4. POLICY, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the proposed project in terms of legislative context and in relation to international, strategic, national, regional and local planning policies and objectives, in order to ascertain whether it is consistent with the relevant legislation and with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The nature and location of the proposed project is described fully in Chapter 2 (Description of the Proposed Project) and will include 13 no. wind turbines with a blade tip height of 150 m and all ancillary works, including a permanent loop-in 110 kV Substation, an underground 33 kV cable connection (circa 8.7 km in length) and all other site works and ancillary development.

It is proposed to supply the power with a 33 kV private grid connection cable from the on-site control building to a proposed new loop-in 110 kV substation in the townland of Killamanagh Co. Galway. The proposed project lies within the functional area of both Mayo County Council and Galway County Council and is thus informed by the provisions of the Mayo County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028 and the Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028. This chapter will include a full review of the relevant climate action and renewable energy policies included in the CDP. For context, it is recommended that this Chapter is read in conjunction with the Planning Statement accompanying this planning application.

The relevant global, European, national and regional climate, energy and planning policies as set out in Section 4.4-4.5 of this chapter emphasise the need to generate renewable energy and the importance of moving towards decarbonising the economy. The proposed project will contribute to the expansion of the renewable wind resource in Ireland and contribute towards governmental, national and regional goals and targets by generating more power from renewable resources. The 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/ EC) set Ireland a legally binding target to meet 16% of our energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. In 2018, the Directive was recast (2018/2001/EU) to move the legal framework to 2030 targets, setting a new binding target of at least 32% with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023. In 2023, the Directive was further amended to set a new binding renewable energy target of at least 42.5% at EU level, but aiming for 45%, emphasising a growing obligation to renewable energy sources. The above-mentioned EU Directives have been supported by the 2015 Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which emphasize the need for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

A report by Climate Action Network Europe (CAN) published in 2025[1] looked into 12 National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) prepared by 12 different Countries including Ireland, and by doing so, revealed that most of them urgently need to align targets and benchmarks with coherent policies to at least reach the EU's climate and energy goals. The report says, 'Concerns linked to missing energy efficiency measures and to energy security due to the dependence on substantial energy imports from third countries are also highlighted in the Commission's recommendations; those shortcomings should be clarified and addressed.''

It is now widely established that Ireland did not meet the 2020 renewable energy targets. A report issued by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) entitled 'Renewable Energy

[1] https://old.caneurope.org/content/uploads/2025/03/Key-Recommandations-NECPs.pdf Accessed on 16th July 2026.

in Ireland – 2020 Update' showed that Ireland was still heavily dependent on fossil fuels[2]. Out of the 27 EU member states, plus the UK, Ireland had made the second lowest progress towards hitting the targets, with only the Netherlands performing worse. Ireland will be subject to tariffs through the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) until these targets are realised. More recently, a report published in 2024 by the SEAI titled 'Energy in Ireland[3]', states that *''Additional electricity demand must be outpaced by increased installed capacity for renewable generation, if we are to decarbonise Ireland's electricity system further, all else being equal. Electricity demand must be managed to ensure that Ireland stays within the confines of our carbon budgets, sectoral emission ceilings, and energy demand reduction targets.''*. The report also found 82.7% of primary energy came from fossil fuels in 2023 with only 14.1% of Ireland's primary energy requirement in 2023 sourced from renewables.

The Irish Government published the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24) on the 20th of December 2023 which sets ambitious actions to ensure our 2030 targets can be achieved. This in the context of substantial and continuing failure by Ireland in meeting climate targets to date. CAP24 recognises that Ireland must significantly increase levels of renewable energy in the country and sets out the roadmap to deliver on Ireland's climate ambition which aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022. CAP24 aims to build on the progress made under CAP23 which stated "transformational policies, measures and actions, and societal change are required to increase the deployment of renewable energy generation, strengthen the grid, and meet the demand for flexibility in response to the challenge" by delivering policies, measures and actions that will support the achievement of our carbon budgets, sectoral emissions ceilings, and 2030 and 2050 climate targets.

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25), published on the 15 April 2025, marks the fourth annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. Similar to CAP24, CAP25 aims to expedite the deployment of onshore wind, targeting up to 9 GW by 2030. The plan emphasizes the necessity for rapid and substantial reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to meet the 2015 Paris Agreement and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, it highlights the importance of the revised National Planning Framework (NPF), which supports the development of electricity grid infrastructure by establishing regional renewable electricity capacity targets for 2030.

4.2 Planning Legislation

The proposed project comprises a renewable energy infrastructure project, including:

- A wind farm consisting of 13 no. turbines;
- A turbine delivery route (TDR); and
- Associated grid connection infrastructure.

In accordance with Class 1 of the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), developments that may be deemed 'Strategic Infrastructure Development' (SID) under Section 37A include:

[2] https://www.seai.ie/publications/2020-Renewable-Energy-in-Ireland-Report.pdf. Accessed on 16th July 2026.
[3] https://www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/energy-in-ireland-2024.pdf Accessed on 16th July 2026

"An installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts."

