

Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 17: Population

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CHAPTER 17 POPULATION

EIAR 17.1 INTRODUCTION

EIAR 17.1.1 The Author of this Chapter (Competent Expert)

The evaluation of the socio-economic implications of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm and the Candidate Grid Connection on local populations has been carried out by Ciara Morley (Ph.D. and M.A. in Economics and Finance), Director at Morley Economic Consulting Ltd. Ciara Morley has more than 15 years' experience in economic research and consulting. Prior to setting up her own economic consultancy in 2020, she was a Manager with EY-DKM, and a Researcher with the ESRI. Ciara's main areas of research include socio-economic analysis, regional development, and Economic Impact Assessments, across a broad range of sectors.

EIAR 17.1.2 Sources of Information

Consultation, desktop studies and fieldwork were carried out in order to gather information on the baseline environment.

Table 17-1: Sources of Baseline Information for Population

Consultation Sources
No Population specific feedback was received from statutory or other public bodies during 2026 consultations. See Chapter 3: Consultation for further details.
Desktop Sources
• Census of Population 2002 – 2022 and various volumes published by the CSO • CSO County Incomes and Regional GDP, various years • Kilkenny Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 • Irelands Ancient East - Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 2027 • Failte Ireland Failte Ireland Visitor Attitudes on the Environment Factsheet September 2026 • Kilkenny - Destination and Experience Development Plan • Kilkenny County Annual Report 2024 • Kilkenny County Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 • Kilkenny City and County Council Development Plan 2021 - 2027 • Solas, Regional Skills South-East 2025 • Desktop research of tourism in County Kilkenny. Full list on Reference page at the end of the chapter. Review of the other EIA Report Topic Chapters as follows: • Chapter 1: Introduction and Policy Context • Chapter 6: Land • Chapter 12: Climate • Chapter 14: The Landscape • Chapter 16: Material Assets
Fieldwork
• Site visit to establish extent of settlement patterns, amenities and local businesses

EIAR 17.1.3 Methodology Used

The evaluations for Population herein have been carried out in accordance with the EPA guidance document *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022)*, and the *Social Impact Assessment in Environmental Impact Assessment in the UK* (ISEP, 2025). This methodology has been used to determine the sensitivity of receptors, and the magnitude and significance of potential impacts. The methodology can be found in full in [Appendix 17.1: Methodology for the evaluation of Population](#). The author's extensive experience with EIA preparation and economic analysis also informs this report.

A list of guidelines and legislation which were taken into account during the evaluation of this chapter is also included in [Appendix 17.1](#).

EIAR 17.1.4 Statement on Certainty and Sufficiency of Information Provided

In respect of Population, no material limitations or difficulties were encountered during the course of the studies carried out to inform the assessment of socio-economic impacts of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm on local populations.

A clear documentary trail is provided throughout this chapter and chapter appendices to the competency of data and methods used and the rationale for selection of same. The information used to compile this chapter is collated from the other assessments in this EIAR, and is also collated from site-specific investigations, data and documents generated by public bodies and statutory agencies and from the other competent experts' assessments in this EIAR.

Baseline data and trends for the local population have been derived from a range of national statistical data sources which annually collect and report statistics for geographic areas across the whole of Ireland and include datasets from the CSO census data. Future trends are not anticipated to change enough to alter the baseline scenario when compared to the national average, the baseline environment information provided within this chapter is considered sufficient for the purpose of this assessment.

EIAR 17.1.5 Development being Considered

The subject development – the **Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm**, comprises 12 wind turbines and all associated foundations and hard-standing areas in respect of each turbine, 2 control buildings, 7.7km of access roads, 1 met mast and 1 LiDAR unit for measuring meteorological conditions, underground cabling between the turbines and control buildings, 7 site entrances, newly created Biodiversity Areas and all ancillary associated and facilitating works and activities. 7 turbines and 1 control building are proposed in the Ballylehaun Area, and 5 turbines and 1 control building are proposed in the Ballyring Area.

The overall whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project also includes a connection to the national electricity grid, which is not part of the currently proposed development. While the ultimate grid connection point is subject to a separate process with Eirgrid, a candidate route has been identified to the closest node at Eirgrid Ballyragget Substation. This **Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection** comprises a new substation in Parksgrove (Parksgrove Substation) and three distinct underground cable (UGC) sections: Ballylehaun-Ballyring UGC, Ballyring-Parksgrove UGC, and Parksgrove-Moatpark UGC.

To facilitate the evaluation of the whole project, this candidate grid connection is included in the baseline descriptions and considered within the impact evaluations detailed below.

EIAR 17.2 SENSITIVE ASPECTS

EIAR 17.2.1 Overview of Population in the Local Environment

Population in the local environment relates to the people and local communities living and working in the area. This includes people's way of life and the local economy.

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm site is located on the hills and uplands of the Cullahill Mountain range. The proposed development is located entirely in County Kilkenny. It is located between the villages of Lisdowney and Gathabawn in County Kilkenny, and Cullahill in neighbouring County Laois. The area has a low-density population with farmsteads and one-off housing located in the open countryside.

All of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm footprint is located in agricultural land, with 11 of the 12 turbines located in grassland fields, and the twelfth turbine in tillage lands. There are a number of waymarked walking trails in the local area. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is similarly located in agricultural lands.

EIAR 17.2.2 Zone of Influence/Study Areas

The areas or zones of influence around the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm within which the sensitive aspects of the environment could be affected by the Project are called the Study Areas herein and are set out in the table below and illustrated on [Figures 17-2 to 17-4](#).

Table 17-2: Study Area of the Project in relation to the Population socio-economic environment

Sensitive Aspect	Zone of Influence/Study Area	Justification for the Study Area extent
Local Populations & Local Economy	Electoral Divisions (EDs): Cullahill, Glashare, Balleen, Lisdowney, Ballyconra, Ballyragget Electoral Districts	Includes EDs within which the development is located and within 2km from the wind turbines, to identify local population dynamics, drivers of the local economy and tourism products or facilities
	3km from the turbines	To identify the core Areas of Benefit for the Community Benefit Scheme
	R639, L58141, L1803, L5818, L1804, L1806, L18062, L1807 local roads along haulage and turbine delivery routes from national roads	The regional and local roads which will be subject to increased windfarm site traffic
	L5818, L5821, L5821, L1806, L18062, L1808, L1807, L1811, and R432	Public roads which will be used to access the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection works – <i>based on Chapter 16 study areas.</i>
	Villages, towns, industry and tourism products within 5km of the project	Identify drivers of the local economy and tourism products or attractions in the local area – <i>based on the Central Study Area, Ch.14</i>
	20km from the turbines	To identify important tourism products in the wider area – <i>based on Chapter 14 study areas</i>

EIAR 17.3 BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

The context and characteristics of the baseline environment, and the trends and evolution thereof, in relation to *Local Populations & Local Economy* are described in the subsections below.

The result of fieldwork and desktop surveys are summarised in the sections below, illustrated on the mapping listed below, with the detailed data included in the Appendices listed:

EIAR Figures (included at the end of this Chapter):

Figure 17.1: Locational Context of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project

Figure 17.2.1: Electoral Divisions for the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project

Figure 17.2.2: Local Population

Figure 17.3: Tourism Products and Attractions

EIAR Appendices (included at the end of this Chapter):

Appendix 17.2: CSO Population Statistics

EIAR 17.3.1 Context and Characteristics

EIAR 17.3.1.1 Local Populations & Local Economy

EIAR 17.3.1.1.1 Locational Context of the Local Area

The **Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm** is proposed for an agricultural area on the northern portion of the Slieveardagh Hills in North County Kilkenny. Cullahill Mountain is further to the north and northeast in County Laois.

The **Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection** follows a route along the public road between the Ballylehaun Control Building and the Ballyring Control Building, and then a cross-country route between the Windfarm Control Building in Ballyring and the Eirgrid Ballyragget Substation at Moatpark, c.1.4km to the north of Ballyragget town.

Electoral Divisions: The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm is proposed within three Electoral Divisions (EDs), namely Cullahill ED, Glashare ED, Balleen ED and Lisdowney ED. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is routed through Glashare ED, Balleen ED, Lisdowney ED, Ballyconra ED and Ballyragget ED. These EDs contain local populations and local labour force, which are described below. The EDs are identified on [Figure 17.2.1: Electoral Divisions for the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project](#).

Nearest towns and villages: The nearest County Kilkenny towns and villages to the Gathabawn turbines are:

- Gathabawn village, 1km southeast of the nearest Ballylehaun turbine, 3km from Ballyring turbines;
- Lisdowney village, 3km northeast of the Ballyring turbines, and 6km from the Ballylehaun turbines;
- Freshford town, 4km from the Ballyring turbines, and 7km from the Ballylehaun turbines.
- Ballyragget town, 6km from Ballyring, and 10km east of Ballylehaun;
- Johnstown town, 6km from Ballylehaun, and 9km from Ballyring;
- Urlingford town, 9km from the Ballylehaun turbines, 12km from Ballyring

In neighbouring County Laois:

- Cullahill village, 3km northeast of the nearest Ballylehaun turbine, 6km from the Ballyring turbines;
- Galmoy village, 5km to the west of the Ballylehaun turbines, 9km from the Ballyring turbine;
- Durrow town (Co. Laois) 8km to the northeast of the Ballyring turbines, 9km from Ballylehaun turbines.

See [Figure 17.1: Locational Context of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project](#)

Road Infrastructure: The road network around the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project comprises mainly local roads, with the regional road R639 to the west of the Ballylehaun turbines, and the M8 Motorway further to the west. The N77 national secondary road which links Kilkenny City to Portlaoise via Ballyragget and Durrow towns is located to the east and north of the Project. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection crosses under the N77 (drill under road) at Parksgrove.

Other Infrastructure: There is an existing 4-turbine wind farm – Lisdowney Wind Farm, on lands to the north of the Ballyring turbines, and to the west of the Ballylehaun turbines. This wind farm has been in operation since 2016. A number of solar farms have been constructed in recent years in the Parksgrove and Ballyconra areas. There is an existing 110kV Eirgrid Substation at Moatpark on the far side of the River Nore, c.6km east of the Ballyring turbines. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is routed to this substation.

Industry: A notable socio-economic feature of the wider local area is the large Tirlán dairy processing plant, located off the N77 road in Ballyconra townland, 2km from Ballyragget town. This plant is an important employer in the area, and many of the farms locally supply milk to this plant.

Traditionally, mining has been another important employer to the west of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project, associated with mines in the Galmoy and Lisheen areas.

EIAR 17.3.1.1.2	Local Populations
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The local population and settlement patterns are described below.

The EDs are identified on [Figure 17.2.1: Electoral Divisions for the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project](#).

Population:

According to the CSO Census of Population 2022, the population of the individual EDs was:

- Cullahill ED: 362 persons
- Glashare ED: 311 persons
- Balleen ED: 517 persons
- Lisdowney ED: 287 persons
- Ballyconra ED: 239 persons
- Ballyragget ED: 1,587 persons

The combined population of the Study Area was 3,303 in Census 2022, marking a 20% increase in the 20-year intercensal period since Census 2002. Population growth over this period was strongest in the Lisdowney ED, with a 53.5% rise, and much of this growth recorded in the last 10 years. Between Census 2011 and Census 2016 the population in this ED rose by 18.3%, and by a further 13.9% in the six years to Census 2022. The only ED to record a decline in population was Ballyconra (-9.8%) falling from 265 to 239 persons over the 20 years. The Study area has a relatively low population density at 24.5 people per KM². This compares to a national average of 73.3. Ballyconra, reflecting the lowest population of the six EDs, has the lowest density at 14.1.

See [Appendix 17.2: CSO Population Statistics](#)

Settlement Patterns: The Study Area is typical of a rural upland area in Ireland and agriculture and commercial forestry are the predominant land uses in the vicinity of the site. The area around the proposed wind farm is sparsely populated with a dispersed and low population – with 65 houses within 1km of the proposed Gathabawn wind turbines, and a further 209 houses between 1km and 2km from the turbines. In relation to the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection, there is a low number of houses close to the Underground Cabling routes, with just 9 houses within 500m of the Parksgrove Substation. There are 53 houses within 500m of the underground cables associated with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection.

Once-off residential properties and farmsteads are dotted along the third-class routes that service the locality. Residential dwellings are also clustered in the villages of Gathabawn, Lisdowney, Cullahill and further away – in the towns of Freshford, Johnstown and Ballyragget.

Local houses within 1km and 2km of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm turbines and within 500m of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection are identified on Tables 17-3 and 17-4 below, and illustrated on **Figure 17.2.2: Local Population** (included at the end of this chapter).

Table 17-3: Local Residences within 2km of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm turbines

** House is also within 500m of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection*

House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)
H01	R32 VH9Y	807	H93	E41 H012	1333	H185	E41 CY61	1998
H02	R32 DE92	783	H94	E41 P527	1033	H186	E41 RX38	1999
H03	R32 XW81	959	H95	E41 N924	1080	H187	E41 K188	1912
H04	R32 EY81	824	H96	E41 EW29	1363	H188	E41 H009	1793
H05	R32 X0W0	886	H97	E41 C583	1474	H189	E41 K1W6	1725
H06	R32 P5D2	948	H98	E41 F1W8	1303	H190	E41 XF53	1605
H07	R32 P5D3	950	H99	E41 VH58	1347	H191	E41 KN36	1642
H08	E41 F851	511	H100	E41 TP65	1492	H192	E41 TK82	1720
H09	E41 F851	515	H101	E41 ND23	1163	H193	E41 NP66	1673
H10	E41 HN26	721	H102	E41 P864	1259	H194	E41 C1W7	1652
H11	-	644	H103	E41 PR62	1162	H195	E41 A033	1727
H12	E41 YX22	694	H104	E41 XN47	1108	H196	E41 H6V2	1765
H13	E41 E226	804	H105	E41 HP82	1100	H197	E41 A309	1871
H14	E41 C8W5	711	H106	E41 H958	1085	H198	E41 HE03	1878
H15	E41 DD70	604	H107	E41 NT68	1011	H199	E41 X094	1998
H16	E41 P7N0	674	H108	E41 V020	1051	H200	E41 T802	1958
H17	E41 T180	802	H109	E41 YX38	1051	H201	E41 X925	1978
H18	E41 XF96	780	H110	E41 Y680	1031	H202	E41 XE62	1987
H19	E41 RP86	756	H111*	E41 W621	1024	H203	E41 T665	1984
H20	E41 P304	817	H112	R32 V6K6	1047	H204	E41 C827	1711
H21	E41 P9R2	716	H113*	E41 C6H3	1021	H205	E41 V8N7	1606
H22	E41 YH63	685	H114	E41 FT52	1419	H206	E41 XT61	1880
H23	E41 R6K5 / E41 W2F7	611	H115	E41 H599	1221	H207	E41 W718	1823
H24	E41 VP94	899	H116	E41 FW95	1226	H208	E41 A440	1682
H25	E41 NH97	630	H117	E41 A580	1178	H209	E41 V577	1652
H26	E41 YE94	608	H118	E41 XA07	1258	H210	E41 D789	1896
H27	E41 XC03	697	H119	E41 HE94	1208	H211	E41 VW74	1859
H28	E41 WD59	697	H120	E41 CK07	1269	H212	E41 T258	1980
H29	E41 Y578	702	H121	E41 K590	1284	H213	E41 P208	1835
H30	E41 PW90	904	H122	E41 W778	1300	H214	E41 N2D0	2006
H31*	E41 H970	959	H123	E41 DP68	1319	H215	E41 V3W8	1900
H32*	E41 C6N4	976	H124	E41 NW60	1291	H216	E41 Y032	1643
H33*	-	615	H125	E41 PW71	1265	H217	E41 PC65	1844
H34*	E41 X030	920	H126	E41 XE17	1176	H218	E41 E430	1772
H35*	E41 F6X6	955	H127	E41 CF97	1205	H219	E41 D516	1781
H36*	E41 R923	604	H128	R95 WV90	1038	H220	E41 E9X3	1721
H37*	E41 T3H5	650	H129	R95 K2PA	1082	H221	E41 HT02	1810
H38*	E41 XY19	509	H130	R95 EY97	1138	H222	R95 W2V6	1712
H39	E41 FY96	523	H131	R95 P953	1173	H223	R95 P270	1707
H40	E41 E1W5	554	H132	R95 E3Y1	1403	H224	R95 RK64	1611
H41	E41 C635	559	H133	R95 NDY2	1423	H225	R95 YH33	1857
H42	E41 V009	617	H134	R95 E36V	1386	H226	R95 FP95	1865
H43*	E41 N9K6	709	H135	R95 YK59	1456	H227	R95 PK29	1859
H44*	E41 W623	732	H136	R95 EY71	1486	H228	R95 WK03	1798
H45*	E41 E7C6	844	H137	R95 K6X2	1482	H229	R95 A433	1677

