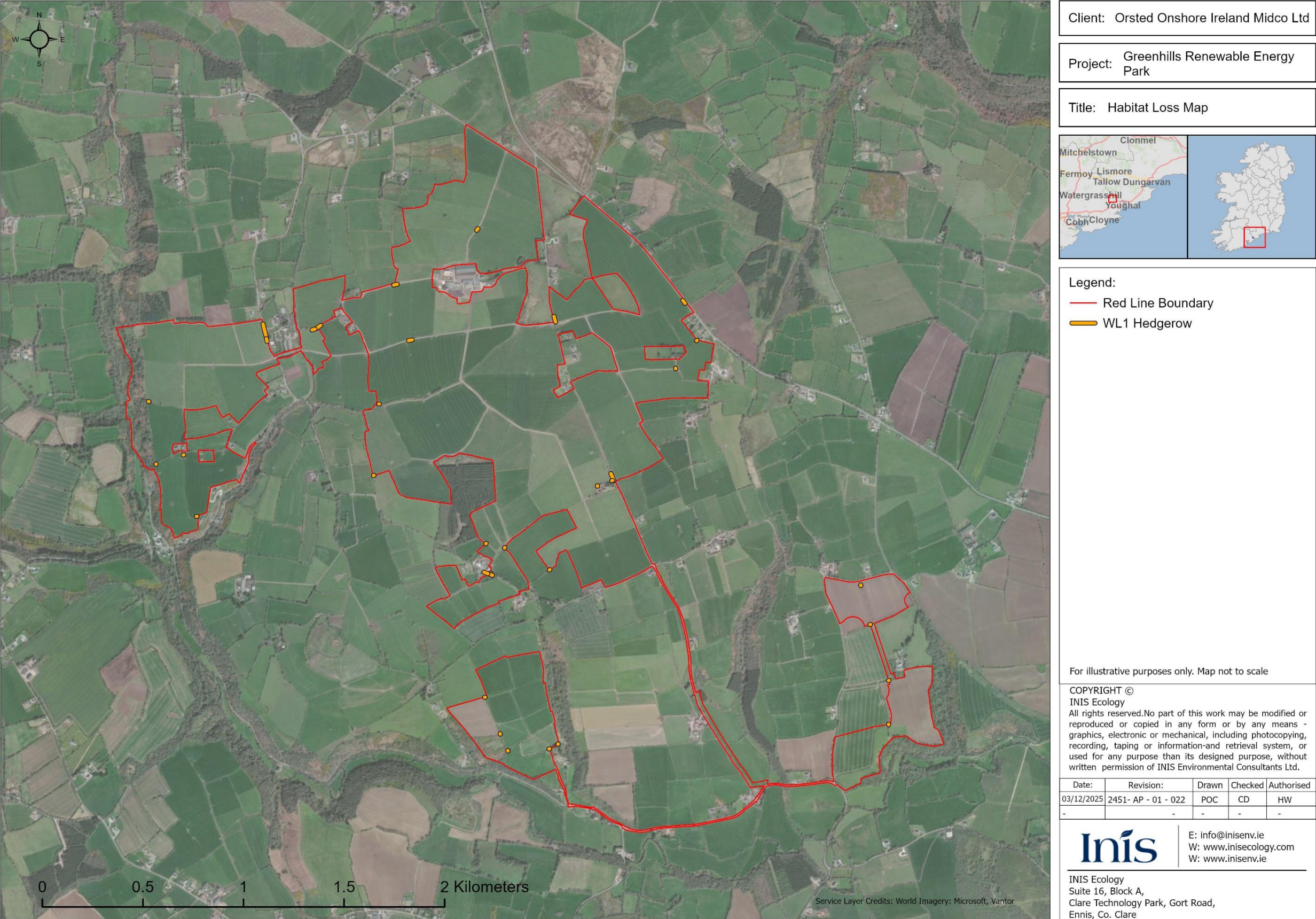


Figure 8.1: Kesh area map.