The proposed project will have an output in excess of 50 MW. In view of the fact that the development proposed fits into this category, consultations were held with the An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act (as amended). The Commission, by letter dated 06 October 2026, confirmed that the proposed project falls within the scope of paragraphs 37A(2)(a), (b) and (c of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and therefore have decided that the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development within the meaning of Section 37A of the 2000 Act. As such, the application for permission must therefore be made directly to the Coimisiún. A copy of this correspondence in is included in Appendix 1-1 (Case Ref 324133-26). The planning application for the proposed project, which this EIAR accompanies, is made to An Coimisiún Pleanála under Section 37E of that Act.

Conclusion

Based on the above, the proposed wind farm has a total installed capacity of 58.5 MW, which exceeds the 50 MW threshold set out in Class 1 of the Seventh Schedule and was deemed by An Coimisiún Pleanála to fall within the scope of paragraphs 37A(2)(a), (b) or (c). Accordingly, the wind farm constitutes SID under Section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

The entire project, including the wind farm, turbine delivery route, and associated grid connection, is submitted as a single SID application to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

4.2.1 Planning History of the Site

A review of Mayo County Council and Galway County Council's planning portal shows all the current and past planning applications located in and surrounding the site boundary. Following a review undertaken on 17th June 2026 on both Mayo County Council's online application database and the ACP database, there is no history of planning applications within the site boundary.

Planning history has been prepared and included as part of Appendix 4-1 of this EIAR Chapter.

In addition to the above, and for the purposes of undertaking a cumulative assessment, a planning search of large scale or significant applications permitted by both County Councils and ACP within 10 km of the subject site have been considered. For the purposes of this search, large scale and significant development refers to wind turbine permissions, solar development, electricity development, quarry development, recycling facility, and residential development comprising the provisions of over 25 units. Given the nature of the proposed project and the land uses surrounding the subject site, it is considered that projects of this nature and scale within this proximity have the most significant potential to give rise to significant effects.

This has been prepared and included in Appendix 4-2 of this EIAR Chapter.

4.3 Planning and Development Policy Context

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

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

4.4 International and European Policy

4.4.1 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

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

The framework set no binding limits on GHG emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms. Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called "Protocols" or "Agreements") may be negotiated to set binding limits on GHGs. The convention enjoys near universal membership, with 197 countries listed as being Parties to the Convention[4].

4.4.2 Kyoto Protocol Targets

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

4.4.3 Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol

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

[4] https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/organisation/unfccc-united-nations-framework-convention-climate-change_en. Accessed on 16th July 2026.

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

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

4.4.4 Paris Agreement 2015

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

In 2016, the threshold for entry into the agreement was adopted and the agreement came into force in November 2016. Ireland is legally bound by Article 7 of the United Nations COP21 Paris Agreement, signed in December 2015, to prepare and submit periodic updates on its national adaptation and mitigation plans in the global effort to keep global warming below 1.5 °C.

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

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

- Recognition that impacts from climate change will be lower at a temperature increase of 1.5 °C when compared with an increase of 2 °C;
- A request for participating countries to provide stronger national action plans for the year 2022 instead of the original agreed timeline of 2025;
- Agreement for participating nations to phase-down coal power and phase-out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies;
- A reaffirmed commitment by all parties to deliver financial aid to developing countries with a request for this aid to be doubled;
- An agreement on issues contained within the "Paris Rulebook", pertaining to operational details for the practical implementation of the Paris Agreement;
- An acknowledgment that the impacts of climate change are increasing with developing nations especially affected;
- Agreement to strengthen the Santiago Network for the connection of at-risk countries for the provision of assistance, knowledge and resources.

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

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

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

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

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

- COP30 adopted the "Global Mutirão" cover decision, which reaffirms the 1.5°C goal and calls on all countries to strengthen their 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including clearer pathways for accelerating renewable energy deployment, enhancing energy efficiency, and supporting just, orderly and equitable transitions away from fossil fuels.
- Countries agreed to mobilise at least USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035 to support climate action, which includes scaling renewable energy, upgrading grid infrastructure, and funding technology deployment for low-carbon energy systems. This also includes commitments to double adaptation finance by 2025 and triple it by 2035, a key enabler for resilient energy transitions.
- Launch of the Global Implementation Accelerator and the Belém Mission to 1.5°C. New initiatives introduced at COP30 aim to support countries in delivering enhanced NDCs, accelerating renewable energy investment, and improving transparency and planning around national energy transitions.

- Under the COP30 Climate Action Agenda, international initiatives, including IRENA, IEA, the Clean Energy Ministerial and the Green Grids Initiative, aligned on a global plan to reinforce and expand power grids, with USD 1 trillion in planned investment to triple collective renewable energy capacity by 2030, emphasising grid resilience and integration of large-scale solar and wind.

Although COP30 reaffirmed the global 1.5°C objective and strengthened commitments to climate finance and implementation, it did not deliver a binding global roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels. The final agreement acknowledged the need to reduce unabated fossil fuel use; however, stronger language on phase-out was not agreed due to political differences among participating countries.

COP30 instead focused on implementation mechanisms, including the launch of a Global Implementation Accelerator and the "Belém Mission to 1.5°C", alongside commitments to scale up climate finance and adaptation. Despite these measures, global progress remains insufficient to meet the Paris Agreement targets.

4.4.5 European Green Deal 2019

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

While the Fit for 55 legislative package has now been fully adopted and is in the implementation phase across the EU, recent assessments indicate that the EU is not currently on track to meet its 2030 GHG reduction targets. Continued acceleration in policy implementation and renewable energy deployment will be required to close the gap between current projections and legally binding targets. The various elements of the Fit for 55 Deal are indicated Figure 4-1.