House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest turbine (m)
H46*	E41 YC63	870	H138	R95 W2Y2	1474	H230	R95 DX21	1690
H47*	E41 A7P0	854	H139	R95 CYV6	1479	H231	R95 EK25	1793
H48*	E41 YN30	694	H140	R95 A008	1481	H232	R95 R240	1853
H49	E41 YH70	776	H141	R95 T3Y9	1496	H233	R95 X406	1693
H50	E41 KD26	720	H142	R95 Y8X0	1431	H234	R95 KT52	1574
H51	R95 V2K1	898	H143	R95 HP49	1414	H235	R95 KPR8	1571
H52	R95 XV34	919	H144	R95 P224	1247	H236	R95 V8N7	1539
H53	R95 KFN4	778	H145	R95 EW86	1436	H237	R95 W8D4	1821
H54	R95 V240	715	H146	R95 C2F3	1202	H238	R95 NP78	1751
H55	R95 K8WE	681	H147	R95 HXR9	1105	H239	R95 TX40	1733
H56	R95 YYW0	617	H148	R95 YD77	1105	H240	R95 W9W8	1768
H57	R95 DYP5	542	H149	R95 YY83	1043	H241	R95 W603	1605
H58	R95 V3WF	780	H150	R95 C1P3	1117	H242	R95 R8FT	1581
H59	R95 Y899	831	H151	R95 C9R2	1141	H243	R95 T8F5	1658
H60	R95 AH22	691	H152	R95 FX31	1313	H244	R95 WF54	1619
H61	R95 PRP4	822	H153	R95 W215	1317	H245	R95 KC58	1597
H62	R95 E6D5	815	H154	R95 H7FE	1484	H246	R95 KH59	1742
H63	R95 V8VC	997	H155	R95 EY27	1370	H247	R95 HF53	1736
H64	E41 PR83	775	H156	R95 HE92	1321	H248	R95 XW53	1690
H65	E41 EY95	703	H157	R95 ANP2	1366	H249	R95 F3CH	1900
H66	R32 YK28	1185	H158	R95 X038	1443	H250	R95 CK61	1889
H67	R32 R9C5	1085	H159	R95 YY04	1339	H251	R95 RW82	1927
H68	R32 FF64	1019	H160	R95 VH34	1287	H252	R95 XE93	1572
H69	-	1297	H161	R95 X4HY	1082	H253	R95 C860	1652
H70	R32 W9K1	1153	H162	R32 X4A8	1950	H254*	E41 RV00	1859
H71	R32 Y6W6	1159	H163	R32 DH00	1576	H255	E41 V205	1832
H72	R32 YD52	1328	H164	R32 P620	1792	H256	E41 EH26	1739
H73	R32 F9D7	1394	H165	R32 NX29	1914	H257	E41 XV30	1714
H74	R32 YX81	1458	H166	R32 T9RR	1935	H258	E41 CD86	1667
H75	E41 NN96	1030	H167	R32 R1H5	1694	H259	E41 DT22	1566
H76	E41 DE48	1290	H168	R32 RC67	1653	H260	E41 EF98	1509
H77	E41 XC57	1020	H169	R32 Y5W7	1584	H261	R32 V226	1826
H78	E41 A322	1028	H170	R32 K2C2	1559	H262	R32 E6P3	1714
H79	E41 HX62	1445	H171	R32 A9P7	1513	H263	R32 R7F6	1660
H80	E41 W738	1311	H172	R32 VE02	1881	H264	E41 A6Y8	1193
H81	E41 F642	1430	H173	R32 YP95	1879	H265	E41 T2N3	1233
H82	E41 AK53	1392	H174	R32 N765	1960	H266	R95 W63R	1390
H83	E41 K065	1367	H175	R32 KVV9	1897	H267	R95 P9KW	1232
H84	E41 DY90	1340	H176	R32 E4P9	1775	H268	R95 PD90	1308
H85	E41 E6P0	1305	H177	R32 N6P1	1802	H269	R95 WN80	1183
H86	E41 NP92	1084	H178	R32 F8D9	1750	H270	R95 EK58	1156
H87	E41 CK00	1092	H179	R32 T8KP	1767	H271	R95 NX9R	1484
H88	E41 H261	1096	H180	R32 Y5TE	1547	H272	R32 DK09	1999
H89	E41 T186	1179	H181	R32 XA61	1624	H273	R32 DXA9	1998
H90	E41 HY65	1177	H182	E41 TC63	1691	H274	E41 C7N0	2021
H91	E41 KT18	1299	H183	E41 P276	1645			
H92	E41 VW11	1274	H184	E41 XR84	1791			

* House is also within 500m of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection

Note: House H23 has two Eircodes, both linked to the same building, and is treated as one house, H23, herein.

Table 17-4: Local Residences within 500m of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection

UGC: Underground Cables: Ballylehaun-Ballyring UGC/Ballyring-Parksgrove UGC/Parksgrove-Moatpark UGC

PS: Parksgrove Substation

House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest UGC (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest UGC (m)	House ID	EirCode	Distance to nearest UGC (m)
H31	E41 H970	231	H113	E41 C6H3	103	H292	R95 X0H4	117 (UGC) 436 (PS)
H32	E41 C6N4	136	H254	E41 RV00	38	H293	R95 X440	87 (UGC) 421 (PS)
H33	-	144	H275	R95 TN96	165	H294	R95 K5X5	119 (UGC) 355 (PS)
H34	E41 X030	19	H276	R95 N8Y4	75	H295	R95 FA3H	80 (UGC) 328 (PS)
H35	E41 F6X6	20	H277	R95 X6X0	148	H296	R95 X884	289
H36	E41 R923	32	H278	R95 E5R7	49	H297	R95 F6HW	265
H37	E41 T3H5	96	H279	R95 R1X6	83	H298	R95 D6P5	129 (UGC) 394 (PS)
H38	E41 XY19	37	H280	R95 VW80	115	H299	R95 N1F1	94 (UGC) 359 (PS)
H43	E41 N9K6	33	H281	R95 E8N9	181	H300	R95 C7P2	51 (UGC) 313 (PS)
H44	E41 W623	27	H282	R95 AX64	217	H301	R95 RKW4	346 (UGC) 315 (PS)
H45	E41 E7C6	48	H283	R95 V226	289	H302	R95 PE09	240
H46	E41 YC63	42	H284	R95 K184	250	H303	R95 NH68	243
H47	E41 A7P0	24	H285	R95 H018	247	H304	R95 R2T7	107
H48	E41 YN30	204	H286	R95 NDH5	193	H305	R95 D9V2	38
H58	R95 V3WF	205	H287	R95 FC84	299	H306	R95 C3H3	13
H59	R95 Y899	136	H288	R95 VW30	116	H307	R95 A0CR	54
H60	R95 AH22	85	H289	-	43	H308	R95 W5C9	134
H61	R95 PRP4	141	H290	R95 A727	276	H309	R95 A338	159
H111	E41 W621	244	H291	R95 D9W7	253 (UGC) 440 (PS)	H310	R95 P7TK	184

EIA 17.3.1.1.3 Local Economy

Key Employment Sectors: According to Census 2022 (latest available), Professional Services and Commerce and Trade are the two main employment sectors in the Study Area. Given the reliance on cars to commute to work (71%), and the high proportion commuting up to 30 minutes to work (58%), it is likely that much of the local population is accessing employment opportunities in nearby urban areas, of Kilkenny or Portlaoise.

Overall, proportion of people involved in Agriculture in the Study Area (14%) is significantly greater than the national average (4%) with dairying the dominant enterprise in the broader county.¹ Tirlán (formerly Glanbia Ireland and Glanbia Co-op) is a major employer in the area and a major driver of the rural economy. A 2023 study established that Tirlán directly supported 6,730 jobs in dairy and grain in Ireland and paid out €2 billion in milk and grain payments in 2022 - €244 million of which was in Kilkenny County.²

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-fss/farmstructuresurvey2023/livestock/>

² <https://www.tirlan.com/our-story/news/new-study-shows-tirlan-drives-eu55-billion-of-economic-activity>

Gross Value Added (GVA): CSO data for incomes and the economy is available at a county and regional level rather than at a sub-county level. The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area is in the South-East Region which comprises Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford. In 2024, the latest year for which preliminary data is available, GDP per person in County Kilkenny stood at €40,067, below the national average of €104,511. Preliminary GVA per person in County Kilkenny was also lower than at a national level - €38,150 and €99,513 respectively.³ Based on Census 2022 population levels for the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area (3,303 persons), the size of the local economy is estimated to be €126 million in GVA terms.

EIAR 17.3.1.1.4	Tourism Products & Attractions
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Within the South-East Region, County Kilkenny attracted 488,000 domestic tourists in 2024, generating €109 million in Revenue.⁴ This equates to a quarter of all domestic revenue generated in the South-East Region in 2024.⁵ In the same year, the county attracted 167,000 overseas tourists, generating €70 million in revenue. This equates to just under a third of all overseas tourists visiting the region.

For overseas tourists visiting Ireland, hiking and cross-country walking was the most popular activity by a significant margin in 2024.⁶ Walking (45%) is also an important activity for domestic holidaymakers to County Kilkenny.⁷ There are three walks identified within the study area:

- The **Gathabawn Loop Walk** is routed along the L5818 local road to the east of the Ballylehaun Area and overlaps the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection along part of the the Ballylehaun-Ballyring UGC route on the L5818, L5821 and L5820 local roads.
- The **Cullahill Health Way Loop Walk** is located further and on the far side of Cullahill Mountain – i.e. on the north-eastern slopes. This walk starts and finishes in Cullahill village to the north of the Ballylehaun Area, and does not overlap any part of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection;
- Also starting/finishing from Cullahill village, the **Cullahill – Binnianea Loop Walk** is a longer looped walk on the northeastern slopes of Cullahill Mountain and does not overlap any part of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection.
- **Mac Giolla Phadriag Way** is a linear walk between Cullahill and Durrow via Cullahill Mountain, Ballykeely Wood and Ballagh Hill.

³ <https://data.cso.ie/table/CIRGDP01>

⁴ [https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?](https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?_gl=1*zqa5hr*_gcl*_au*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*FPAU*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*_ga*OTU3NTgyNTU4LjE3NTk3NDU5MzE.*_ga_QXN9X1MSHM*cZ3ODg4Nzg3OTgkbzlkZzEkdDE3ODg4Nzg4NTEkajckbDAkaDUzMTE3Nzg0Ng..*_fplc*a29xcklVeU9BaVJLdkhjYnRnR3loc3hVSmc2Y1JlaXlwSDREaEJKY2p6YiUyRnVsRjQ0MkRiZ1JVtIFwSXNmR2xzdWhla01MYWxGdWZNN01HR1ZwM2k5UHJc2NtMVE3TWWhwR1pwT2lZu1dT2k4Y1p2TFhVYTJCMVB0MzNRVmcIM0QIM0Q.)

⁵ [https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/606ddf5f-f95a-4e92-ab98-f673a434defc/research-key-tourism-facts-national-2024.pdf?](https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/606ddf5f-f95a-4e92-ab98-f673a434defc/research-key-tourism-facts-national-2024.pdf?_gl=1*9etx26*_gcl*_au*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*FPAU*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*_ga*OTU3NTgyNTU4LjE3NTk3NDU5MzE.*_ga_QXN9X1MSHM*cZ3ODg4Nzg3OTgkbzlkZzEkdDE3ODg4Nzg4NTEkajckbDAkaDUzMTE3Nzg0Ng..*_fplc*a29xcklVeU9BaVJLdkhjYnRnR3loc3hVSmc2Y1JlaXlwSDREaEJKY2p6YiUyRnVsRjQ0MkRiZ1JVtIFwSXNmR2xzdWhla01MYWxGdWZNN01HR1ZwM2k5UHJc2NtMVE3TWWhwR1pwT2lZu1dT2k4Y1p2TFhVYTJCMVB0MzNRVmcIM0QIM0Q.)

⁶ [https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/606ddf5f-f95a-4e92-ab98-f673a434defc/research-key-tourism-facts-national-2024.pdf?](https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/606ddf5f-f95a-4e92-ab98-f673a434defc/research-key-tourism-facts-national-2024.pdf?_gl=1*9etx26*_gcl*_au*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*FPAU*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*_ga*OTU3NTgyNTU4LjE3NTk3NDU5MzE.*_ga_QXN9X1MSHM*cZ3ODg4Nzg3OTgkbzlkZzEkdDE3ODg4Nzg4NTEkajckbDAkaDUzMTE3Nzg0Ng..*_fplc*a29xcklVeU9BaVJLdkhjYnRnR3loc3hVSmc2Y1JlaXlwSDREaEJKY2p6YiUyRnVsRjQ0MkRiZ1JVtIFwSXNmR2xzdWhla01MYWxGdWZNN01HR1ZwM2k5UHJc2NtMVE3TWWhwR1pwT2lZu1dT2k4Y1p2TFhVYTJCMVB0MzNRVmcIM0QIM0Q.)

⁷ [https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?](https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?_gl=1*9etx26*_gcl*_au*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*FPAU*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*_ga*OTU3NTgyNTU4LjE3NTk3NDU5MzE.*_ga_QXN9X1MSHM*cZ3ODg4Nzg3OTgkbzlkZzEkdDE3ODg4Nzg4NTEkajckbDAkaDUzMTE3Nzg0Ng..*_fplc*a29xcklVeU9BaVJLdkhjYnRnR3loc3hVSmc2Y1JlaXlwSDREaEJKY2p6YiUyRnVsRjQ0MkRiZ1JVtIFwSXNmR2xzdWhla01MYWxGdWZNN01HR1ZwM2k5UHJc2NtMVE3TWWhwR1pwT2lZu1dT2k4Y1p2TFhVYTJCMVB0MzNRVmcIM0QIM0Q.)

⁷ [https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?](https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/ad8c3e5d-59db-4d54-ae09-f5566ca52473/research-key-tourism-facts-kilkenny-2024.pdf?_gl=1*9etx26*_gcl*_au*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*FPAU*MTk3ODU4MDAuMTc4ODg2NTc5Ng..*_ga*OTU3NTgyNTU4LjE3NTk3NDU5MzE.*_ga_QXN9X1MSHM*cZ3ODg4Nzg3OTgkbzlkZzEkdDE3ODg4Nzg4NTEkajckbDAkaDUzMTE3Nzg0Ng..*_fplc*a29xcklVeU9BaVJLdkhjYnRnR3loc3hVSmc2Y1JlaXlwSDREaEJKY2p6YiUyRnVsRjQ0MkRiZ1JVtIFwSXNmR2xzdWhla01MYWxGdWZNN01HR1ZwM2k5UHJc2NtMVE3TWWhwR1pwT2lZu1dT2k4Y1p2TFhVYTJCMVB0MzNRVmcIM0QIM0Q.)

Organised Walking Events: These walks are also part of organised events:

- The local Gathabawn Rural Development Group host an annual charity walking event along the Gathabawn Loop, on St. Stephens Day every year.
- The Mac Giolla Phadraig Way Walk is an annual walk which takes place on the October Bank Holiday weekend, and some organised walks also held at Easter. Past organised walks of this Way have been walked from Durrow and finish in Gathabawn village instead of Cullahill.
- Laois Walks Festival often includes guided historical and scenic treks around Cullahill Mountain.
- Cullahill Mountain Climbs provides guided seasonal walks which includes the Healthy Way and Binneanea loops.

See **Figure 17.3: Tourism Products & Attractions**

Cycling trails in the area include the North Kilkenny Cycle Route and the Laois Cycle Route which follow local roads in the area, including through Gathabawn and Lisdowney villages. During 2025 and 2026, the annual Rás na mBan cycle has passed through Freshford to the south of the Project for Stage 1 of the race. A cycle route from Kilkenny to Portlaoise has also been proposed as part of the National Cycle Network Plan⁸ which would pass through the Study Area on its route via Ballyragget and Abbeyleix.

In relation to scenic route/viewing location within 5km that look in the direction that the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm will be within: the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 lists one scenic view, V14: *“Views north and east on the Johnstown/Gattabaun Road No. LP1805 between junctions with Road nos. LT18054 and LT18056.”*. The Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027 lists three scenic views - 004, 014 and 021, of which the Landscape expert considered the most relevant was 004: *“Road No. L5753 in the townlands Cullahill. Views towards Knockmannon Hill”* which looks in the direction of the proposed windfarm. *Whereas the orientation of Views 014 and 021 are slightly offset from the main direction of the wind farm but views may still be afforded of it.*

There is limited tourist accommodation within 5km of the Proposed Gathabawn Wind Farm. There are c. 24 tourism accommodation properties (including B&B residences, Airbnb, hotels) in the area, many of which are located in Freshford.

See **Figure 17.3: Tourism Products & Attractions**

While not within the Study Area, Kilkenny Castle & Parklands and St. Canice’s Cathedral and Round Tower are located in Kilkenny City, c.17km southeast of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm site. According to the Office of Public Works, Kilkenny Castle and Kilkenny Castle Parklands attracted 761,282 visitors in 2025⁹, while St. Canice’s Cathedral saw 57,305 visitors in 2024 (latest available)¹⁰. Kilkenny Castle Parklands is in the Top 10 most visited ‘Free to Enter’ visitors site in the Country.

EIAR 17.3.1.1.5	Community Benefit Funds from renewable energy projects
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The **Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)** is an Irish Government initiative that is playing a key role in reaching Ireland’s target of generating at least 80% of electricity from renewable sources (DCEE, 2026).

The RESS scheme provides financial support to grid-scale renewable electricity projects across the country and is operated through a competitive auction-based scheme which invites qualifying renewable electricity projects to bid in with a price they will receive for the duration of the RESS support.