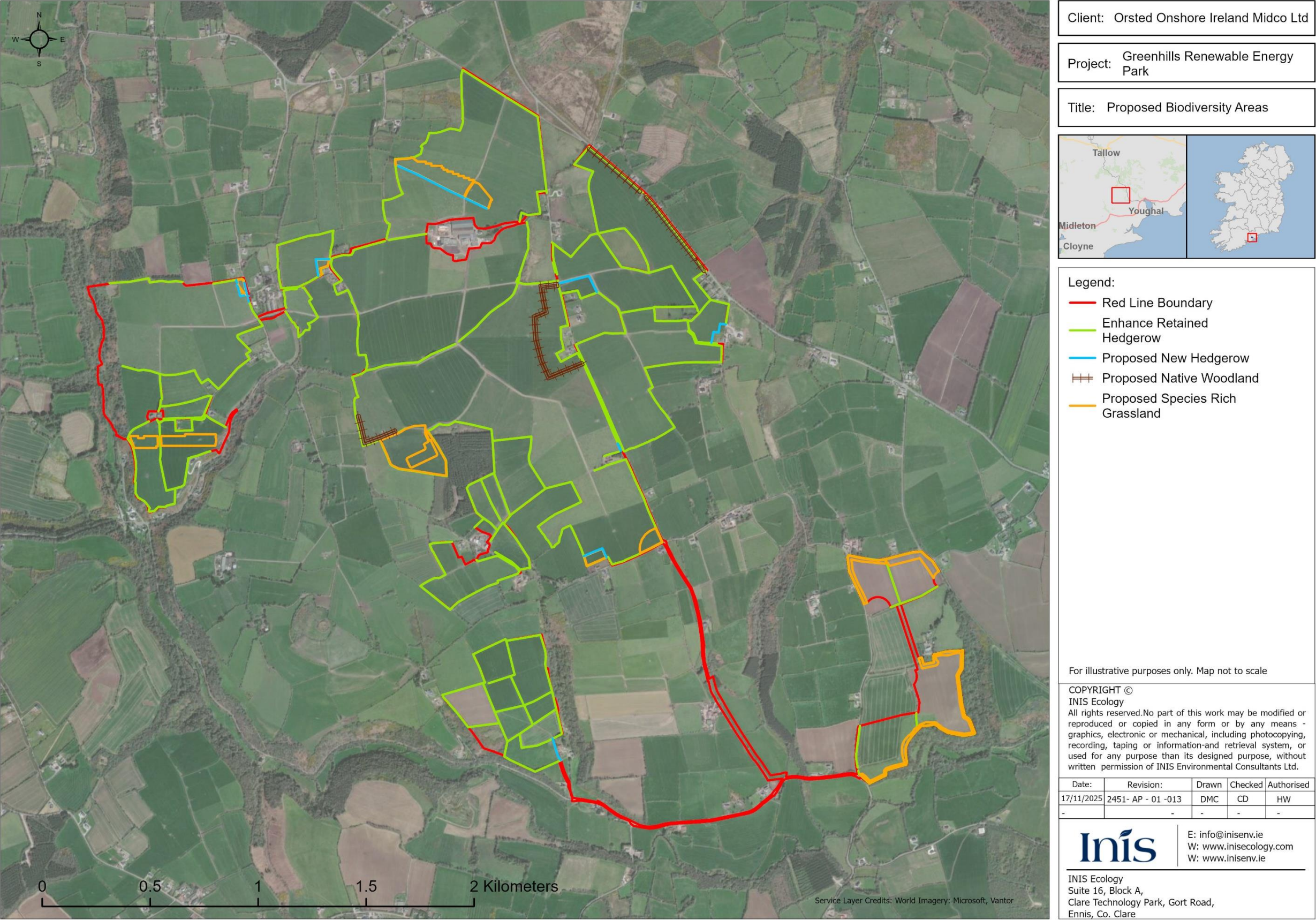


Figure 3.2: Proposed linear habitat enhancement and grassland planting areas.