Figure 4-1 - Elements of the Green Deal

First climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

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

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

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

Revisions:

- Revision to the EU Emission Trading Scheme, to lower the overall emissions cap per economic sector, phase out free emission allowances for aviation, and include shipping for the first time;
- Revision to the Effort Sharing Regulation, assigning stronger reduction targets for each Member State in building, road, domestic maritime transport, agriculture, waste and small industry sectors;
- Revision to the Regulation on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry, setting an overall EU target for carbon removals by natural sinks and setting national targets;

- Amendment of the Renewable Energy Directive, setting a new 2030 target of 40% (up from 32%) energy use from renewables by 2030 and strengthening bioenergy sustainability criteria;
- Amendment of the Energy Efficiency Directive setting a more ambitious binding annual target at EU level, raised from 32.5% to 36%;
- Amendment of the regulation setting CO_2 emission standards for cars and vans requiring average emissions of new cars to come down by 55% from 2021 to 2030 and net zero by 2035;
- Revision to the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive to require aircraft and ships have access to clean energy supply in major ports and airports; and
- Revision of the Energy Taxation Directive to align taxation of energy products with climate policies and promote clean technologies

The Fit for 55 package, designed to cut EU GHG emissions by 55% by 2030, has been fully adopted[5]. All major proposals have passed through the legislative process and are now in implementation.

New initiatives:

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

Further proposals and amendments are expected, including a new Climate, Energy and Environmental State Aid Guidelines.

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

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

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

[5] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/climate-action/delivering-european-green-deal/fit-55-delivering-proposals_en Accessed on 16th July 2026

Although this Regulation has now expired, one significant measure introduced by the Regulation itself was the *"introduction of a rebuttable presumption that renewable energy projects are of overriding public interest and serving public health and safety for the purposes of the relevant Union environmental legislation, except where there is clear evidence that those projects have major adverse effects on the environment which cannot be mitigated or compensated for*".

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

The original Renewable Energy Directive, Directive 2009/28/EC (commonly referred to as 'RED I'), was adopted in 2009 as part of the EU's 2020 Climate and Energy Package. It established a legally binding framework for promoting renewable energy across the European Union, with the primary objective of increasing the share of energy from renewable sources to 20% of gross final energy consumption by 2020. In addition, the Directive set a specific binding target of 10% renewable energy in the transport sector for each Member State.

A key feature of RED I was the introduction of national binding targets, which were differentiated based on each Member State's starting point, capacity, and economic conditions. Member States were required to develop National Renewable Energy Action Plans (NREAPs) outlining how they would meet their respective targets. The Directive also introduced mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between Member States, including statistical transfers, joint projects, and joint support schemes, thereby encouraging a coordinated EU-wide approach to renewable energy deployment.

RED I also established sustainability criteria for biofuels and bioliquids, particularly in relation to GHG savings and land use impacts. These provisions aimed to ensure that the expansion of renewable energy sources, particularly bioenergy, did not result in unintended environmental consequences. The Directive played a crucial role in significantly increasing renewable energy deployment across the EU and laid the foundation for subsequent policy developments.

Renewable Energy Directive II (Directive (EU) 2018/2001)

Directive (EU) 2018/2001, commonly referred to as 'RED II', entered into force in December 2018 as part of the "Clean Energy for All Europeans" package. It updated the EU's renewable energy policy framework for the period 2021–2030 and replaced the national binding targets of RED I with a single binding EU-wide target of at least 32% renewable energy by 2030, with a provision for upward revision. This marked a shift towards a more flexible governance framework, where Member States contribute collectively to meeting the EU target through National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs).

RED II introduced a range of new provisions aimed at facilitating the expansion of renewable energy across multiple sectors. These included measures to promote self-consumption and energy communities, giving citizens and local groups a more active role in energy generation. The Directive also strengthened sustainability criteria for bioenergy and established more robust accounting rules for renewable energy, ensuring that emissions reductions are accurately measured and verified.

In addition, RED II introduced sectoral targets, including a requirement for renewable energy to account for at least 14% of energy consumption in transport by 2030. It also set out indicative trajectories for heating and cooling and encouraged the integration of renewable energy into

district heating systems. Following the adoption of the European Green Deal in 2019, the ambition of RED II was further increased, with a revised target of at least 40% renewable energy by 2030, reflecting the EU's strengthened climate objectives.

Renewable Energy Directive III (Directive (EU) 2023/2413)

Directive (EU) 2023/2413, known as 'RED III', represents the most recent and most ambitious revision of the EU's renewable energy framework. Adopted in 2023 as part of the European Green Deal and the "Fit for 55" package, RED III increases the EU's binding renewable energy target to at least 42.5% of gross final energy consumption by 2030, with an additional aspirational target of 45%. This reflects a significant scale-up of ambition, designed to accelerate the transition to a climate-neutral energy system and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

RED III introduces a more detailed and sector-specific approach to renewable energy deployment. It establishes strengthened requirements across transport, industry, heating and cooling, and buildings. For example, Member States must ensure increased use of renewable fuels in transport, promote renewable hydrogen in industry, and drive continuous increases in renewable energy use across heating and cooling systems. These measures are designed to address sectors that have traditionally been more difficult to decarbonise, thereby supporting a more comprehensive energy transition.