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/280482/50bf7376-dc20-4606-9898-7f307414e083.pdf#page=null>

⁹ https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/6c91f074/Copy_of_Final_Stats_Press_Release_003.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.failteireland.ie/en/research-and-insights/visitor-numbers-dashboard>

The auction takes the form of a simple, sealed bid auction of eligible offers. Lowest price bids are selected first, until the quantity sought is achieved. This price bid is a guaranteed minimum, and also maximum, so if the market price for electricity is below the bid price, they will receive support. If the market price for electricity is above the bid price, they are required to pay the difference back. In this way, RESS provides consumer protection, whereby supported projects are required to pay into the scheme when market prices exceed their RESS bid price.

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) helps developers by providing long-term revenue certainty through guaranteed, auction-secured electricity prices for up to 16 years. Managed in Ireland by EirGrid, the scheme removes major financial risks before construction begins. The first RESS auction, RESS 1, took place in 2000. The most recent RESS 6 action took place in August 2026.

Community Benefit Funds: All renewable electricity (RE-E) projects supported under RESS have to provide a Community Benefit Fund (CBF) for the benefit of the local area, to the amount of €2 per megawatt hour of electricity exported to the grid. The CBF, which is estimated to be approx. 300,000 per annum depending on the amount of electricity generated, will be established and distributed in accordance with the Rulebook for Community Benefit Funds under RESS (May 2025). In accordance with Rulebook, the Community that lives close to the RESS Project is the beneficiary of the CBF. A locally recruited CBF committee will be responsible for setting the direction of the Fund, the geographical area and making funding decisions. The CBF may define the Area of Benefit of the Fund, taking into consideration the Fund's resources and the number of households located in the vicinity of the windfarm. The funds generated will support local infrastructure, energy upgrades, education etc. These funds are designed to ensure that RESS projects contribute to sustainable community initiatives and empower local communities to support local causes and at least 40% of funds must be aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals which focus on sustainability, climate action and community development.

RESS Community Benefit Funds in the local and wider area of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm include:

- €50,000 to €100,000 per annum, Parksgrove Solar Farm (existing)
- c.280,000 per annum, Ballynalacken Windfarm (consented)
- c.250,000 per annum, Seskin Wind Farm (under appeal, ACP)

Other older existing wind farms, such as Lisdowney Windfarm or Lisheen Wind Farm, do not provide RESS Community Benefit Funds. Although it is noted that a community fund of €14,265 was available for the Lisdowney Wind Farm in 2023.

EIAR 17.3.2 Existing Sources of Impacts

The occurrence of existing environmental impacts in the areas on or around the location of the proposal have also been considered. The Lisdowney Windfarm, which is operational for the last 10 years, has contributed to the local economy through construction build spend, local landowner payments and the more recently available community benefit fund.

EIAR 17.3.3 Importance, Sensitivity and Vulnerability to Change

EIAR 17.3.3.1 Importance

The local economy is key to population well-being and sustains and underpins the structures of society. Through economic activity and employment, the local economy generates incomes for the population, which enables individuals and families to prosper and achieve their social aspirations, all of which is important in creating sustainable local communities. These issues are particularly important at a local level for a predominantly rural area, where the range of economic opportunities is limited compared to larger more

urban areas. Overall, the local economy is considered High importance. Tourism is considered to be Medium importance in the local EDs.

EIAR 17.3.3.2 Sensitivity

Population growth within the Gathabawn Windfarm Project Study Area, has been relatively strong over the past 20 years. Lisdowney, Balleen, and Ballyragget EDs all recorded double digit growth in the period between Census 2002 and Census 2022, with much of this growth, particularly for the Lisdowney and Balleen recorded in the past 10 years. Other EDs, such as Cullahill and Ballyconra have recorded low or negative population growth over the same period. The trends indicate that much of the population growth in the Study Area of the past 20 years (+20%) has broadly followed the relatively strong regional and national population growth over the same period and points towards good economic opportunities in the surrounding area. Notwithstanding that, the relatively small population of the Study Area, in the context of the county and region means the sensitivity of the local economy is considered to be Low.

Due to the relatively small tourism offering in the Study Area, the sensitivity is considered to be Low.

EIAR 17.3.4 Evolution of the Baseline Environment (the 'Do-Nothing' scenario)

There is an existing windfarm (Lisdowney Wind Farm) to the north and west of the proposal and this windfarm can be expected to seek an extension of duration to continue operating in the medium to long term.

Trends in population, employment and disposable incomes: Census and CSO data relating to population and standard of living provide insight into key trends in the Study Area. The populations of all but one of the EDs have increased over the 20-year period 2002 – 2022. Ballyconra ED is the only ED in the Study Area to record a marginal decline over the 20-year intercensal period of 9.8%, or 26 people. Ballyragget ED stands out with the highest population and population density over the 20 years. It has not, however, experienced the highest population growth over the period. This was recorded in Lisdowney ED where the local population increased by 53.5%, from 187 to 287.

CSO population forecasts estimate that the State's population will increase to 6 million (27%) out to 2051.¹¹ Assuming the local population grows broadly in line with the national growth rate, the population of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project Study Area will increase to 4,195 by 2051, an increase of 892 people.

Personal disposable income in County Kilkenny has broadly trended upwards since 2016 and, as of 2024 (latest available) is 58% higher than the recessionary levels recorded in 2012. Household disposable income in the county has followed a similar trend – up 70% on 2012.¹² Similar trends were recorded in the South-East Region, with personal and household disposable incomes increasing by 55% and 79% respectively, between 2012 and 2024.¹³

The South-East Region accounts for 8% of total employment in Ireland. In the 12 months to Q2 2025 (latest available), the unemployment rate in the region declined by 2.5 percentage points.¹⁴ Full employment is typically achieved when the unemployment rate reaches 5%¹⁵ - this means that everyone who wants a job

¹¹<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-plfp/populationandlabourforceprojections2017-2051/populationprojectionsresults/#:~:text=Under%20the%20M3F1%20variant%20the,due%20to%20net%20inward%20migration.>

¹²<https://data.cso.ie/table/RAA02>

¹³ <https://data.cso.ie/table/RAA03>

¹⁴https://a.storyblok.com/f/70398/x/20ebea2d24/solas_south-east_regional_infographics.pdf

¹⁵https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBudgetOffice/2023/2023-03-30_pbo-note-on-introduction-to-the-irish-economy-unemployment_en.pdf

can find a job. The figures for Q2 2025 indicate full employment at both a regional (4.5%) and national (4.8%) level.

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm will be operated for at least a period of 35 years. It is expected that over the operational phase of the Windfarm, the local population will grow in line with the national average. It is also expected that GVA per person, and consequently the socio-economic circumstances will continue to improve over the long-term. It is assumed that the baseline environment will not have materially changed by the time of the construction or operation of the development.

Trends in Tourism: Challenges in the broader sector, relating to inflation, particularly rising energy costs, and geopolitical and economic uncertainty means that sentiment in the tourism sector has moderated through 2026.¹⁶ Despite concerns on the impact of inflation – both in terms of operating costs and consumers’ purchasing power, the majority of tourism operators do anticipate to perform as well or better than in 2025 and look to the domestic market to bolster much of this growth

The latest overseas visitor statistics¹⁷ confirm that cross country walking, hiking and cycling is a continuing upward trend amongst overseas visitors. These activities accounted for 86 per cent of the activities engaged in by overseas visitors in 2024 (latest available). These activities are important for domestic tourists too, with 55% of tourists to County Kilkenny engaging in walking, hiking and cycling.

EIAR 17.3.5 Climate Change Effects to Population

The Irish Government has taken earnest steps in recent years to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change. Commitments have been set to halve greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero no later than 2050.¹⁸ Certain sectors, such as agriculture, transport, energy industries and the residential sector are amongst the highest emitters¹⁹ of greenhouse gases and thus will be required to carry a greater burden in terms of Ireland’s transition to a low carbon economy. The efficiency of Ireland’s electricity supply (i.e., the proportion generated from renewable sources) has, however, improved over the last two decades linked, in some part, to the generation of wind energy which accounted for the generation of 40% of Ireland’s electricity usage in early 2026 – 33% from wind.²⁰

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm aligns with targets set in the Climate Action Plan 2025 to accelerate the actions required to respond to the climate crises. The scheme is predicted to produce approximately 150,000,000 kWh which is enough to supply 33,237 houses annually with the average domestic electricity needs²¹. This amount of electricity has the potential to offset 38,250 tonnes of CO₂e per annum – equivalent to 3,102ha of forestry, or 22,238 diesel/petrol cars switching to electric vehicles (see Section EIAR 1.6 of Chapter 1).

If the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm does not proceed, the climate mitigation of 150 million kWhrs of renewable energy – electricity will not occur.

¹⁶ <https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/b592100b-46d7-49ad-aeed-0a3e0b934e0a/REPORT%20TBSS%20May%202026%20for%20Failte%20Ireland%20website.pdf?>

¹⁷ <https://assets.failteireland.ie/5608854e-b2c7-0144-a5f6-88a7e629b0a4/606ddf5f-f95a-4e92-ab98-f673a434defc/research-key-tourism-facts-national-2024.pdf?>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

¹⁹ [Latest emissions data | Environmental Protection Agency \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/data-and-statistics/latest-emissions-data/)

²⁰ <https://www.eirgrid.ie/news/new-record-wind-energy-ireland>

²¹ Based on SEAI data of 4,513 kWh annually per household in 2022. <https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-statistics/residential/>

EIAR 17.4 IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This Section comprises an evaluation of the impacts of the proposal on the receiving Population environment.

EIAR 17.4.1 Criteria & Methodology

The criteria used for impact evaluation in this report is based on the EPA guidance document Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, and the ISEP guidance 'Social Impact Assessment in Environmental Impact Assessment in the UK (2025)'. The methodology for determining the significance of impacts to Population is based on the sensitivity of the receptors (sensitive aspect) and the magnitude of the impact, as outlined in [Appendix 17.1](#).

EIAR 17.4.2 Source-Pathway-Receptor

The following sources of impacts and pathways for these impacts to the identified receptors (sensitive aspects) of Population are listed below.

EIAR 17.4.2.1 Sources of Impact

Construction Phase

- Construction traffic
- Use of local road network
- Construction employment
- Presence of construction works
- Construction contracts, purchasing of materials/services

Operational Phase

- Operating turbines
- Operating substation
- Community Benefit Fund
- Kilkenny County Council Commercial Rates

Decommissioning Phase

- Decommissioning contracts, purchasing of services

EIAR 17.4.2.2 Pathways

- Visibility
- Financial transactions

EIAR 17.4.2.3 Receptors

- Local residences and business owners

EIAR 17.4.3 Evaluation of effects on Population

A summary of the findings of the evaluation of the effects of the whole Gathabawn Windfarm project on Population (*Local Populations and Local Economy*) are listed in the table below. The relevant phases of the development are the construction, operational and decommissioning phases which are denoted by C, O and D respectively.

The evaluations follow this summary table

The following effects are evaluated in detail to determine whether or not they are likely to be Significant.

Table 17-5: List of effects to Population evaluated in detail

LOCAL POPULATIONS/LOCAL ECONOMY	EIAR Section
Operational Phase:	
Decrease in Property Prices	EIAR 17.4.3.1
Positive impact – Distribution of the Community Benefit Fund	EIAR 17.4.3.2

All of the remaining effects of the Gathabawn Windfarm project on Population have no likelihood of causing significant adverse effects to Local Populations or Local Economy receptors. A short evaluation of these effects is provided in [Section 17.4.3.3](#), with a list of these impacts provided in the table below. The relevant phases of the development are the construction, operational and decommissioning phases which are denoted by C, O and D respectively

Table 17-6: List of effects to Population which will not be significant

Effects of the Proposed Development which will not be significant	Phase	Impact Significance – See Section EIAR 17.4.3.3
LOCAL POPULATIONS & LOCAL ECONOMY		
Business disruption or loss of revenue due to construction works or traffic	C	Neutral
Decrease in tourism revenue	C	Neutral
Disruption of Mobile Broadband, Communication or TV Signals	O	Neutral
Positive impact – Increase in Local Economy due to construction spend	C	Imperceptible
Decrease in tourism revenue	O	Neutral
Positive impact – Improvements in County Budget due to Commercial Rates	O	Slight – Imperceptible
Positive impact – Strengthening the Local Economy	O	Imperceptible
Positive impact – Contribution to Climate Mitigation	O	Imperceptible
Effects to Local Populations and Local Economy during decommissioning	D	Neutral

EIAR 17.4.3.1 Decrease in Local Property Prices

Sensitive Aspect:	Local Populations
Sensitivity:	High (as per Section EIAR 17.3.2.1)
Impact Source(s)	Presence of wind turbines in an area
Impact Pathway(s)	Financial transactions
Project Stage	Operation Phase

Overview of Impact (general):

Potential or perceived reduction in demand or appeal for houses in the vicinity (within 1km and within 2km) of a proposed, new or established turbine or windfarm, resulting in a decrease in property prices. There are 65 houses within 1km and a further 209 houses between 1 and 2km from the windfarm. Approximately one quarter of these properties within 1km relate to landowners involved in the Project.

Examination of the Impact of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project:

Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm: Indirect/secondary negative impacts on house prices in the vicinity (within 1km and within 2km) of a proposed, new or established turbine or windfarm have not been reliably established by Irish state bodies or NGOs because where the operational impacts of the windfarm e.g. noise and shadow flicker are within allowable limits the matter of house resale values are subjective.

However, a growing body of international empirical research suggests that proximity to wind farms and associated energy infrastructure does not have a consistent negative effect on residential property prices. A 2014 study by the UK's Centre for Economics and Business Research²², examining more than 82,000 property transactions within 5km of seven wind farms in England and Wales between 1995 and 2013, found no evidence that wind farm development adversely affected local property prices. Similar findings from a 2016 ClimateXChange²³ study covering mainland Scotland between 1990 and 2014, which found no consistent negative relationship between proximity to wind turbines and house-price growth. Further afield, a 2014 Canadian²⁴ project studying more than 7,000 property transactions in Ontario found no statistically significant effect of wind farms on property values. Taken together, these studies indicate that property-price trends are predominantly influenced by wider housing-market, local economic and macroeconomic conditions, with no consistent evidence of a material adverse effects attributable to proximity to wind energy infrastructure.

In the long term, it is considered that Climate Change will have profound impacts on economic stability with the economic consequences of extreme weather events, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse and increasing natural resource shortages causing shocks to the global economy. House prices will likely fluctuate in response.

It should be noted that there will be a considerable Community Benefit Fund linked to the operational phase of Gathabawn Windfarm of €300,000 per annum distributed locally. Part of this Fund will be paid directly to near neighbours to reflect their proximity to the turbines. This can be considered an additional income attaching to the property. Also, the fund will improve community services, arts and cultural funding locally, making the area in general more attractive to prospective buyers.

As detailed above, house resale values are multi-factorial and affected by many and diverse variables which cannot be reliably co-related. Overall, it is considered that houses prices in the long term will be more adversely affected by supply and demand dynamics and the response of global markets to the effects of climate change. Given the relatively low number of houses within 2km of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm, it is considered that Significant Adverse impacts are not likely to occur. However, it is acknowledged that while most houses in the surrounding area will have Low magnitude impacts, those houses closest to the windfarm may experience Medium magnitude effects.

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/mar/29/property-house-price-impact-wind-farms-turbines>

²³ <https://www.climateexchange.org.uk/projects/impact-of-wind-farms-on-property-prices/>

²⁴ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cjag.12030>

Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection: The potential for the candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection to affect local property prices is considered to be imperceptible. The majority of the proposed grid connection comprises underground cabling along the Ballylehaun-Ballyring, Ballyring-Parksgrove, and Parksgrove-Moatpark sections. While installation of the underground cables may result in temporary disruption during the construction phase, once completed there will be limited visible evidence of the infrastructure and no material long-term change to the character of the surrounding area. Accordingly, no material effect on local property values is anticipated from these elements during the operational phase. The Parksgrove Substation will represent a permanent above-ground element; however, given its relatively localised footprint, any effect on residential property prices is expected to be highly localised and limited.

Impact Magnitude	Low	Impact Significance: (pre-mitigation)	Imperceptible - Slight
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Mitigation and Monitoring Measures: Even though Significant impacts are not predicted; the following mitigation and monitoring measures will be implemented as best practice environmental management.

WM103 GM92	<u>A Community Liaison Officer</u> will be appointed for the duration of the operational phase and will act as a point of contact for the local community.
WM104	<u>The Community Benefit Fund</u> will be distributed in line the Government's Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) 'Community Benefit Fund Good Practice Principles Handbook'. The Fund will be registered with SEAI and a Report will be prepared annually and submitted to the SEAI, to demonstrate compliance with the RESS Handbook.
WM102 GM93	<u>Environmental Management Plan for the Operational Phase:</u> Following the completion of the construction and commissioning of the Project, the Environmental Management Plan will be updated, and the operation of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project will be carried out in accordance with the updated Plan. A suitably qualified Environmental Manager will be appointed by the Project Promoter, and it will be their responsibility to ensure that the EMP is implemented through liaising with the Asset Manager and by carrying out regular audits on EMP compliance. The EMP will be an important contract document for the Asset Management contractor who will be contractually obliged to comply with the EMP and the requirements of the Environmental Manager.

Effectiveness of Mitigation Measures:

Overall, while it is considered that houses prices in the long term will be more adversely affected by supply and demand dynamics and the response of global markets to the effects of climate change. A suite of mitigation measures are included in the EIAR to protect the amenity of properties in the vicinity of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm project. These will be implemented during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases through the Environmental Management Plan. Furthermore, the windfarm will be required to comply with any planning conditions relating to the windfarm, in particular in relation to noise and shadow flicker.