3.2 Create native woodland

Mixed broadleaved woodland currently occupies 3.26ha within the managed area. A mosaic of mixed broadleaved woodland and scrub occupies a further 2.65ha in the managed area. However, the site would benefit from the additional planting of broadleaved native species which will add to the overall species diversity across the site. It is proposed that approximately 1.96ha of native broadleaved woodland shelter belts be planted on site (Figure 8.2). Species selected will be native to the local area. It is recommended that Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* not be planted due to the prevalence of ash dieback disease in Ireland. Therefore, it is recommended that native species such as Sessile Oak *Quercus petraea*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Birch *Betula* spp., Willow *Salix* spp. and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* be used. Species mixture will follow guidelines set out by the Native Tree Area Scheme¹ and will provide additional foraging, commuting and shelter habitat for wildlife on site, contributing to increased biodiversity.

3.3 Native Wildflower Meadow Area

Improved agricultural grassland currently occupies 29.10ha within the managed area. A mosaic of improved agricultural grassland and scrub occupies a further 0.7ha within the managed area. The developer will allow improved grassland to revert to a more natural state. In such cases, a reversion program will be required, involving:

- Analysis of soil samples to establish baseline nutrient levels;
- Cessation of chemical and organic fertiliser application;
- Cessation of lime application;
- Habitat enhancement works.

The grassland between the solar arrays on site will be allowed to revert to a natural state during the operational phase of the development. This grassland will be cut unevenly once a year in autumn, after any wildflower species have flowered, and the cuttings removed to prevent addition of excess nutrients to the soil. Noxious plant species may be pulled.

Further, areas of native wildflower meadow will be created on site. It is proposed that native wildflower mixes be planted across the site. Approximately 13.35ha of species rich grassland will be planted on site. In the first instance, seeds will be sourced locally. Fields will also be allowed to grow naturally from baseline levels with regular cuts over winter to facilitate establishment of diverse flowering plants. Irregular grazing regimes may also be deployed in line with the proposed recommendations. No wildflower mixes will be used. This will provide valuable foraging habitats for pollinators, birds and other wildlife on site.

3.4 Eliminate Use of Pesticides

No spraying or broadcast application of herbicides will be permitted within the proposed Development boundary at any time. Where necessary to site management, Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* will be removed by cutting. In exceptional circumstances, targeted control of invasive species using herbicides may be permitted. Pesticide use will be minimised wherever possible, with

¹ Available at <https://teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/grants/native-tree-area-scheme/> Accessed in November 2025.

none permitted within 5m of any existing hedgerows (except for spot treatment of invasive plant species such as Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)).

3.5 Scrub

Scrub currently occupies 2.65ha within the managed area. A total of 636m of linear scrub is also currently present within the managed area. Existing areas of scrub will be retained where possible. Small areas of established scrub will be trimmed to prevent encroachment onto grassland and access routes. Cuttings will not be burned, but piled into heaps and left to decay naturally along site verges.

3.6 Otter

An artificial Otter holt will be placed on the western boundary of the Proposed Development in order to encourage establishment onsite of ~~six~~ Otter populations related to the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Figure 3.3). Artificial holts will be placed in an undisturbed area, far away from roads, free from flooding and as close to good food supply as possible in Ireland. Environmental Agency (NIEA) (2019). Increased Otter presence may in turn deter the presence of American Mink onsite, providing biological control for the invasive species as they are in direct competition for resources and some studies have indicated that recovering Otter populations may reduce presence of American Mink (McDonald *et al.*, 2007).



Client: Orsted

Project:Greenhills Renewable Energy Park

Title: Proposed Otter Holt

Fermoy Lismore Tallow Dungarvan

Midleton Youghal

Cobh Cloyne

Legend:

RLB

Proposed Artificial Otter Holt

For illustrative purposes only. Map not to scale

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Figure 8.3: Location of the proposed artificial Otter holt.

4 IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE

4.1 Timing

This BMP will be implemented concurrently with the commencement of the construction phase of the Proposed Development and subsequently throughout the operational phase of the Proposed Development. No hedgerow, scrub or woodland maintenance will occur between 1st March and 31st August of any given year, and maintenance will occur on a 3-year cycle where feasible. Grassland management works will occur in autumn of each year.

4.2 Consent

The managed area incorporates the pooled land holdings of multiple landowners. These landowners will retain full ownership of their lands during the operation of the Proposed Development. Option agreements are in place that will allow the client to maintain the measures set out in the BMP.