A central element of RED III is the acceleration of permitting and deployment of renewable energy projects. The Directive requires Member States to designate "renewable acceleration areas" (also known as 'renewables go-to areas'), where permitting procedures are significantly streamlined. Within these areas, approval for renewable energy projects such as wind and solar must generally be granted within 12 months, while projects outside these areas should not exceed 24 months. Renewable energy developments are also deemed to be of overriding public interest, strengthening their legal position in planning and environmental decision-making.

4.4.7 The 2030 Climate and Energy Framework

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

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

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

On the 27 June 2018, EU ambassadors endorsed the provisional agreement reached by the Bulgarian Presidency on the revision of the renewable energy directive. The new regulatory framework is expected to pave the way for Europe's transition towards clean energy sources

such as wind, solar, hydro, tidal, geothermal, and biomass energy. The agreement sets a headline target of 32% energy from renewable sources at EU level for 2030. Other key elements of the agreement include:

- The design of support schemes will provide for a possibility of technology specific support, aligned with state aid guidelines. The opening of renewable support towards neighbouring member states will be voluntary, at an aspirational pace of at least 5% between 2023 and 2026 and 10% between 2027 and 2030. Except for certain cases, member states will be obliged to issue guarantees of origin.
- Permit granting procedures will be simplified and streamlined with a maximum of two years for regular projects and one year in case of repowering, both extendable for an additional year in case of specific circumstances and notwithstanding environmental and judicial procedures. For small-scale projects below 10.8 kW simple notification procedures will apply. Each member state may choose to apply simple notification procedures also to projects up to 50 kW.
- The annual increase of energy from renewable sources in heating and cooling will be 1.3 percentage points indicatively, or 1.1 percentage points if waste heat is not taken into account.
- Via obligations on fuel suppliers, renewables will reach a level of at least 14% in transport by 2030, supplemented by a set of facilitative multipliers to boost renewables in different sectors.

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

4.4.8 Roadmap for moving to a competitive Low-Carbon Economy in 2050

The low carbon Roadmap sets out cost-efficient pathways for key economic sectors for achieving an overall 80% reduction in the EU's emissions by 2050 (compared to 1990). Extensive economic modelling undertaken to prepare the Roadmap shows that domestic emission cuts of the order of 40% and 60% below 1990 levels could be achieved in a cost-effective way by 2030 and 2040, respectively. Current policies are projected to reduce emissions domestically to -30% in 2030 and -40% in 2050.

Figure 4-2 below illustrates the pathway towards an 80% reduction by 2050, shown in 5-year steps. The upper "reference" projection shows how domestic GHG emissions would develop under current policies. A scenario consistent with an 80% domestic reduction then shows how overall and sectoral emissions could evolve, if additional policies are put in place, considering technological options available over time.

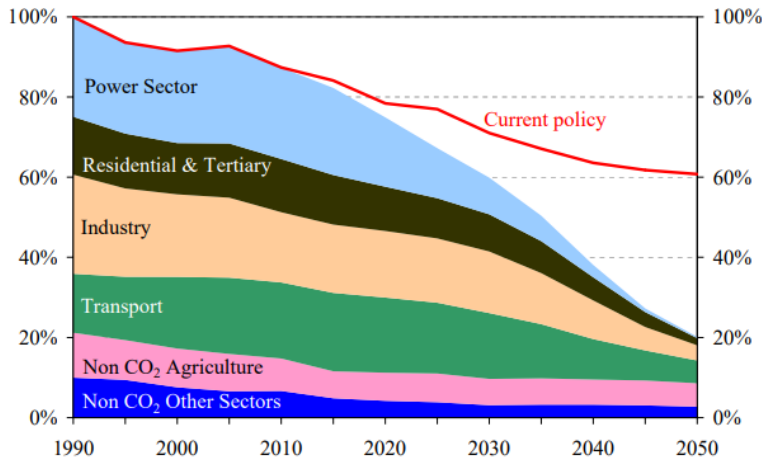


Figure 4-2 - EU GHG emissions towards an 80% domestic reduction[6]

The Commission intends to use the Roadmap as a basis for developing sector specific policy initiatives and Roadmaps. They will ensure that the EU Emissions Trading System remains a key instrument to drive low carbon investments in a cost-efficient manner. It will also remain attentive to the risk of carbon leakage in order to ensure a level-playing field for industry.

4.4.9 European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119)

The European Climate Law (Regulation (EU) 2021/1119), adopted in June 2021, establishes a legally binding framework for achieving climate neutrality in the European Union by 2050. The Regulation gives legal effect to the objectives set out in the European Green Deal by requiring EU institutions and Member States to align all relevant policies with the goal of net zero GHG emissions by mid-century. It represents a fundamental shift from policy ambition to legally enforceable climate governance at EU level.

A central provision of the European Climate Law is the adoption of an interim target of reducing net GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. This target is binding at EU level and forms the basis for the suite of legislative measures introduced under the "Fit for 55" package. The Regulation also establishes a framework for monitoring progress through regular reporting, scientific review and the preparation of trajectories to guide emissions reductions over time. In doing so, it ensures that both EU-wide and national policies remain consistent with long-term climate objectives.