Residual Impact Significance (post-mitigation):	Imperceptible - Slight
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EIAR 17.4.3.2 Distribution of the Community Benefit Fund – Positive Impact

Sensitive Aspect:	Local Populations
Sensitivity:	High (as per Section EIAR 17.3.2.1)
Impact Source(s)	Payment of the Community Benefit Fund
Impact Pathway(s)	Financial transactions
Project Stage	Operation Phase

Overview of Impact (general):

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) is a key policy initiative to deliver on the Government's Climate Action Plan renewable electricity (RE-E) commitments. All RE-E projects supported under RESS have to provide a Community Benefit Fund for the benefit of the local area, to the amount of €2 per megawatt hour of electricity exported to the grid.

Examination of the Impact of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project:

Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm: The Gathabawn Windfarm Community Benefit Fund (CBF) is estimated to be **circa €300,000 per annum**. The Fund will be created irrespective of whether the Windfarm participates in RESS or other Government price support scheme or not and **will operate for the lifetime of the windfarm**.

The CBF will be established and distributed in accordance with the Rulebook for Community Benefit Funds under RESS (May 2025). In accordance with Rulebook, the Community that lives close to the RESS Project is the beneficiary of the CBF. A locally recruited CBF committee will be responsible for setting the direction of the Fund, the geographical area and making funding decisions. The CBF may define the Area of Benefit of the Fund, taking into consideration the Fund's resources and the number of households located in the vicinity of the windfarm.

Subject to final CBF Committee approval, it is proposed that a substantial amount of the Gathabawn CBF will be distributed within 5km of a turbine i.e. to near neighbours within 1km and 2km, to community groups and NGOs in the nearest village of Gathabawn and in the village of Lisdowney, Cullahill and Galmoy. The small towns of Freshford and Johnstown are also in the Area of Benefit, with Ballyragget and Durrow on the periphery.

The fund will be distributed as follows;

- Payment to all households within 1km of a turbine base of €1,000 per annum. There are 65 houses within 1km.
- Households located further than 1km but within a distance of 2km will receive an annual payment of an amount lower than €1,000 but higher than €500, depending on the actual distance from a turbine base, and the agreement of the local community fund committee.
- The total amounts allocated to direct payments to households will be limited to 50% of the total annual contributions from the CBF.
- The balance of circa €140,000 every year will be distributed to local community organisations such as clubs, schools, tourism and community projects, sport and home energy efficiency programs. Successful projects will be in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals of - Quality Education, Affordable and Clean Energy, Sustainable Cities and Communities and Climate Action.

The annual CBF is equivalent to approximately 0.24% of the estimated annual GVA of the Study Area. In the context of the overall size of the local economy (particularly the EDs of Glashare, Balleen, and Lisdowney) the magnitude of this additional contribution is considered to be Medium. However, given the localised nature of the fund the effect is considered to be slight and positive.

There is no community benefit fund associated with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection.

Impact Magnitude	Medium	Impact Significance: (pre-mitigation)	Slight (Positive)
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Mitigation and Monitoring Measures: Even though Significant impacts are not predicted; the following mitigation and monitoring measures will be implemented as best practice environmental management.			
WM104	<u>The Community Benefit Fund</u> will be distributed in line the Government's Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) 'Community Benefit Fund Good Practice Principles Handbook'. The Fund will be registered with SEAI and a Report will be prepared annually and submitted to the SEAI, to demonstrate compliance with the RESS Handbook.		
WM105	<u>The Community Benefit Fund</u> will be set up once the windfarm becomes operational and will be distributed annually. The Community Liaison Officer will be available to local community groups at the set-up stage of the Fund to assist in the organisation of a fund committee and thereafter during the distribution of funds. The latest recipients of the funding will be listed on the community website www.ecopowergathabawn.ie Annually, the opening of the fund for applications will be advertised on the community website, on Local Radio and in the Local Newspapers		
<u>Effectiveness of Mitigation Measures:</u> The RESS Community Benefit Fund Rules require that the fund is administered and governed in accordance with the Handbook. This will ensure that the Fund will provide annual payments through a combination of direct payments to near neighbours in the vicinity of the windfarm and also through sustainable funding for local community organisations such as community clubs and projects, local schools, local tourism projects, local sport clubs and home energy efficiency programs.			
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Residual Impact Significance (<i>post-mitigation</i>):</td><td>Imperceptible - Slight</td></tr> </table>		Residual Impact Significance (<i>post-mitigation</i>):	Imperceptible - Slight
Residual Impact Significance (<i>post-mitigation</i>):	Imperceptible - Slight		

EIAR 17.4.3.3 Impacts which will not be Significant

All of the remaining effects on Population of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm, both alone and cumulatively with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection will not be significant. Short evaluations of these effects are provided below:

EIAR 17.4.3.3.1 Construction Phase

Business disruption or loss of revenue due to construction works or traffic (C): Neutral impact. While there are local businesses and community facilities in Gathabawn, Lisdowney, and Cullahill, there are no businesses in close proximity to the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm or the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection sites or access points. Haulage routes to the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm will use the national and regional road network as far as Coolnacrutta (R639) and Parksgrove (N77). The extent of construction material haulage on local roads will be limited and of short duration. As per Chapter 16 Material Assets, any effects on traffic on these roads will be Not Significant, and access to local businesses will be maintained throughout the construction period. In addition, it is proposed to deliver turbine components during off-peak hours, minimising disruption to local businesses along the turbine delivery route.

Traffic volumes for the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection will be very low, and mainly to the Parksgrove Substation Compound area, which will be accessed close to the junction of the L1807 with the N77 road. It is acknowledged that communities, particularly in Lisdowney, have recently experienced roadworks and traffic management associated with other infrastructure works. Notwithstanding this, road works on local roads will be brief and reversible, with flagmen in place to manage traffic through the works zone. No disruption to local businesses is expected. The overall impact is assessed to be Neutral.

Decrease in tourism revenue (C): Neutral impact. While there is accommodation available to rent/stay in the Study Area, the number of properties is relatively limited, and so any people staying at these properties will likely be there for short stays only, and are not likely to be significantly affected. The area contains local recreational and tourism amenities, including the Gathabawn Loop Walk, which overlaps with the Ballylehaun-Ballyring section of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection. These amenities primarily serve local recreation and small-scale visitor activity and are not considered to generate activity or expenditure such that temporary disruption associated with construction of the Proposed Windfarm or Candidate Grid Connection would materially affect tourism revenues.

Construction activity may result in temporary and localised inconvenience to recreational users. However, access will be maintained and managed and any effects will be temporary. Overall, the effect on tourism revenue will be Neutral.

Disruption of Mobile Broadband, Communication or TV Signals (O): Neutral impact. The potential for impacts on telecommunications has been evaluated in Chapter 16: Material Assets, where it was established that the Gathabawn turbines will not affect mobile broadband coverage in the area due to the nature of mobile broadband signals which diffract around the turbine blades themselves. It was also concluded that the Gathabawn Windfarm turbines will not impact on any point to point links or local broadband services, and in any case mitigation measures are readily available to remedy any unforeseen effects. Therefore, it is considered that any secondary impact on businesses in the area will be Neutral

Positive impact – Increase in Local Economy due to construction spend (C): Imperceptible impact. Overall, increased activity and experience in civil, electrical and professional services, and increased purchase of materials and services as a result of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project will have a positive economic impact, and thus social impact, in the region.

In relation to Gross Value Added to businesses & employment opportunities, any positive effects will be Imperceptible and considered Not Significant. The construction of the windfarm will take approximately 12

months and will be carried out by specialist construction contractors. Approximately 160 people will be employed at the height of construction including construction workers, engineers and specialist crews erecting and commissioning the wind turbines, ecologists, archaeologist, supervisors, plant operators and security staff. It is unknown how many will be employed from the local population, but any additional spend by employees within the study area is unlikely to have a noticeable effect on the local economy.

Approximately €10 million will be spent in Ireland on the civil and electrical contracts for the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm, and a further 25 million for the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection.

Local quarries will be contracted to supply the construction phase aggregate requirements. Site plant fuel and general hardware such as tools, wire and posts for the boundary fence will be sourced locally. Ready-mix concrete, precast concrete structures, construction compound building materials and fittings, specialist plant and electrical equipment hire, geogrid, drainage pipes and equipment, security fencing and permanent notice boards will all be sourced in the region.

EIAR 17.4.3.3.2 Operational Phase

Decrease in tourism revenue (O): Neutral Impact. Due to the short-term use of accommodation services by visitors, there is no potential for significant effects on this service. Chapter 14: Landscape evaluates the impact of the development on landscape character within 20km of the windfarm site, with particular focus on effects on receptors within 5km of the site. The views from within 5km of the nearest turbine are generally the most sensitive because they are likely to be more dominated within a local landscape context. The Landscape expert evaluated that the impact on the perception of the landscape from within 5km of the Project will have an impact ranging between Slight to Moderate depending on the proximity, viewing context, and intervening screening - *“Notwithstanding that the highest effects are generally associated with recreational routes within or close to the Study Area, the residual visual effects at tourism, recreational, and heritage receptors within the study area are assessed to be Not Significant”*.

Given the nature and relatively low number of the tourism offering in the Study Area there is not expected to be a negative impact on visitor numbers or revenue during the operational phase of the project. The effect on tourism revenue will be Neutral.

Positive Impact – Improvements in County Budget due to Commercial Rates (O): Slight – Imperceptible positive impact. It is estimated that the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm will generate c.€800,000 of commercial rates per annum over the 35-year operational phase. This would represent 3.2% of the overall commercial rates collected by Kilkenny County Council (€24.3 million in 2025²⁵). At these levels, it is expected that the additional rates would be a noticeable positive effect to the county budget, however as the population of the Study Area represents just 3% of the County Kilkenny population (c.104,160 Census 2022), it is unlikely that the benefits of these rates will be directly felt in the local area.

Positive Impact – Strengthening the local economy (O): Imperceptible impact. The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm and the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection will result in an increase in gross value added (GVA) to business and employment opportunities in the Study Area due to the purchase of materials and services, employment, and payments to landowners which will result in secondary induced spending in the local economy. The impact, while positive, will be low. During the operational phase of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project, it is anticipated that c.10 persons employed – 1 site caretaker (local), 7 turbine maintenance workers, and 2 managers for the Gathabawn Windfarm. The impact will be neutral given the size of the Study Area. The management and maintenance of the Parksgrove Substation and cabling into the Ballyragget Eirgrid Substation will be taken over by Eirgrid as part of their network operation activities, within negligible GVA into the local area.

²⁵ <https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/finance/annual-financial-statements/unaudited-afs-2025.pdf>

During the Operation Phase c. €4.2 million (annual average) will be spent on management, operation and maintenance, and materials for turbines. Of this: c. €12,000 per annum is local purchases on accommodation, fuel, food and hardware supplies, and c. €50,000 per annum is for local maintenance of roads and electrical equipment. Financial contributions will be made to the local population via landowner payments and the Community Benefit Scheme. Lease payments totalling c.€670,000 annually will be paid to landowners involved in the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm. On average, this equates to c.€1 million annually for 35 years. There are no operational phase payments associated with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection. The magnitude of the additional GVA generated in the local economy (c. 4%) is assessed as Low and of Imperceptible significance in the North Kilkenny region.

Positive impact – Contribution to Climate Mitigation (O): Imperceptible positive impact. The costs and benefits associated with climate action targets are best discussed at a national level. The EPA's latest projections indicate that, even with full implementation of planned policies and measures, Ireland could achieve a reduction of only 25% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to the national target of 51%.²⁶ In 2023, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council²⁷ set out that failure to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 could cost, on average of c. €0.35 billion annually up to 2030, when costs rise to €0.7 billion (0.2% of GNI*). Costs relating to extreme weather events could be in the region of 0.2% of GNI* (or €0.5 billion).

Against this backdrop, the generation of renewable energy by the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm would contribute incrementally towards the achievement of Ireland's emissions-reduction and renewable electricity objectives, while supporting the associated longer-term economic benefits of reduced fossil-fuel dependency, improved energy security and mitigation of the financial and economic costs associated with climate change.

EIAR 17.4.3.3 Decommissioning Phase

Effects to Local Populations and Local Economy during decommissioning works (D): Neutral impact. The decommissioning phase will be of a short duration (approx. 6 months) with a small number of personnel involved and therefore any induced spending is likely to be imperceptible. Decommissioning works will be temporary and moving from one turbine hardstanding area to the next, with low additional volumes of traffic on the local and regional roads. Taking into account the separation distances to local tourism assets, it is considered unlikely that any reduction in tourism revenue or asset quality would occur.

It is also noted, that with decommissioning comes the end of the community benefit fund, this may have a negative effect on the community who may at that time potentially depend on the fund for particular services or running of community facilities, for example.

EIAR 17.4.3.4 Cumulative Effect of the Whole Project

Cumulative impacts of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm and the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection Whole Project will be Imperceptible-Slight to Slight (positive). This largely relates to the impact associated with a potential reduction in house prices and the benefits associated with the Community Benefit Fund.

There are **no likely Moderate, Significant, Very Significant or Profound adverse impacts to Population** arising from the construction, operation or decommissioning of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm, either alone or cumulatively as a whole project with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection.

Overall, when all of the effects, adverse as well as positive, are considered altogether it is evaluated that the **cumulative effect of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project to Population will be Not Significant.**

²⁶ <https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2026/epa-projections-show-ireland-remains-off-track-for-2030-climate-.php>

²⁷ <https://www.fiscalcouncil.ie/climate-change/>

EIAR 17.4.4 Environmental Protection Measures

Measures which form part of standard windfarm construction/operation will be implemented during the construction/operation/decommissioning of the development to protect the Population environment and avoid/reduce these not significant effects. The environmental protection measures are identified below and are in the Environmental Management Plan 2026 for the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project.

WM12 GM12	The <u>Environmental Management Team</u> will monitor construction works for compliance with the Environmental Management Plan. The project Environmental Management Team which includes an Environmental Clerk of Works, the Project Ecologist and specialists as required such as archaeologists, invasive species specialists and hydrologists, who are independent of the site contractors. The Environmental Management Team will report to the owner's Project Manager.
WM13 GM13	A <u>Landowner Liaison Officer</u> (LLO) will be appointed and will monitor the erection and maintenance of the construction works area boundary fences and will liaise with the landowners regarding the location of access gateways along the fence, and of livestock water supply pipes and livestock water supply sources. The LLO will keep the landowners up to date with relevant construction work schedules.
WM88	<u>Public Road Repair</u> : Any damage to structures or road pavements along widening sections, cable routes or along concentrated construction haul routes, because of the construction works and deliveries to the works areas, will be repaired to at least as good a condition as pre-works.
GM71	<u>Public Road Repair</u> : Any damage to structures or road pavements along cable routes and along concentrated construction haul routes will be repaired to at least as good a condition as pre-works.
WM89 GM72	The <u>Traffic Management Plan</u> will be a key construction contract document and will be implemented to safely coordinate and manage traffic during the construction works. The Traffic Management Plan will be developed in coordination with Kilkenny County Council.
WM90 GM73	<u>Flag-men</u> will be used on public roads at road works locations. These flagmen will control the movement of traffic on the public road, so that road users can continue to use the public road network in a in a safe and efficient manner.
WM91 GM74	<u>Local Communication</u> : Local residents likely to be affected by road works, will be kept up to date on works schedules by the Community Liaison Officer.
WM92	<u>Traffic Volumes</u> : The largest traffic volumes are associated with the concrete pours for the turbine foundations. No other deliveries to the Ballylehaun Area or Ballyring Area of the Gathabawn Windfarm will be scheduled to occur on the concrete pour days in that Area.
WM93	<u>Local Traffic Flow</u> : Site entrance works and public road widening works on the L58141 and L18062 will be carried out prior to the main construction period at the Ballylehaun Area and at the Ballyring Area.
GM75	<u>Steel plating</u> will be available to cover the open trench to ensure access to property is maintained.
WM72	<u>Dust control</u> : Dust minimisation measures will be implemented during the construction works as follows: The site roads will be regularly inspected and swept to remove build up of mud and aggregate materials from their surface,