4.3 Responsibilities

The client will ultimately be responsible for the implementation of the BMP to ensure that adverse effects on biodiversity features are avoided, and enhancements are delivered. In the event of favourable consideration of the Proposed Development application, it is anticipated that the implementation of this BMP will be secured by means of a condition within the planning consent.

The client will engage a suitably qualified ecologist to oversee the implementation of the BMP as a part of the annual solar farm operational programme.

5 MONITORING AND REVIEWS

5.1 Pollinators transect NBDC 5 visit measures

Pollinator transects will be undertaken to monitor pollinator activity onsite following the guidelines set out in the NBDC Five Visit Monitoring Scheme². Two walks will be completed between 22nd April and 16th June, three walks will be completed in July and 31st August. A minimum of two weeks must be left between visits, and all visits should be completed during favourable weather conditions. This scheme allows for sufficient data to be collected to track changes in pollinator populations. Monitoring methods will be updated in line with best practice recommendations for tracking pollinator biodiversity within agricultural ecosystems.

5.2 Camera traps

Camera traps will be deployed in January of each year to monitor the proposed artificial Otter holt for activity. Deploying these traps early in the year minimises the risk that dense vegetation will reduce the success of identification of Otter activity.

5.3 Countryside bird surveys transects

Transect surveys will be conducted to monitor breeding birds following the latest practice guidelines for monitoring breeding bird populations in Ireland (BirdWatch Ireland, 2012).

5.4 Hedgerow and Treelines

Newly created or enhanced hedgerows will be subject to condition assessment by an appropriately qualified ecologist, following the Hedgerow Appraisal System (Fonckes, 2013) each year after planting for the first five years (the establishment phase), and then every five years until (and including) year 20 (the operational phase).

This will help identify ongoing management actions, such as weed control, gapping up and where fence maintenance is required.

• The Hedgerow Appraisal System and

• In addition to the condition assessment, the diversity of the tree/shrub/climber component will be the same, or greater than, that at planting (>10 native species per 100m).

These condition assessments will form part of an audit report and feedback on all hedgerows will be provided to the Developer.

5.5 Woodland

Newly planted broadleaf woodland will be monitored based on the dimensions, species composition, presence of positive and negative indicator species, vegetation height and ground conditions by an appropriately qualified ecologist. These conditions will be assessed each year after planting for the

²Available at <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/five-visit-monitoring-scheme/> Accessed November 2025

first five years (the establishment phase), and then every five years until (and including) year 20 (the operations phase).

This will help identify ongoing management actions, such as weed control, gapping up and where fence maintenance is required.

- Hedgerow Appraisal System (which will be adapted for the site) to assess the condition of the hedgerows. This will be done at the time of planting and then every five years until (and including) year 20.
- In addition to the condition assessment, the diversity of the tree/shrub/climber component will be assessed. This will be done at the time of planting and then every five years until (and including) year 20. The diversity of the tree/shrub/climber component will be the same, or greater than, that at planting.

These condition assessments will form part of an audit report and feedback on all woodlands will be provided to the Developer.

5.6 Reporting

Reports on the direct management and maintenance of each managed area will be submitted to the competent authorities on an annual basis (one annual planning compliance report, covering both breeding and wintering season when monitoring work is being undertaken) and every 5 years where applicable, with reports submitted by the managing party of the solar farm. These reports will detail the ongoing work and maintenance being carried out to ensure optimal foraging returns from each area. As stated by the AIP guidance document on solar farm projects, active seasonal management of these measures will be needed to ensure the plan is to be meaningful and effective (NBDC, 2023). This will ensure the project measures remain in line with the as yet unpublished management plan for Ireland to deliver its obligations under the EU Nature Restoration Regulation. This plan is expected to come into enforcement following assent by the European Commission in 2027.

6 CONCLUSION

The client aims to ensure that biodiversity at the Proposed Development site is better after the development than it is currently through implementation of specific measures during the construction and operation phases. As a result, management prescriptions outlined in **Section 3** have been put in place to increase the biodiversity on site.

Additional measures are also proposed to allocate a total of 1,400m of linear habitats (hedgerows) to offset the loss of bat and bird commuting and foraging habitat and 1.96ha of native woodland.