The Regulation places a clear obligation on Member States to contribute to achieving these targets through national policy measures, including the development and implementation of National Energy and Climate Plans and Climate Action Plans. It also introduces requirements for the European Commission to assess collective and individual progress, ensuring accountability and transparency in climate action across the Union.

[6] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0112:FIN:EN:PDF Accessed on 16th July 2026

In the context of renewable energy development, the European Climate Law reinforces the urgent need to accelerate the deployment of low-carbon energy infrastructure, including wind energy projects and associated grid development. The legally binding nature of the targets, combined with the current gap between projected emissions reductions and required outcomes, underscores the importance of facilitating renewable energy projects as part of the transition to a climate-neutral energy system.

4.4.10 Effort Sharing Regulation (EU) 2018/842, as amended 2023

The Effort Sharing Regulation (EU) 2018/842, as amended in 2023 under the "Fit for 55" package, establishes legally binding annual GHG emissions reduction targets for each Member State in sectors not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System. These sectors include transport, buildings, agriculture, waste and small-scale industry, which collectively represent a significant proportion of national emissions and are particularly challenging to decarbonise. The Regulation forms a key pillar of the EU's climate policy framework, supporting the achievement of the binding emissions reduction targets established under the European Climate Law.

Under the revised Effort Sharing Regulation, Member States are assigned differentiated national targets based on relative economic capacity and cost-effectiveness considerations. Ireland is required to achieve a reduction of approximately 42% in GHG emissions in the relevant sectors by 2030, relative to 2005 levels. The Regulation also introduces stricter compliance mechanisms, including annual emissions limits, enhanced monitoring and reporting obligations, and limited flexibility mechanisms, thereby ensuring a high level of accountability in achieving national targets.

The Regulation places a clear obligation on Ireland to implement effective national policies and measures to reduce emissions across a number of sectors where progress has historically been limited. Achieving these reductions is closely linked to the increased electrification of transport and heating, improvements in energy efficiency, and the displacement of fossil fuels through the expansion of renewable electricity generation. As such, the provision of additional renewable energy capacity, together with the development of associated grid infrastructure, is essential to enable emissions reductions across these sectors.

Current projections from the Environmental Protection Agency indicate that Ireland is not on track to meet its legally binding targets under the Effort Sharing Regulation, even with full implementation of existing policies. This highlights a significant gap between policy ambition and projected outcomes and reinforces the urgent need for the accelerated delivery of renewable energy projects. In this context, the proposed project will contribute positively to national and EU climate objectives by supporting the transition to a low-carbon energy system and facilitating emissions reductions across multiple sectors of the economy.

4.4.11 REPowerEU (2022)

The REPowerEU Plan, published by the European Commission in May 2022, was developed in response to energy security concerns following the invasion of Ukraine. The Plan aims to reduce the European Union's dependence on imported fossil fuels while accelerating the transition to a secure, affordable and sustainable energy system.

The Plan reinforces the central role of renewable electricity, including onshore and offshore wind, in achieving climate targets and ensuring energy independence. It places a strong emphasis on the rapid deployment of renewable energy infrastructure and the expansion of electricity networks required to support increased generation capacity.

A key element of REPowerEU is the removal of barriers to delivery, including the need to streamline and accelerate planning and permitting processes. The Plan recognises renewable energy developments and associated grid infrastructure as being of overriding public interest in certain circumstances, thereby strengthening the policy support for such projects.

In Ireland, REPowerEU has been incorporated into the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, supporting targeted investment in renewable energy and associated infrastructure. Key objectives of REPowerEU include:

- Accelerating the deployment of renewable energy, particularly wind and solar;
- Reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and enhancing energy security;
- Streamlining and shortening planning and permitting procedures;
- Expanding and reinforcing electricity grid infrastructure; and
- Supporting investment in energy systems and clean technologies.

4.5 National Policy Context

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

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

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

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

4.5.1 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

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

Under Section 15 of the Act, Planning Authorities were required to have regard to Climate Action Plans, approved adaptation measures and the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change, thereby ensuring that climate considerations are integrated into planning and development decision-making.

4.5.2 White Paper on Energy – Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Future 2015-2030

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

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

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

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

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

The purpose of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021 is to provide for the approval of plans 'for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by the end of the year 2050'. The 2021 Climate Act also 'provide for carbon budgets and a decarbonisation target range for certain sectors of the economy'. The 2021 Climate Act removes any reference to a national mitigation plan and instead refers to both the Climate Action Plan and a series of National Long Term Climate Action Strategies. In addition, the Environment Minister shall request each local authority to make a 'local authority Climate Action Plan' lasting five years and to specify the mitigation measures and the adaptation measures to be adopted by the local authority. The Act has set a target of a 51% reduction in the total amount of GHGs over the course of the first two carbon periods ending 31 December 2030 relative to 2018 annual emissions. The 2021 Climate Act defines the carbon budget as 'the total amount of GHG emissions that are permitted during the budget period'.

The 2021 Act also introduced specific obligations on public bodies under Section 15. Pursuant to Section 15(1), a relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with the national climate objective and the objectives contained within approved Climate Action Plans. Section 15(2) further requires relevant bodies, in the performance of their functions, to have regard to the most recent Climate Action Plan, approved sectoral adaptation plans, the National Adaptation Framework, and where applicable, approved local authority Climate Action Plans. Planning authorities, as relevant bodies under the Act, are therefore required to exercise their statutory functions having regard to Ireland's legally binding climate objectives and the State's transition to a climate resilient, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy. This legislative framework is a material consideration in the assessment of renewable energy developments that contribute towards the achievement of national renewable energy and decarbonisation targets, such as the proposed project itself.