	- Any road that has the potential to give rise to fugitive dust will be regularly watered, as appropriate, during dry and windy conditions. - Vehicles delivering material with dust potential will be enclosed or covered with tarpaulin to restrict the escape of dust. Public roads in the vicinity of the site will be regularly inspected for cleanliness, and cleaned as necessary
WM82	<u>Telecom operators</u> will be contacted prior to the erection of the permitted wind turbines to confirm (1) requirement for mitigation measure, and (2) form of mitigation measure to be implemented – i.e. one or a combination of (a) change of telecom equipment on the existing masts; (b) change of signal pathways; (c) installation of telecom apparatus onto the windfarm met mast.
WM94	<u>A road safety and courtesy protocol</u> will be implemented for the duration of construction. All companies delivering to site will have to sign up to this protocol as part of their supply contract. Courtesy for other road users is fundamental to the protocol. Vehicles will slow down or stop, as appropriate, for other road users, in particular for pedestrians and cyclists along the construction haulage routes. Appropriate signage will be maintained for the duration of the project with clear signs at all junctions on the L1807, L1806 and L1804, L1803, L5818 and L58141 local roads.
WM74 GM63	<u>A Community Liaison Officer (CLO)</u> will be appointed. The CLO will liaise with and keep the local community up-to-date with relevant construction work schedules, through the use of letter drops to or direct contact with nearest neighbours. The CLO will be the point of contact for local residents and local landowners for matters relating to noise, dust or traffic. The Environmental Clerk of Works will liaise with the CLO and will be the point of contact between the contractor/developer and the Local Authority regarding any matters relating to noise or vibration from the construction works.
WM102 GM93	<u>Environmental Management Plan for the Operational Phase</u> : Following the completion of the construction and commissioning of the Project, the Environmental Management Plan will be updated, and the operation of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project will be carried out in accordance with the updated Plan. A suitably qualified Environmental Manager will be appointed by the Project Promoter, and it will be their responsibility to ensure that the EMP is implemented through liaising with the Asset Manager and by carrying out regular audits on EMP compliance. The EMP will be an important contract document for the Asset Management contractor who will be contractually obliged to comply with the EMP and the requirements of the Environmental Manager.
WM103 GM92	<u>A Community Liaison Officer</u> will be appointed for the duration of the operational phase and will act as a point of contact for the local community.
WM104	<u>The Community Benefit Fund</u> will be distributed in line the Government's Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) 'Community Benefit Fund Good Practice Principles Handbook'. The Fund will be registered with SEAI and a Report will be prepared annually and submitted to the SEAI, to demonstrate compliance with the RESS Handbook.
WM114 GM89	<u>Vegetation Monitoring</u> : The rate of re-vegetation of exposed soils and growth of newly planted hedgerows and trees will be checked by the Asset Manager during quarterly site inspections. Where revegetation is slower than expected, that area will be prepared and re-seeded or replanted in an appropriate manner, as advised by a suitably qualified ecologist.
WM107	<u>Curtailment Strategy – Noise</u> : A noise curtailment strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure that the operating windfarm complies with the prescribed operational noise criterion. In order to develop this strategy: (i) a pre-construction noise survey will be carried out to establish the background noise levels and to confirm the applicable wind turbine noise criteria at identified Noise Sensitive Locations (NSL) and (ii) following the commissioning of the Project and the commencement of operation of the

	wind farm, a second noise survey will be carried out at the NSLs to establish compliance with the noise limit conditions applied to the development. This survey will be carried out according to the IOA GPG and Supplementary Guidance Note 5: Post Completion Measurements (July 2014). Where exceedances are confirmed during surveys, then appropriate sound power operating modes will be activated for specified turbines operating in specified wind conditions as required to reduce noise output when exceedance at a NSL is predicted by the wind turbines computer SCADA software. A third noise survey will be carried following the activation of sound power modes to confirm the effectiveness of the curtailment strategy.
WM109	<u>Shadow Flicker Control</u>: The wind turbines will be fitted with a Shadow Flicker Control Module, comprising a central processing unit (CPU) and light sensors. Should a complaint regarding shadow flicker be received from a neighbouring resident, the occurrence of shadow flicker at the receptor will be investigated and the Control Module will be set to automatically turn off the turbine at the request of the resident, if the defined parameters for shadow flicker events, at a given sensitive receptor, are predicted to occur. This will eliminate shadow flicker at the residence in question. A report on the operation of the Shadow Flicker Control Module and compliance with any planning condition limiting shadow flicker occurrence will be prepared and submitted to the Local Authority after Year 1 of operation, and every 3 years thereafter.
WM123 GM94	<u>Up-to-date Best Practice</u>: Prior to the commencement of decommissioning works, a <u>review of these protective measures</u> listed herein will be carried out to ensure that the most up-to-date measures are implemented during decommissioning works to comply with best practice at the time.
WM122 GM95	<u>Environmental Management Plan</u>: Any decommissioning works will be carried out in accordance with the updated EMP. A suitably qualified Environmental Manager will be appointed by the Project Promoter, and it will be their responsibility to ensure that the EMP is implemented through liaising with the Asset Manager and the decommissioning Contractor(s) and by carrying out regular audits on EMP compliance. The EMP will be an important contract document for the decommissioning contractor(s) who will be contractually obliged to comply with the EMP and the requirements of the Environmental Manager
WM124 GM101	<u>Consultation & Supervision of Works</u>: The works will be carried out in consultation with Kilkenny County Council and under the supervision of a suitably qualified engineer and ecologist. Re-vegetation of the site will be carried out under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist.
WM125 GM100	<u>A Community Liaison Officer (CLO)</u> will be appointed for the duration of the decommissioning phase and will be the point of contact for local residents.
WM136 GM107	<u>Revegetation</u>: The Asset Manager and Project Ecologist will check the rate of re-vegetation of exposed soils and reinstated areas quarterly following decommissioning works (until revegetation is attained). Where revegetation is slower than expected, that area will be prepared and re-seeded in an appropriate manner.

EIAR 17.5 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS WITH OTHER PROJECTS

Other existing and permitted projects, and projects advanced in the planning system were examined for their potential to cumulatively affect Population with the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project. These projects are referred to as 'Other Projects' herein. The potential for off-site and secondary consequential development is also considered.

A Cumulative Study Areas are set out below and Other Projects located within this Study Area were identified and examined for potential for cumulative effects.

1. Electoral Divisions of Galmoy, Cullahill, Glashare, Lisdowney, Balleen, Ballyconra and Ballyragget, as the cumulative evaluation focuses on the local communities, and therefore the local population and economy around the development;
2. 5km for wind farms and other large projects within the central study area
3. 20km for windfarms within the wider, to facilitate their consideration in relation to tourism and to climate change mitigation actions.
4. Other renewable energy projects within 15km, in relation to community benefit funds;

The Other Projects which occur within the Cumulative Study Areas were subject to a cumulative scoping exercise, see Chapter 5 Description of the Development Appendix 5.4. As a result of this scoping exercise, some of these Other Projects were scoped IN for evaluation of cumulative effects, and these projects are listed below.

The Other Projects which have been Scoped-IN to the cumulative evaluations herein are identified in **Figure 17.4.1: Other Projects Scoped-In to the Population Cumulative Evaluations** and **Figure 17.4.2: Other Projects Scoped-In to the Population Cumulative Evaluations** (included at the end of this chapter).

EIAR 17.5.1 Evaluation of Cumulative Impacts with Other Projects

The potential for cumulative effects with Other Projects is evaluated hereunder. The evaluation takes into account existing sources of pollution or damage identified in Section EIAR 17.3.2.

EIAR 17.5.1.1 Construction Phase Cumulative Effects within local Electoral Districts

Other Projects Scoped In: Ballynalacken Windfarm Project, Seskin Wind Farm Project (large construction projects, potential for overlapping construction periods).

Cumulative Construction Spend – positive cumulative impact: Two Other Projects have potential to build during the same period as the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project – the consented Ballynalacken Wind Farm, and the Seskin Wind Farm project which is currently under appeal to An Coimisiún Pleanála. Due to the combined construction spend within the Ballyconra and Ballyragget ED areas, the cumulative GVA is expected to be c. €21 million across the three projects, equivalent to approximately 15% of the overall size of the local economy. The cumulative construction spend will be of Medium magnitude, resulting in a Medium (positive) significance of cumulative impact.

Cumulative Business Disruption: Given the separation distance between the Ballynalacken and Seskin projects and the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project, it is considered that there is no potential for cumulative effects.

EIAR 17.5.1.2 Operational Phase Cumulative Effects on Tourism (secondary visual impacts)

5km Central Study Area - Other Projects Scoped In: Lisdowney WF, Seskin WF (under appeal, ACP), Killoshulan WF (potential SID, pre-planning).

20km Wider Study Area - Other Projects Scoped In: In addition to the WFs in the Central Study Area – existing Lisheen WF and Bruckana WF and potential Littleton WF (in-planning) to west, operational wind farms on Slieveardagh Hills to south (includes Farranrory (under construction), Briskalagh (consented), Foylatalure (Operational), Cnoc (Operational), Ballybay (Operational), Kyleballyoughter (Consented), and wind farm projects on the Castlecomer Plateau to the north east Pinewood (under construction), Ballynalacken WF (consented), Fassa (potential SID, preplanning).

Cumulative visual impacts on tourism in the Central Study Area (5km):

The cumulative effect of in the proposed development is considered in Landscape Chapter 14 wherein the landscape expert states that any cumulative landscape changes with existing windfarms arises from the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm's proximity to the immediately adjacent Lisdowney Wind Farm. The cumulative effect is considered to be Medium as the developments will not combine to create a strong sense of turbine proliferation, visual clutter or dominance over the underlying landscape. Overall, it is considered that any cumulative visual effects will not be significant.

The magnitude of any secondary impact on tourism activities of walking and cycling in the vicinity would be Low, considering the movement of walkers and cyclists through the landscape offering intermittent views. Therefore, the secondary impact on tourism of cumulative windfarms within 5km of the Proposed Gathabawn Wind Farm is Not Significant.

When potential future wind farms are also taken into consideration, both Killoshulan Wind Farm and Seskin Wind Farm are proposed within the 5km study area, with Killoshulan c.2.5 km south, and Seskin just under 5 km to the north-east of the nearest proposed Gathabawn turbine. There will be some clear instances of combined visibility of two or more developments; however, these most often occur from locally elevated lands, whilst the more settled, lower-lying areas between these rolling hills benefit from a notable degree of screening provided by the surrounding terrain and intervening vegetation. The separation distances ensure that the wind farms will generally be perceived as distinctly separate developments. Notwithstanding this, the combination of the proposed Killoshulan and Seskin turbines with the proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project would result in a marked increase in the intensity of wind energy development within the study area, with wind energy development becoming one of the more prominent land uses within the surrounding landscape. However, it is considered in The Landscape evaluation that the perceived scale and intensity of the four combined developments (i.e. Lisdowney, Gathabawn, Seskin and Killoshulan) within the central study area and its periphery would be noticeably diminished by the rolling nature of the surrounding terrain, which assists in limiting the potential for clear combined visibility of all four developments from any one location.

Cumulative visual impacts on tourism within the wider area (20km):

The landscape expert notes in Landscape Chapter 14 that beyond the central Study Area there is considerable separation from other wind energy development (> 8km) which substantially reduces the possibility for notable cumulative landscape of visual effects. There are multiple recreational trails and tourism offerings in the wider area from which there may be a Slight-Imperceptible significance of visual effect, however the separation from other similar developments means that visual effects are assessed as Not Significant.

EIAR 17.5.1.3 Operational Phase Cumulative Effects on Local Population & Local Economy

15km Community Benefit Funds area - Other Projects Scoped In: Parksgrove SF, Ballynalacken WF, Seskin WF, Briskalagh WF, Bruckana WF, Moyne SF, Killeshulán WF

Cumulative positive impacts due to the Community Benefit Fund and Payment of Rates:

When the CBF for the seven other scoped-in projects within 15km of the Proposed Development is considered, €1.3 million, in addition to the annual contributions of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project (cumulative total: €1.6m) will go into local communities every year to fund various projects and activities. These windfarm community benefit funds, in addition with the payments of rates to the Local Authority will contribute to the enhancement of amenities and facilities in the local area, which will have an **indirect positive** cumulative effect on community resources and sense of place over the long-term.

EIAR 17.5.1.4 Operational Phase Cumulative Effects on Climate Mitigation

Other Projects Scoped In: All renewable energy projects within the Central Study Areas (Lisdowney WF, Parksgrove SF, Tirlán SF, Seskin WF and potential Killeshulán WF) and within the wider 20km area (Lisheen WF, Bruckana WF, Littleton WF, WFs on the Slieveardagh Hills (Farranrory WF, Briskalagh, Foylatalure, Cnoc, Ballybay, Kyleballyougher), and wind farms on the Castlecomer Plateaux (Pinewood WF, Ballynalacken WF and the potential Fassa WF), Moyne SF, Keatingstown SF).

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project is a Climate Mitigation project, and its largest positive effect is the contribution to national Climate Mitigation targets due to an increase in Renewable Energy generation, Carbon Emission Offset and Energy Security. The production of renewable energy has been evaluated as a Positive impact in Chapter 12: Climate, and the proposed Gathabawn Windfarm is considered an essential project as without its contribution to the 9GW renewable energy target the CAP25 target and net-zero goal is further from being achieved. The other wind farms and solar farms within the central and wider areas also are Climate Mitigation projects, contributing to national climate targets.

Primary climate change impacts (e.g. increased temperatures, increased CO₂, sea level rise and increased extreme weather events) can affect several environmental functions (e.g. water availability, salinization, food production, wildfires, PM concentrations, property damage), which in turn have the potential to alter a range of health and economic outcomes.

On the basis that the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm would contribute to renewable energy infrastructure, and that this Climate Mitigation together with other Climate Mitigation associated with the other renewable energy projects, and adaptation measures implemented by individuals, businesses and governments, would cumulatively result in positive contributions towards national policy and global targets inherently linked to sustainability, health and wellbeing and is considered where International targets are met, that the impact to human health and wellbeing and to economic systems on global, national and local scale will be Positive and beneficial over the long term.

EIAR 17.5.2 Summary of Cumulative Evaluations

Taken together, it is evaluated that **adverse cumulative impact** to Local Populations and the Local Economy of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project with Other Projects **will be Not Significant**.

It is also evaluated that **positive cumulative impacts** to Local Populations and the Local Economy of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project with Other Projects **will generally be of Slight Positive impact**.

EIAR 17.6 SUMMARY CONCLUSION

LOCAL POPULATIONS & LOCAL ECONOMY: The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm together with the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection will cause adverse as well as benefit effects to Local Populations and to the Local Economy.

During the construction of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project, adverse effects will not be significant, this is mainly due to the very small number of houses in the vicinity of the windfarm site and along construction haul routes, and the temporary nature of construction, with the reversibility of any impacts on access and enjoyment of the area by visiting walkers upon the completion of construction. The implementation of a road safety protocols for construction traffic will ensure that people using the local road networks are not significantly affected by HGV construction traffic. There will be no significant adverse cumulative impacts with other projects during the construction of the Gathabawn Windfarm Project.

Positive construction phase effects to the local economy, through local purchases and contracts and secondary spend by construction workers, will be positive but not significant.

During the operation of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm, potential adverse effects relate to decreases in local **property values**. It was evaluated that the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm will not significantly adversely affect property prices and that house prices in the long term will be more adversely affected by supply and demand dynamics and the response of global markets to the effects of climate change. Given the relatively low number of houses within 2km of the proposed windfarm, it is considered that Significant Adverse impacts are not likely to occur.

The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is also considered in the context of the elements referenced hitherto. The potential negative impact on local property prices is considered to be **imperceptible** as there will be limited visible evidence of the infrastructure and thus will have no material effect on property values.

Other effects deemed to have Neutral, Imperceptible, or Slight Impacts were identified during the construction, operational, and decommissioning phases but were considered to be Not Significant. These include –

Neutral Impact

- Business disruption or loss of revenue due to construction works or traffic.
- Decrease in tourism revenue.
- Disruption of mobile broadband, communication or TV signals.
- Effects during decommissioning works

Imperceptible Impact

- Strengthening the Local Economy due to construction/operational spend.
- Contribution to Climate Mitigation.

Slight-Imperceptible

- Improvements in Country Budget due to Commercial Rates

Construction and operation of the Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection will result in Neutral or Imperceptible (Not Significant) impacts on business disruption or loss of revenue, tourism revenue, or strengthening of local economy.

In relation to the attractiveness of **tourism** offerings and indirect effects on tourism revenues locally and in the wider area, it is evaluated that the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project, either alone or cumulatively

with other windfarm and solar farms in the wider landscape, that magnitude of any secondary impact on tourism activities of walking and cycling in the vicinity would be Neutral and Not Significant. This is considering the low number of tourism offerings in the local area, and the movement of walkers and cyclists through the surrounding landscape offering intermittent views of the windfarm, with the turbines becoming small scale distant features of the landscape the further the visitor travels from the area.

Other positive effects of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project include the **annual Community Benefit Fund**, which at c.€300,000 per annum, will have a beneficial effect on the local communities through the funding of various projects and activities which will enhance community amenities and facilities in the long term. Over the lifetime of the windfarm, the Community Benefit Fund will directly contribute over €10.5 million to the local communities. This is evaluated as a **slight positive effect** to community wellbeing and way of life. Cumulatively, when the seven other scoped-in projects within 15km of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project are considered, an additional €1.1 million will go into local communities every year.

Payment of rates to Kilkenny County Council of c.€800,000 per annum, will have a positive impact on local communities through the funding of local authority projects and services. However, while the rates are sizable, due to the size of the Kilkenny County Council annual commercial rate income of c.€24.3 million (in 2025), this positive effect will be Not Significant.

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm Project is a **Climate Mitigation project**, and the largest positive effect of the proposed development is the contribute to national Climate Mitigation targets due to an increase in Renewable Energy generation, Carbon Emission Offset and Energy Security. On the basis that the project would contribute to renewable energy infrastructure, evaluated as Significant Positive in Chapter 12 Climate, and that this Climate Mitigation together with Climate mitigation and adaptation measures implemented by individuals, businesses and governments, would cumulatively result in a positive change contributing towards national policy and targets. Failure to meet these targets could cost the State an average c. €0.35 billion annually up to 2030, when annual costs will rise to €0.7 billion (0.2% of GNI*).