4.5.4 National Development Plan 2021-2030

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

The NDP includes National Strategic Outcome 8 – Transition to Climate-Neutral and Climate Resilient Society. The NDP recognises that the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive low-carbon, climate resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy and society must influence public capital investment choices over the next 10 years. It acknowledges that Ireland's energy system requires a radical overhaul to achieve its energy and climate objectives by 2050. This means how energy in Ireland is generated and used needs to fundamentally change. Investment in renewable energy sources, ongoing capacity renewal, and future technology affords Ireland the opportunity to comprehensively decarbonise our energy generation. Renewable energy, including wind technology, will play a key role in helping to diversify away from a reliance on fossil fuels.

The National Development Plan 2021-2030, sets out the investment priorities at national, regional and local planning levels that will facilitate the implementation of the NPF.

In the context of the energy sector, the principle objective of the NDP is to assist in ensuring a 'long-term, sustainable and competitive energy future for Ireland'. Targeted investment within regulated network infrastructure ensures that Ireland's power grid is:

- Maintained to the highest international safety standards;
- Fit for purpose in the medium to longer-term in order to meet projected demand levels; and
- Meets the challenge of integrating world-leading levels of renewable energy.

The NDP recognises that the national objective of transitioning by 2050 to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy and society must influence public capital investment choices over the next 10 years. It acknowledges that Ireland's energy system requires a radical overhaul to achieve its energy and climate objectives by 2050. This means how energy in Ireland is generated and used needs to fundamentally change.

The NDP states that investment in renewable energy sources, ongoing capacity renewal, and future technology affords Ireland the opportunity to comprehensively decarbonise our energy generation. Renewable energy, including wind technology, will play a key role in helping to diversify away from a reliance on fossil fuels.

4.5.5 National Development Plan Review 2025

The original National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 has been updated through the publication of the National Development Plan Review 2025. The review reaffirms the role of the NDP in supporting the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF) whilst substantially increasing the level of public investment to address Ireland's infrastructure requirements and future economic growth. The updated NDP provides for total investment of approximately €275.4 billion to 2035, representing the largest capital investment programme undertaken by the State.

The review identifies investment in housing, water, energy and transport infrastructure as a central Government priority, recognising that these sectors are critical to supporting population growth, economic competitiveness and balanced regional development. The Government states that improved economic infrastructure is essential to support housing delivery, enhance competitiveness and secure future prosperity.

The NDP Review acknowledges Ireland's commitments under national and European climate policy and reiterates the objective of transitioning to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. It recognises that the delivery of climate objectives will require significant investment in renewable energy, electricity infrastructure, energy efficiency and low-carbon technologies. The review further notes that Climate Action Plan 2025 contains a range of measures relating to renewable energy and energy infrastructure that require substantial capital investment.

Of particular relevance to renewable energy development, the review provides for enhanced investment in the electricity network, including €3.5 billion in equity funding for ESB and EirGrid to support enhanced energy grid capacity, acknowledging the critical role of electricity infrastructure in supporting housing delivery, economic competitiveness and the energy transition.

The review also confirms that investment decisions have been guided by the need to improve critical infrastructure, particularly in the areas of energy, transport and water services, and

recognises that ongoing investment in these sectors is necessary to facilitate sustainable growth and support Ireland's climate and renewable energy objectives.

4.5.6 Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)

RESS is a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, which provides financial support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland. RESS is a central component of Ireland's National Energy and Climate Plan and Climate Action Plans, supporting the transition to a low-carbon electricity system and the achievement of Ireland's legally binding target of 80% renewable electricity by 2030. In addition to cost effectiveness, RESS delivers a broad range of policy objectives, including:

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

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) has been implemented through a series of competitive auctions designed to deliver increasing volumes of renewable electricity capacity in line with Ireland's 2030 targets.

The first auction (RESS 1), held in August 2020, was delivered by the Department, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), and EirGrid. It demonstrated strong market engagement, with 114 projects applying and 82 securing support.

RESS 2 followed in 2022 and supported the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2021. The auction delivered approximately 2,748 GWh of renewable generation, including circa 414 MW of onshore wind and 1,534 MW of solar capacity.

RESS 3, held in 2023, saw a notable reduction in the volume of onshore wind capacity awarded. Approximately 148 MW of wind and around 500 MW of solar were successful, equating to an estimated 934 GWh of annual generation. This was significantly below the indicative auction range of 2,000–3,500 GWh and reflected constraints in project pipeline delivery, including planning and grid challenges.

RESS 4 (2024) marked an improvement in delivery compared to RESS 3, with approximately 1,334 MW of capacity procured. While this represented a recovery in output, the level of capacity remains below what is required to fully meet Ireland's 2030 renewable electricity targets.

RESS 5 was held in September 2025 and a total of 22 projects were successful from 32 qualifying applicants, delivering approximately 1,072 MW of capacity. This comprised approximately 853 MW of solar and 219 MW of onshore wind. The auction supported in the region of 1,500 GWh of renewable generation, which represents a decrease compared to RESS 4 and remains below the indicative volumes required to meet 2030 targets.