MITIGATION MEASURES: Measures to minimise the impact on Population include the implementation of the Environmental Management Plan during all phases of the development, and a Construction phase Traffic Management Plan and the appointment of a Community Liaison Officer.

Overall, it is evaluated that the impact of the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm on Population, both alone and in combination with the Candidate Gathabawn Gird Connection, and cumulatively with Other Projects, will be Not Significant.

EIAR 17.7 Glossary, List of Abbreviations**Glossary of Terms**

Term	Definition
Electoral Division (ED)	Defined by the CSO as the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the State for which Small Area Population Statistics are published from the Census. There are 3,440 legally defined in the State.
Gathabawn Windfarm	Twelve wind turbines are proposed for two areas – seven turbines in the Ballylehaun area and five turbines in the Ballyring area. In addition to the turbines and their hardstanding areas, the windfarm also includes site access roads, two Control Buildings; a met mast, underground cabling, temporary works to facilitate turbine deliveries, and other associated and ancillary works.
Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection	Underground cabling between the Ballylehaun and Ballyring Areas (Ballylehaun-Ballyring UGC), underground cabling from the Ballyring Area (from Ballyring Control Building) to a new substation at Parksgrove (Ballyring-Parksgrove UGC), the Parksgrove Substation, and underground cabling from the substation to the existing Eirgrid Ballyragget Substation in Moatpark (Parksgrove-Moatpark UGC). The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is not included as part of this Planning Application, it will be subject of a separate Planning Application, at a future date. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is considered in this EIA Report in order to facilitate the cumulative evaluation of the Whole Project.
Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	The measure of the value of total output of an economy in a given period.
Gross Value Added (GVA)	The measure of the values of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of the economy.
Induced Spending	Induced spending is the increased spending that is generated by increased incomes.
Local Economy	The economic system and range of economic activity in a local area that serves a local population.
National Economy	The economy of the Republic of Ireland. It encompasses the value of all goods and services manufactured within the country.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ED	Electoral Division
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added

EIAR 17.8 Reference List

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Figure 17.4.2	Other Projects Scoped-In to the Population Cumulative Evaluations

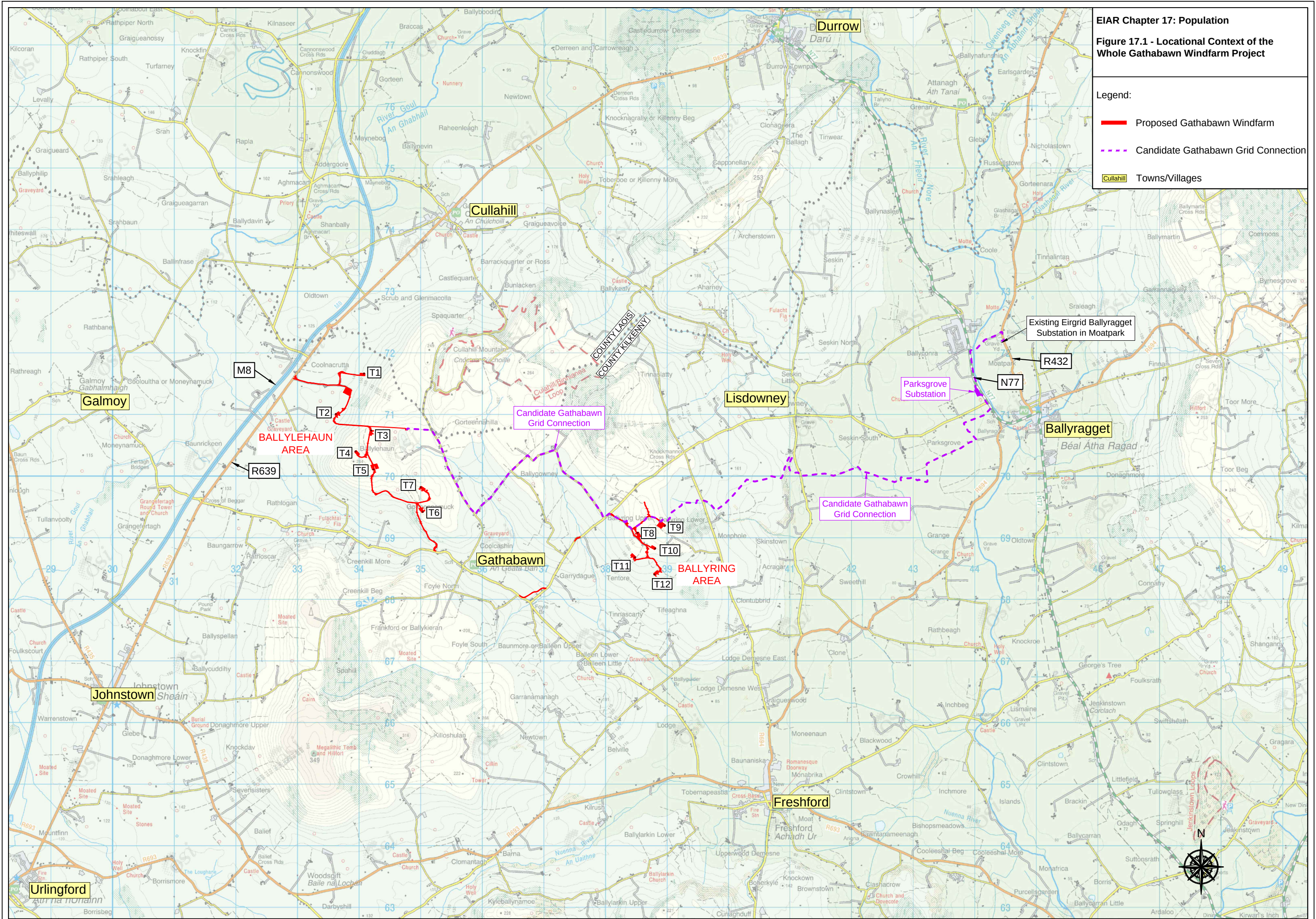
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Appendix 17.1	Methodology for the evaluation of Population
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Figures

Figure 17.1 - Locational Context of the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project

 Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm
 Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection
 Towns/Villages

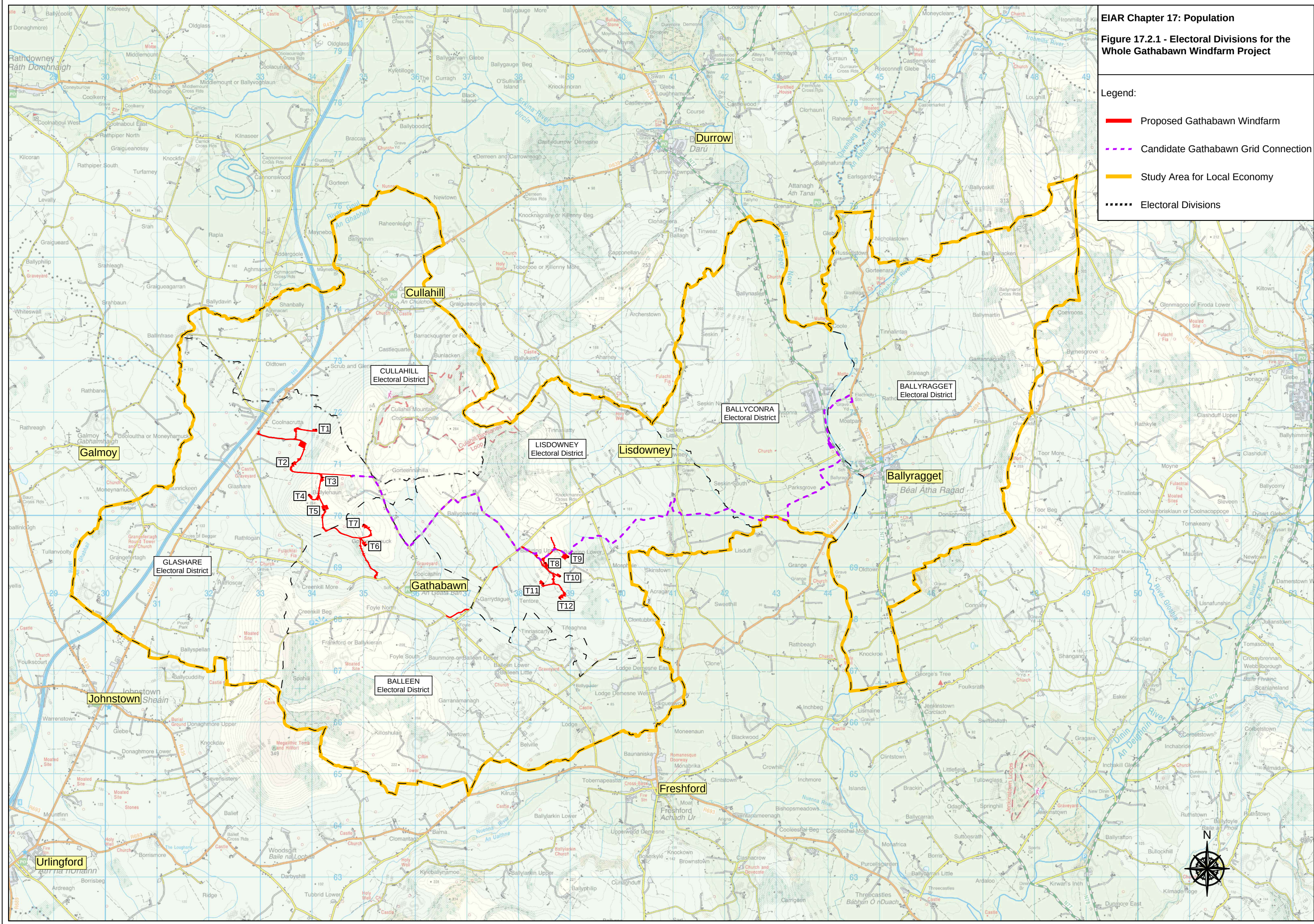


ElAR Chapter 17: Population

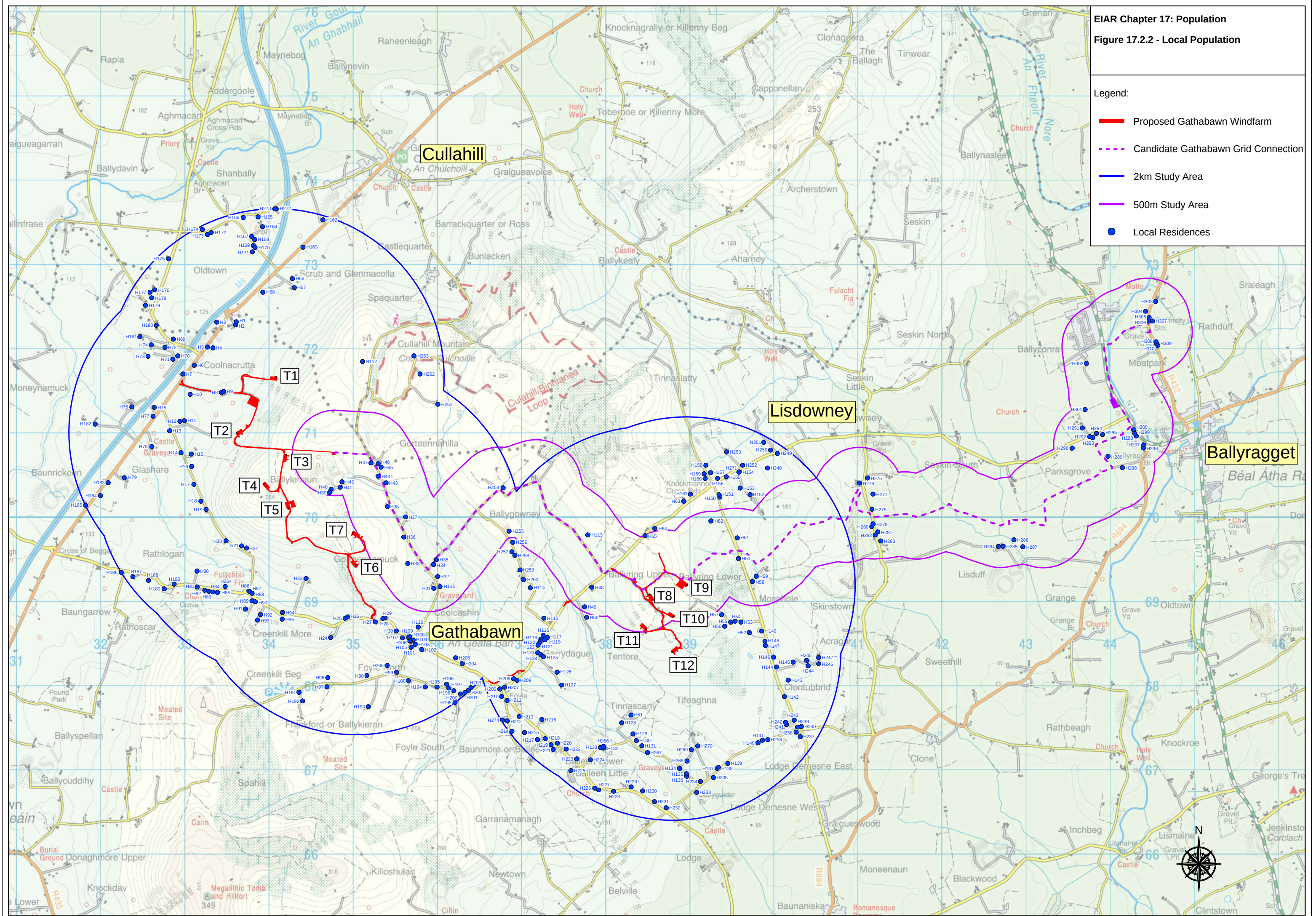
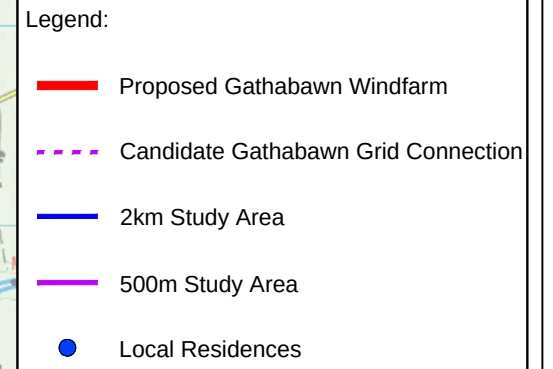
Figure 17.2.1 - Electoral Divisions for the Whole Gathabawn Windfarm Project

Legend:

- Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm
- Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection
- Study Area for Local Economy
- Electoral Divisions



ElAR Chapter 17: Population
Figure 17.2.2 - Local Population



EIAR Chapter 17: Populan and Human Health

Figure 17.3 - Tourist Products and Attractions

Legend:

Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm

Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection

Gathabawn Loop Walk

Cullahill Heathy Way Loop Walk

Cullahill - Binnianea Loop Walk

Durrow Valley Leafy Walk

Capponellan Fairy Trail Walk

Freshford Loop Walk

Granstown Country Walk

Jenkinstown Walk

Proposed LCW 42 Walk

North Kilkenny Cycle Route

Laois Cycling Routes

Scenic Views

Tourist Accommodation

Tourist Attractions/Offerings

Gastro Pub

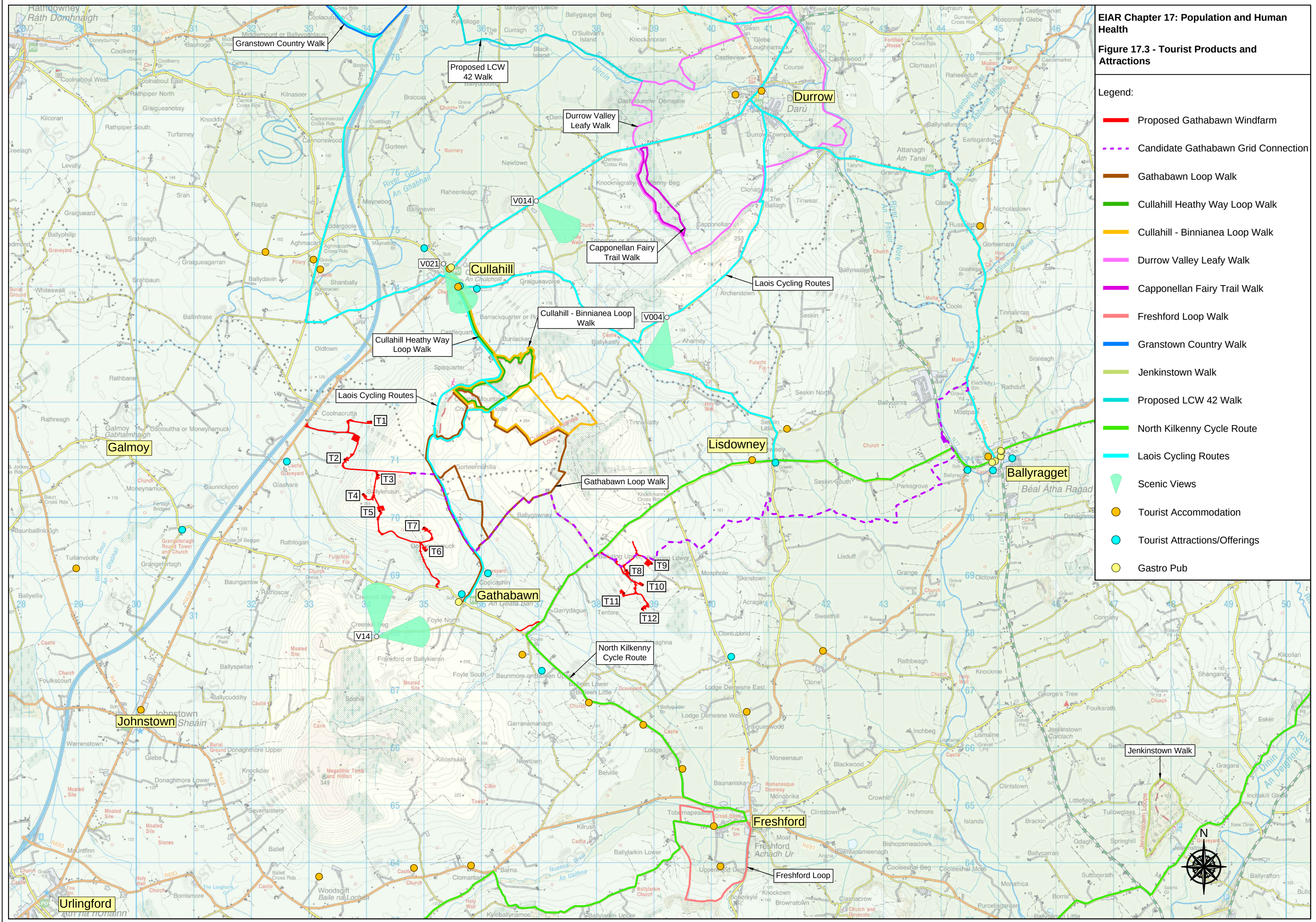


Figure 17.4.1: Other Projects Scoped-In to the Population Cumulative Evaluations

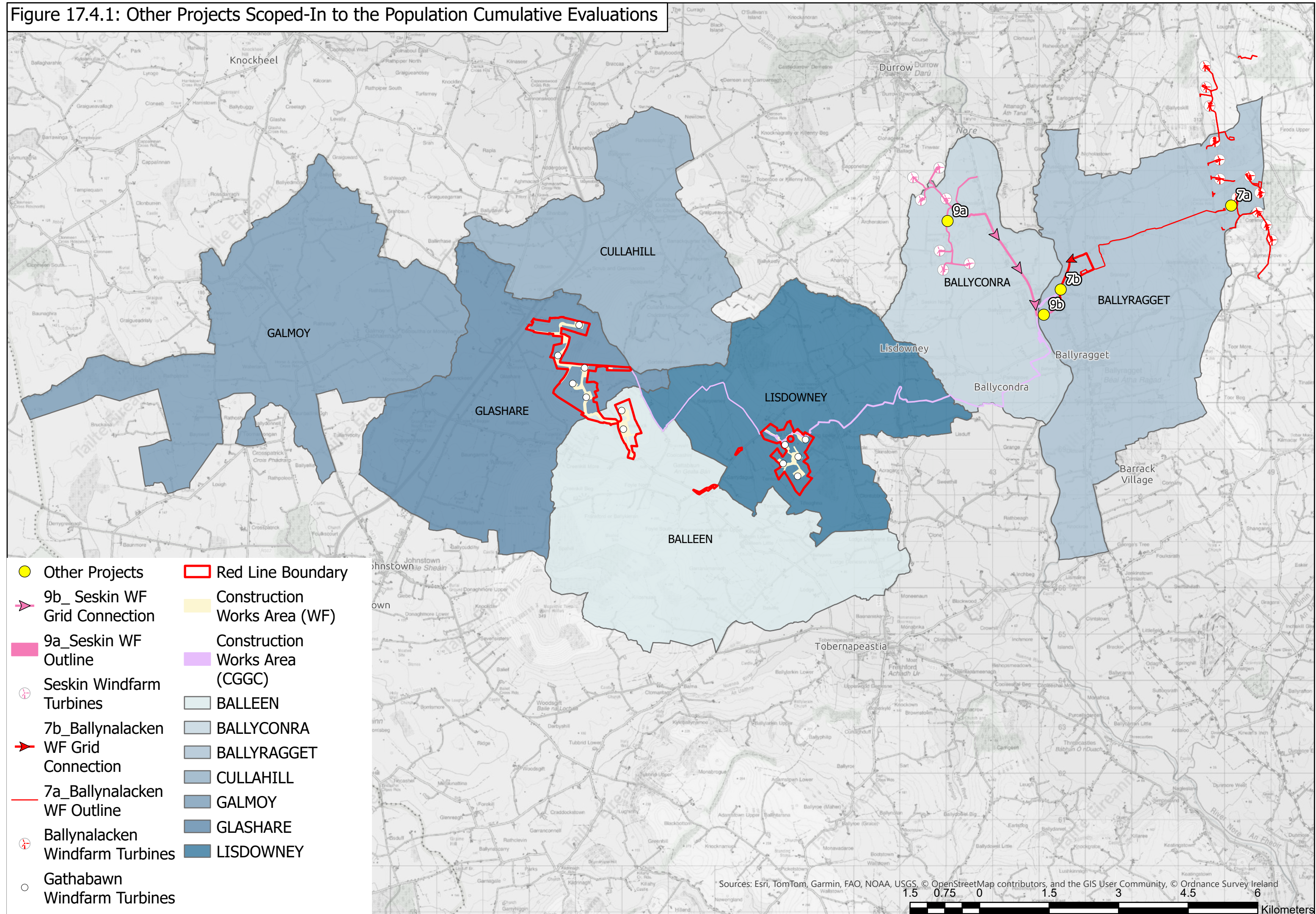
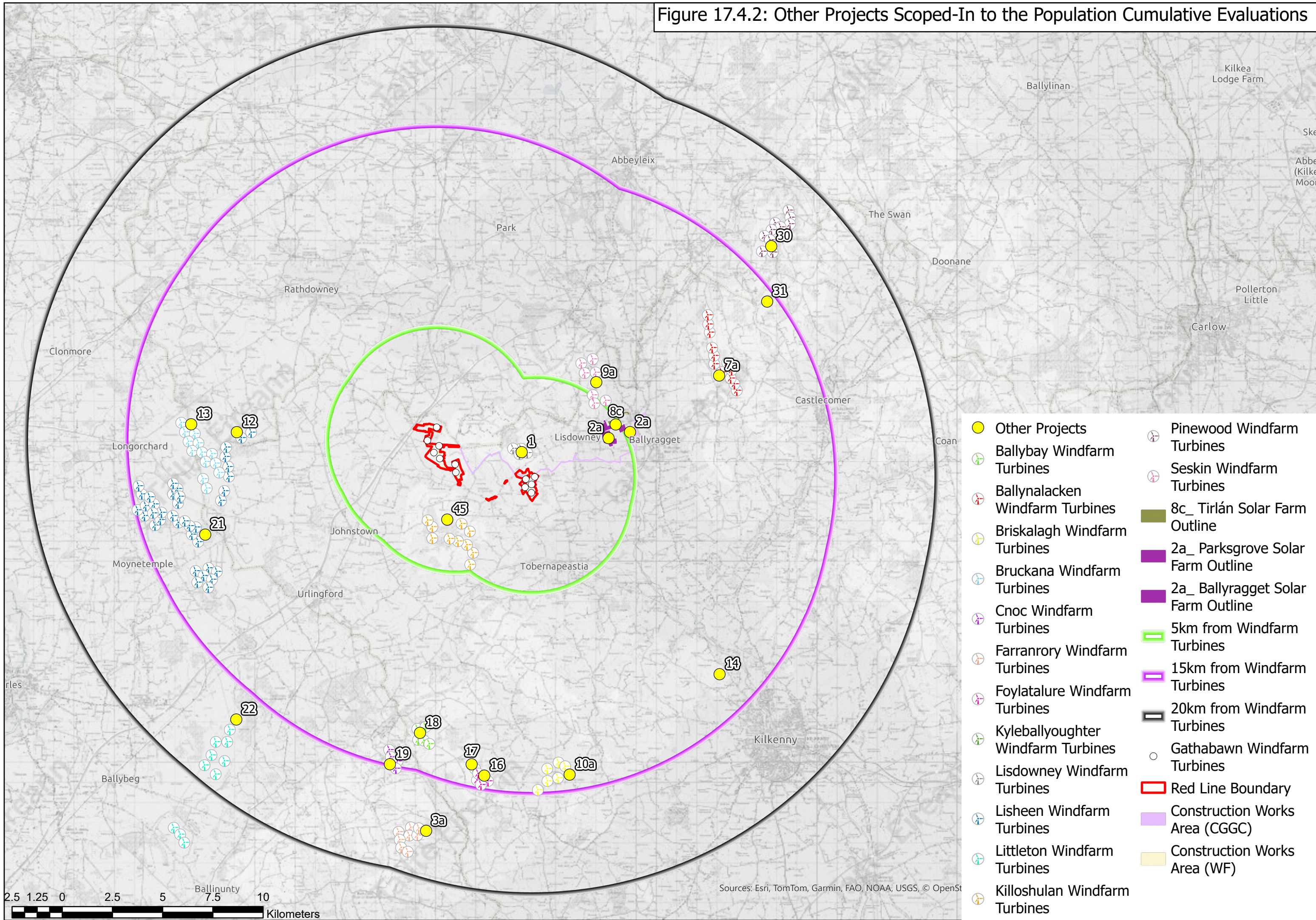


Figure 17.4.2: Other Projects Scoped-In to the Population Cumulative Evaluations



Appendix to Chapter 17: Population

Appendix 17.1: Methodology for the evaluation of Population

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A17.1 Methodology Applied during the Preparation of Chapter 17: Population

The criteria used to describe the baseline environment and to evaluate effects is based on the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals guidance document *Social Impact Assessment in Environmental Impact Assessment in the UK (2025)*. The author's experience with EIA preparation and socio-economic impact assessments also informs this report.

A17.1.1 Assessing Significance

Assessing significance is central to the EIA process and features in all extant legislation in the UK and Europe. Significance can be assessed as a function of both the sensitivity of a receptor and the magnitude of an impact, an approach commonly used to guide significance assessments for other EIA topics. The matrix below is a tool to assist with judgement. Typically, effects assessed as 'major' or 'moderate' are significant in EIA terms.

Magnitude of Impact	Sensitivity of receptor			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major/Moderate	Moderate/Minor	Minor/Negligible
Medium	Major/Moderate	Moderate	Minor	Minor/Negligible
Low	Moderate/Minor	Minor	Minor	Negligible
Negligible	Minor/Negligible	Minor/Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

There are not clear cut-off points between categories and terminologies, for example, the point at which an impact changes magnitude category is a professional judgement, supported by evidence and justification. The assessment of significance is both context and value dependent. The ISEP guidance sets out the principles that guide the assessment and the contextual factors to be considered.

A17.1.2 Sensitivity Criteria

The sensitivity assessment is informed by a policy review and baseline evidence. The sensitivity of the community or receptor can be indicated by the following factors:

- Its social, economic, or environmental value is recognised in relevant local, regional or national policy.
- Resilience and capacity to absorb change without fundamentally altering its characteristics. A lower capacity to absorb change would result in higher sensitivity. The presence of sensitive and protected characteristics in affected populations should also be considered.
- Its scarcity value, or the availability of alternative resources, where few alternatives available would indicate higher sensitivity.
- Community dependence on a resource, receptor or receiving environment.

Table 1: Indicators of High Sensitivity

Indicator	Examples of High Sensitivity
Value	- A Sector of the economy deemed important in industrial strategy - A tourism asset highlighted in tourism strategy or promoted in tourism literature - A minority language that is protected or promoted in policy, such as Gaelic, Cornish or Welsh
Capacity	- An area with a limited labour or skills supply to meet workforce demands - A business that is based on the tranquillity or beauty of its environment - A population that includes vulnerable groups or those with sensitive characteristics with high sensitivity to differential effects
Scarcity	- A development site allocated for employment uses in a Local Plan where few alternatives exist - A footpath that provides the only pedestrian route between a residential area and a community facility - A regionally important tourism asset that attracts large number of visitors
Dependency	- Essential social infrastructure such as health, education and public services - Assets which sustain usual daily activities such as recreation or physical activity - A resource which local livelihoods rely upon, for example, agriculture, food, crofting

A17.1.3 Magnitude Criteria

The magnitude of an impact can be determined by the following factors:

- The size of the impact based on anticipated change versus the baseline
- The scale or extent of the impact – the geo-spatial area in which the impact would occur
- The duration of the impact – whether the impact would be short, medium or long term
- The frequency of the impact (if relevant) – how often the impact would occur
- The reversibility of the impact and whether the impact would be temporary or permanent.

Table 2: Indicators of High Magnitude

Indicator	Examples of High Magnitude
Size	- The number of jobs expected to be created is a large proportion of the existing local labour supply - The project will create employment in sectors which will cause structural economic change in a place - The number of new residents is a large proportion of the baseline population
Scale	- The impact will be experienced across a large geographical area - The impact will affect a large number of receptors
Duration	- The construction period will last several years - The lifetime of the project/asset is 40 years or more
Frequency	- Disruptive maintenance work during operation will occur monthly - Noise and vibration caused by drilling will occur 24 hours per day over seven days per week
Reversibility	- Access to the public right of way cannot be reinstated following construction - Permanent change in status of the land is a loss of agricultural land - New homes are permanent and greenbelt land is lost permanently

A17.1.4 Mitigation

Mitigation should be identified for all significant adverse effects. The ISEP mitigation hierarchy is a framework designed to guide Environmental Impact Assessments and management. It aims to integrate environmental and social considerations into project design and implementation to achieve positive outcomes and minimise negative impacts. The hierarchy is adapted for Social Impact Assessment and consists of four key steps:

1. Avoidance: The first and most preferred step is to avoid adverse impacts altogether. This involves altering the project design or location to prevent environmental harm.
2. Minimisation: if avoidance is not possible, the next step is to minimise the impacts. This can be achieved through measures that reduce the severity or extent of the impact.
3. Restoration: When impacts cannot be avoided or minimised, the next step is to restore the affected environment to its original state or as close to it as possible.
4. Compensation: If the impacts cannot be avoided, minimised, or restored, compensating for the residual impacts by compensating specific organisations/ people or by providing social investments for affected communities.

Appendix to Chapter 17: Population

Appendix 17.2: CSO Population Statistics

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A17.1.1 Introduction

The data and descriptions in this appendix have informed Chapter 17: Population of the EIA Report, in relation to the existing Local Economy environment.

Data is sourced primarily from the Census of Population 2022, with data from previous censuses used for trend analysis.

The Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm is proposed within three Electoral Divisions (EDs), namely Cullahill ED, Glashare ED, Balleen ED and Lisdowney ED. The Candidate Gathabawn Grid Connection is routed through Glashare ED, Balleen ED, Lisdowney ED, Ballyconra ED and Ballyragget ED. All EDs, with the exception of Cullahill ED, located in County Laois) are located in north County Kilkenny. These EDs are included as the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area.

Where possible, data relating to the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area is compared to the State averages to provide an insight as to how the EDs potentially impacted by the Proposed Gathabawn Windfarm compare to the rest of Ireland.

A17.1.2 Population and Age Profile

The total population of the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area came to 3,303 as of Census 2022. The populations of all but one of the EDs have increased over the 20-year period 2002 – 2022. Ballyconra ED is the only ED in the Study Area to record a marginal decline over the 20-year intercensal period of 9.8%, or 26 people.

Population levels, growth and density vary between ED. Ballyragget ED stands out with the highest population and population density over the 20 years. It has not, however, experienced the highest population growth over the period. This was recorded in Lisdowney ED where the local population increased by 53.5%, from 187 to 287. Population density in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area, as one would expect for a largely rural area, is low.

Ballyragget is the only significant settlement in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area, with a population of 1,116. The Kilkenny County Council Settlement Hierarchy per the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027 details the following:

- Ballyragget is classified as a “Rural Area – Rural villages less than 1,500 and the wider rural region”.

Table 1: Population, 2002-2022

ED	2022	2016	2011	2006	2002	% Change 2002-2022	Population Density per km ²
Cullahill	362	359	359	341	341	6.2%	21.3
Glashare	311	332	328	301	287	8.4%	14.8
Balleen	517	459	446	404	400	29.3%	21.1
Lisdowney	287	252	213	214	187	53.5%	14.1
Ballyconra	239	239	255	267	265	-9.8%	16.0
Ballyragget	1,587	1,513	1,532	1,451	1,272	24.8%	59.5
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	3,303	3,154	3,133	2,978	2,752	20.0%	24.5
Total State	5,149,139	4,761,865	4,588,252	4,239,848	3,917,203	31.4%	73.3

Source: CSO Census of Population, 2002-2022.

Note: Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area population density per KM2 calculated as average of study area Eds.

As seen in Table 2, the age structure of the population of the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area is not significantly different from the State average, although there is a notably lower proportion of people aged 25-44 years, and a notably higher proportion of those aged 65+, relative to the State average. Glashare ED, for example, reports the lowest level of those aged 25-44 years, some 7.7 percentage points below the State average. While Ballyragget ED has the oldest population, with the 65+ cohort some 7 percentage points higher than the State average.