Most recently, consultation on RESS 6 was held earlier this year and the final auction is scheduled to be carried out in November 2026. It is anticipated that successful projects submitted by qualifying applicants will continue to deliver critical additional MW capacity in an effort to assist Ireland in meeting its renewable energy targets by 2030. All projects supported under RESS are required to establish a Community Benefit Fund for the local area. These funds are governed by the RESS Good Practice Principles and are intended to ensure that communities located in proximity to renewable developments derive tangible benefit from them. In practice, the funds support local initiatives, community infrastructure, and broader socio-economic development, while also fostering ongoing engagement between developers and local stakeholders.

Key participants in the administration of these funds include the project developer, community representatives, and fund administrators operating within the framework set out under the scheme. However, the reduced number of onshore wind projects progressing through recent RESS auctions has implications for the scale, geographic distribution, and long-term value of these funds at a national level.

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

Ireland's Climate Action Plan (CAP) is the Government's primary policy framework for delivering the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy. First introduced in 2019 and updated annually, the Plan sets out a pathway of sectoral actions and targets to achieve Ireland's legally binding objective of net zero GHG emissions by 2050, as established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The CAP provides a detailed roadmap across key sectors including electricity, transport, buildings, industry and agriculture, with a particular emphasis on the decarbonisation of the electricity sector through increased deployment of renewable energy. It establishes specific national targets, identifies the scale of infrastructure required, and assigns responsibility for delivery across Government departments and agencies.

Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon previous iterations and sets out updated measures and actions to ensure continued progress toward Ireland's emissions reduction targets for the periods 2021–2025 and 2026–2030. It reaffirms the central role of renewable electricity in achieving decarbonisation and maintaining energy security, with a continued focus on accelerating project delivery and strengthening supporting infrastructure.

CAP24 confirms Ireland's ambition to achieve at least 80% renewable electricity by 2030 and sets out key technology targets, including approximately 9 GW of onshore wind, 8 GW of solar generation and a minimum of 5 GW of offshore wind capacity. The Plan recognises that achieving these targets will require a substantial increase in the pace and scale of renewable energy deployment, together with significant investment in electricity network infrastructure.

The Plan also highlights the importance of addressing barriers to delivery, including planning, consenting and grid connection constraints. It emphasises the need to maintain a strong pipeline of consented renewable energy projects capable of participating in support schemes such as RESS, alongside the continued development of the transmission and distribution networks to accommodate increased generation and demand.

In this regard, CAP24 reinforces the need for both renewable energy developments and associated grid infrastructure, recognising that timely delivery of such projects is essential to meeting national climate targets and ensuring a secure and sustainable energy system.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is also important to note the key metrics to deliver abatement in electricity as outlined in CAP24 to deliver a decarbonised economy for Ireland by 2050, as shown in Figure 4-3 below.

Table 12.5 – Key Metrics to Deliver Abatement in Electricity[71]

Theme	2025 KPI	2025 abatement (vs. 2018) $MtCO_2eq.$	2030 KPI	2030 abatement (vs. 2018) $MtCO_2$ eq.	2031-2035 measures
Accelerate Renewable Energy Generation[72]	50% renewable electricity share of demand 6 GW onshore wind capacity Up to 5 GW solar PV capacity, including at least 1 GW of new non-utility solar	2. 21	80% renewable electricity share of demand 9 GW onshore wind capacity At least 5 GW offshore wind capacity 8 GW solar PV capacity, including 2.5 GW of new non-utility solar Green hydrogen production from renewable electricity surplus generation	7.18	Decarbonisation Roadmap for a net-zero power system Green hydrogen production via 2 GW offshore wind
Accelerate Flexibility	Maximum level of renewables at any one time on the grid: 85% Dispatch down (excluding surplus generation) of renewables below 7% Minimise surplus generation Required long term storage (4 hour plus) in place	See above abatement figure	Maximum level of renewables at any one time on the grid: 95-100% Dispatch down (excluding surplus generation) of renewables below 7% Minimise surplus generation Required additional long-term storage (4 hour plus) in place At least 2 GW of new flexible gas-fired generation Zero-emission gas-fired generation from biomethane and hydrogen commencing by 2030	See above abatement figure	Required additional long duration storage technologies in place Increased zero emission gas-fired generation to enable a net zero power system
Demand Management	Demand side flexibility 15-20% Zero carbon demand growth	2.21	Demand side flexibility 20-30% Zero carbon demand growth	7.18	Demand side flexibility 30% Zero carbon demand growth
Total Estimated Abatement Potential					

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

4.5.8 The National Planning Framework (NPF): First Revision (April 2025)

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is Ireland's overarching strategic plan for guiding long-term spatial development, setting out how the country will grow and develop to 2040 in a sustainable, balanced and coordinated manner. First published in 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040, the NPF established a national vision for population growth, housing, infrastructure, and regional development, aiming to better align planning and investment decisions across the State.