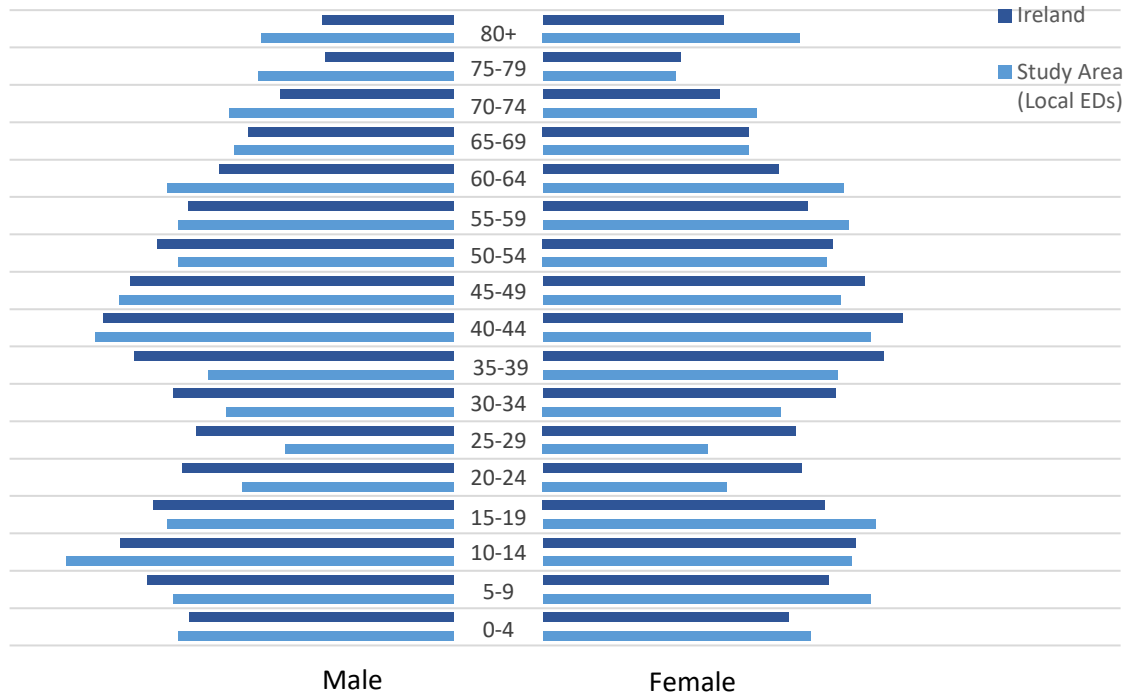
Table 2: Population Age Profile, 2022

ED	≤15	15-24	25-44	45-64	≥65
Cullahill	19.1%	14.9%	22.9%	27.6%	15.0%
Glashare	17.7%	12.9%	19.9%	32.5%	17.0%
Balleen	25.3%	11.4%	21.1%	26.7%	15.5%
Lisdowney	31.4%	7.0%	26.8%	23.3%	11.5%
Ballyconra	16.7%	9.6%	23.4%	33.5%	16.7%
Ballyragget	19.2%	11.0%	23.6%	24.2%	22.0%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	20.9%	11.2%	23.1%	26.3%	18.5%
Total State	19.7%	12.5%	27.6%	25.1%	15.1%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

The population age structure within the study area is shown on Graph 1. Dark blue bars indicate the percentages of the population of the State, while the light blue bars indicate the percentages of the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area for each age category. The male percentages are displayed on the left side of the graph, with female percentages on the right.

Graph 1: Population Structure of the Study Area compared to Ireland



Source: Census of Population 2022.

As shown in Graph 1, local residents and communities in the Study Area are generally of a similar demographic to the national average. The most significant differences can be seen in the older age categories where there is a significantly larger percentage of males and females aged 80+ and a lower percentage of both genders aged 20-39 in the Study Area compared to the national average.

A17.1.3 Housing Stock, Age and Average Household Size

There were 1,141 private households (i.e. excluding guest houses, religious institutions etc.) identified in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area in the 2022 Census, with average household sizes slightly higher than the State average at 2.8. The age of the stock in the study area is slightly older than the State average, with the percentage of housing stock built pre-1991 higher than the State average. Conversely, Lisdowney ED had the highest percentage of housing stock built post-2000 in the Study Area, far outpacing the national average (32%), and reflective of the rapid population expansion in that ED in recent years.

Table 3: Housing Stock, Average Household Size and Age, 2022

ED	# Private Households	Average Household Size	Pre 1991	1991-2000	Post-2000	Not Stated
Cullahill	123	3.0	62%	17%	21%	0%
Glashare	106	3.0	65%	9%	25%	1%
Balleen	171	3.0	56%	11%	32%	2%
Lisdowney	96	3.0	46%	4%	47%	3%
Ballyconra	82	2.9	65%	16%	18%	1%
Ballyragget	563	2.7	56%	7%	35%	2%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	1,141	2.8	57%	9%	32%	1%
Total State	1,836,728	2.7	51%	15%	32%	2%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

A17.1.4 Commuting Patterns

The Census presents the commuting patterns of the population in school, college or work (aged 5+) in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area as well as the lengths of those commutes. Local commuters are dependent on private transport to a varying degree, with a high usage of motor vehicles (71%) compared to the State average (58%) and low percentage of walkers and cyclists (7%), versus 16% nationally. Reliance on public transport in the form of bus travel is broadly in line with the national average. All EDs are highly car dependent with Balleen having the highest dependency at 80%.

Table 4: Commuting Mode of Transport, Population Aged 5+, 2022

ED	Walk	Bicycle	Bus	Motor Vehicle (inc. passengers)	Train	Other & Not Stated
Cullahill	8%	2%	12%	67%	0%	11%
Glashare	2%	0%	12%	69%	0%	15%
Balleen	3%	0%	7%	80%	1%	10%
Lisdowney	6%	0%	7%	75%	0%	12%
Ballyconra	6%	1%	5%	76%	1%	12%
Ballyragget	10%	0%	11%	67%	0%	12%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	7%	0%	10%	71%	0%	12%
Total State	13%	3%	9%	58%	2%	15%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

Commute journey times in the study area are not greatly different from the State average on an overall basis, but there is some variation. The proportion of commuters travelling less than 15 minutes to work is greater in all but one of the EDs. Conversely, there is a higher percentage of commuters travelling between 30 min – 45 hours compared to the State average, which may be reflective of the employment opportunities available in Kilkenny City, or Portlaoise.

Table 5: Commute Journey Time, Population Aged 5+, 2022

ED	<15 min	15-30 min	30-45 min	45 min – 1 hour	1-1.5 hours	>1.5 hours	Not stated
Cullahill	39%	22%	21%	3%	6%	3%	6%
Glashare	25%	17%	35%	7%	6%	4%	7%
Balleen	32%	32%	17%	3%	6%	6%	4%
Lisdowney	32%	30%	19%	5%	4%	3%	7%
Ballyconra	32%	23%	28%	5%	4%	3%	5%
Ballyragget	30%	29%	21%	4%	4%	4%	8%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	31%	27%	22%	4%	5%	4%	7%
Total State	29%	28%	17%	6%	6%	3%	11%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

A17.1.5 Economic Profile

The 2022 Census allows us to ascertain the employment and economic status of the inhabitants of the Study Area. The Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area's local labour force in 2022 numbered 1,580, with 1,494 of these in work. Just over 45.8% of this labour force is resident in Ballyragget ED. The labour market characteristics of the Study Area are slightly better than the State average, with a lower unemployment rate.

Table 6: Employment Status, Labour Force Aged 15+, 2022

ED	At work	Unemployed	Labour Force	Implied Unemployment Rate
Cullahill	167	8	175	4.6%
Glashare	155	7	162	4.3%
Balleen	234	14	248	5.6%
Lisdowney	137	5	142	3.5%
Ballyconra	123	7	130	5.4%
Ballyragget	678	45	723	6.2%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	1,494	86	1,580	5.4%
Total State	2,320,297	210,802	2,531,099	8.3%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

Some 60% of the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area's population aged 15+ is in the labour force (either at work or looking for work), with a further 9% in education, 7% homemakers and 18% retired, all close to State averages.

Looking at historic trends, the labour force in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area per the 2002 Census was 1,243, with an unemployment rate of 7.2%. The level of unemployment was high by Census 2011, with a total unemployment rate of 18% in the Study Area – Ballyragget experienced the worse of the financial crisis, recording unemployment of 21%. Over the 20-year intercensal period, two developments are clear:

- The labour force in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area grew strongly by 19% (dominated by Lisdowney ED at 34%);
- Labour market conditions deteriorated markedly by Census 2011. By Census 2022, the unemployment rate had fallen to 9.2% in the Study Area.

Table 7: Principal Economic Status, Population 15+, 2022

ED	At work %	Unemployed %	Labour Force Participation Rate	Implied Unemployment Rate	Student %	Home-maker %	Retired %	Other %
Cullahill	57%	3%	60%	5%	15%	7%	14%	4%
Glashare	61%	3%	63%	4%	11%	8%	14%	3%
Balleen	61%	4%	64%	6%	10%	6%	17%	2%
Lisdowney	70%	3%	72%	4%	7%	6%	12%	3%
Ballyconra	62%	4%	65%	5%	10%	9%	14%	2%
Ballyragget	53%	4%	56%	6%	8%	7%	22%	7%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	57%	3%	60%	5%	9%	7%	18%	5%
Total State	56%	5%	61%	8.3%	11%	7%	16%	5%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

In terms of developments since Census 2022, labour market conditions have improved significantly. At a national level as per the Labour Force Survey¹, the unemployment rate has increased marginally from 4.5% in Q2 2022 to 5.1% in Q2 2026, while for the south-east region, which contains all of the EDs in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area, a fall from 5.4% to 4.9% is recorded for the same period.

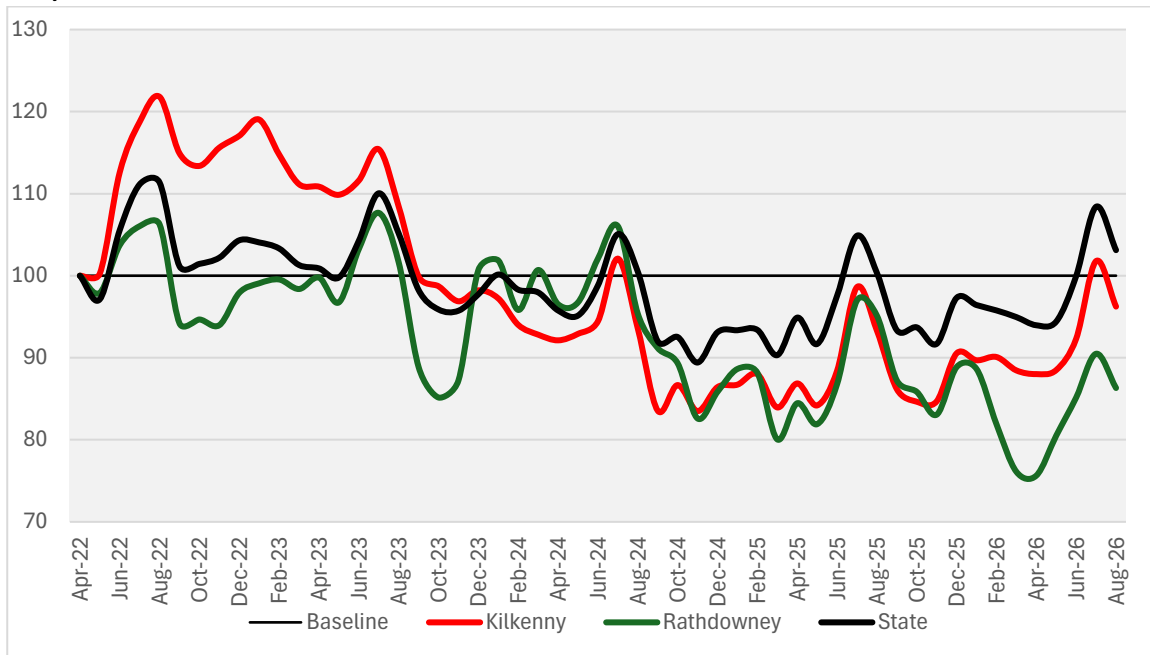
More localised data is available in the form of monthly Live Register statistics from the Social Welfare offices (see Graph 2). While the Department of Social Protection does not specifically note the applicable local branch for the Study Area, there are two main Branch Offices either side of the Study Area – Rathdowney and Kilkenny. It may be assumed that the residents within the Study Area sign on at one of these two locations. Many more people from outside the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area would also sign on at these offices, so the data does not relate precisely to the Study Area, and the Live Register is not an exact indicator of unemployment², but it does point to a slight improvement in local labour market conditions in the years since the 2022 Census of Population.

The data in Graph 2 is expressed as an index with April 2022 (the date of the Census) equal to 100 to allow comparability between the Rathdowney and Kilkenny branch offices and the State. Labour market conditions initially disimproved but have since improved, with trends in both branch offices outperforming the State average. The numbers now signing on at the Rathdowney and Kilkenny branch offices has dropped 13.7% and 3.8% of their April 2022 levels, respectively. This compares to a 3.1% increase in the State overall.

¹ <https://data.cso.ie/table/QLF08>

² A number of categories of people are on the Live Register who would not be considered unemployed, including those signing on to maintain their social insurance credits and people working part-time.

Graph 2: Live Register, Local Social Welfare Office & State, April 2022 to August 2026, Index April 2022 = 100)



Source: CSO, 2026.

The 2022 Census also identifies the broad sectoral categories that the local labour force works in. In 2022, some 10% of the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area's workforce was engaged in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, more than double the State average of 4%. A further 8% were engaged in the Building & Construction sector, 22% in Commerce and Trade, 28% in Professional Services and 6% in the Public Sector. All EDs have a high percentage of workers engaged in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing and slightly fewer workers engaged in Commerce and Trade, relative to the national average, reflecting the rural nature of the Study Area.

Comparing the 2022 Census with previous censuses, some trends are clear. Between 2002 and 2022:

- The proportion of the workforce in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area engaged in Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing fell from 17% to 10%, with the actual numbers falling from 203 to 155;
- The proportion engaged in Construction fell from 13% to 8%, and numerically from 20 to 28;
- The proportion engaged in Professional Services grew from 14% to 28%.

Table 8: Sectoral Employment, Population Aged 15+, 2022

ED	Agriculture Forestry & Fishing	Building & Construction	Manufacturing Industries	Commerce & Trade	Transport & Communicat ions	Public Admin	Prof. Services	Other
Cullahill	16%	8%	10%	20%	5%	7%	26%	7%
Glashare	19%	5%	15%	12%	5%	9%	25%	11%
Balleen	12%	8%	6%	21%	4%	9%	29%	11%
Lisdowney	13%	7%	8%	26%	4%	7%	30%	5%
Ballyconra	17%	7%	15%	24%	1%	6%	25%	2%
Ballyragget	5%	9%	12%	24%	5%	4%	28%	13%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	10%	8%	11%	22%	5%	6%	28%	10%
Total State	4%	6%	12%	24%	9%	6%	24%	16%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

Supplementary data sourced from GeoDirectory provides further evidence of the concentration engaged in agriculture and related activities. Across the 287 businesses/organisations identified in the Study Area, 178 (62%) are classified as “Crop and Animal Production, Hunting and Related Services Activities). Glashare ED has the highest representation in this area – with 91% of the 43 businesses/organisations classified as crop and animal production. Representation is very high in other EDs too – Balleen (77%), Ballyconra (69%), Lisdowney (62%), Cullahill (62%), and Ballyragget (42%). Construction and other related activities are also highly represented in the Study Area – 40% (15 businesses/organisations). Retail, restaurants and bars make up 7% of the businesses/organisations in the Study Area, with manufacturing, construction and related activities accounting for 6%.

The 2022 Census allows us to assess the socio-economic status of the labour force. This indicates the type of work people do, rather than the sector they work in. A lower-than-average proportion of the workforce in the Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area is categorised as Professional/Managerial or Lower Professional workers, while a significantly higher proportion are categorised as Agricultural.

Table 9: Socio-Economic Status, Head of Household, 2022

ED	Professional /Managerial	Lower Professional	Non-Manual	Skilled	Semi/ Unskilled	Agriculture	Others
Cullahill	15%	6%	23%	5%	9%	26%	15%
Glashare	15%	0%	25%	8%	9%	27%	15%
Balleen	13%	1%	26%	12%	15%	16%	15%
Lisdowney	9%	4%	30%	15%	15%	17%	8%
Ballyconra	9%	7%	31%	11%	9%	21%	13%
Ballyragget	13%	5%	29%	14%	16%	6%	16%
Gathabawn Windfarm Study Area	13%	5%	28%	12%	14%	14%	14%
Total State	16%	7%	34%	9%	11%	4%	19%

Source: CSO Census of Population 2022.

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index can also be used to provide an insight into the relative socio-economic conditions of EDs within the Study Area. Data is available for a range of categories such as unemployment, educational attainment and population change, and is used to score areas based on their relative affluence to the State average³. Balleen and Ballyragget are the only EDs in the Study Area considered ‘marginally below average’ in terms of affluence, scoring -2.26 and -0.79 respectively. The other EDs in the Study Area are all considered ‘marginally above average’.

³ Data is expressed as an index where the State average is given a score of 0. Areas scored positively (>0) are considered more affluent than the State average, while areas scored negatively (<0) are considered more disadvantaged than the State average.

A17.1.6 Reference List

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