In accordance with planning legislation requiring periodic review, the first revision of the NPF was prepared in 2024 and formally approved by Government in April 2025, following consideration by both Houses of the Oireachtas. This revised framework updates the original strategy to reflect new demographic trends, climate commitments, and emerging development challenges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **National Policy Objective 30** Facilitate the development of the rural economy, in a manner consistent with the national climate objective, through supporting a sustainable

and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

- **National Policy Objective 66** The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the medium and longer-term requirements of all relevant environmental and climate legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.
- **National Policy Objective 69** Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for GHG emissions reductions as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets.
- **National Policy Objective 70** Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a climate neutral economy by 2050.
- **National Policy Objective 71** Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including supporting the delivery of renewable electricity generating development.
- **National Policy Objective 72** Support an all-island approach to the delivery of renewable electricity through interconnection of the transmission grid.
- **National Policy Objective 73** Support the co-location of renewable technologies with other supporting technologies and complementary land uses, including agriculture, amenity, forestry and opportunities to enhance biodiversity and promote heritage assets, at appropriate locations which are determined based upon the best available scientific evidence in line with EU and national legislative frameworks.
- **National Policy Objective 74** Each Regional Assembly must plan, through their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, for the delivery of the regional renewable electricity capacity allocations indicated for onshore wind and solar reflected in
- below, and identify allocations for each of the local authorities, based on the best available scientific evidence and in accordance with legislative requirements, in order to meet the overall national target.

- **National Policy Objective 75** Local Authorities shall plan for the delivery of Target Power Capacity (MW) allocations consistent with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, through their City and County Development Plans.

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

Figure 4-4 - Regional Renewable Energy Capacity Allocations[7]

The proposed project aims to contribute significantly to the region's goal of achieving an additional 1,389 MW by 2030 from onshore wind resource and will help the Northern and Western Region meet its share of the national renewable energy goals, supporting Ireland's transition to sustainable energy sources.

4.6 The Relevant Policies

4.6.1 National Energy Security Framework

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

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

[7] National Planning Framework: (NPF) First Revision (April 2025) - Table 9.1 – Regional Renewable Electricity Capacity Allocations. Available at https://cdn.npf.ie/wp-content/uploads/National-Planning-Framework-First-Revision-April-2025-1.pdf Accessed on 16th July 2026

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

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

4.6.2 Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006

In 2006, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities' under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (WEDG) provide statutory guidance for wind energy development, including consideration of environmental issues, such as noise and shadow flicker, design, siting, spatial extent and scale, cumulative effect and spacing, as well as the layout and height of wind turbines having regard to the landscape and other sensitivities. Planning authorities must have regard to the Guidelines on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The guidelines are intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy projects and in the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments.

Relevant points include:

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

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

4.6.3 Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines – December 2019

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

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

- New noise standards;
- Setback distances;
- Automatic shadow flicker control mechanisms;
- Community consultation;
- Community dividend;
- Grid connections.

These revised guidelines are still under review and until such time as the new guidelines are published, the 2006 guidelines remain the statutory policy guide in relation to all wind energy developments. However, it is prudent to note that the 2006 Guidelines will likely be reviewed, updated and ultimately published as a National Planning Statement under the mechanisms of the 2024 Planning and Development Act.

As demonstrated in the subsequent chapters, the proposed project will not result in any likely significant effects on the environment and is in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and has been designed as such that it is anticipated that it is broadly capable of adhering to the draft guidelines, although there are effects (such as noise) which are unlikely to adhere fully to the Draft Guidelines.

4.6.4 Irelands Greenhouse Gas Emission Projections 2016-2035

The National Climate Change Strategy designated the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with responsibility for developing annual national emission projections for GHGs for all key sectors of the economy, including transport.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has put forward its clear assessment that the window for action on climate change is rapidly closing. To limit global warming to 1.5°C and avoid the most severe impacts of the climate crisis, the IPCC pathways show that the share of global electricity supplied by renewables—which stands at approximately 30% today—must scale up dramatically to between 70% and 85% by 2050, with wind and solar power serving as the primary drivers of this transition[8].

The EPA's most recent publication, the State of the Environment Report (2024)[9] defines Climate and biodiversity as the most pressing issues to be addressed in Ireland. It highlights concerns about environmental indicators which are regressing. It highlights concerns about critical environmental indicators that continue to regress or show insufficient progress to meet long-term targets. The EPA reiterates that "climate change is the defining challenge for this century". While the publication of the government's Climate Action Plan is recognised as a vital step toward reaching national and EU climate goals, the EPA grades Ireland's overall climate assessment as "poor" on its scorecard, warning that the pace of greenhouse gas emissions reductions is still far too slow to meet 2030 targets. Furthermore, the EPA grades the country's

[8] https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-cycle/ Accessed on 16th July 2026

[9] https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/assessment/state-of-environment-report-/ Accessed on 16th July 2026

overall nature and biodiversity assessment as "very poor", with deteriorating trends continuing to dominate.

The report notes that air pollution remains the "single greatest environmental threat to our health", contributing to an estimated 1,600 premature deaths in Ireland each year. According to the EPA, the main sources of air pollution impacting public health in Irish towns, villages, and cities are:

- Emissions from burning of solid fuels in homes;
- Transport emissions from vehicles in urban areas;
- Ammonia emissions from agriculture.

The proposed project will contribute positively to both climate and air quality in Ireland. This will come about through increased electrification of home heating and transport, along with increased renewable electricity generation (and associated avoidance of fossil fuel burning generation) with an overall reduction in air pollution.

The key findings of the EPA's projections for Ireland's GHG Emissions (2024–2055)[10], published in May 2025, reveal that Ireland is significantly off track to meet its legally binding climate targets. Even with full implementation of all current climate action plans and policies, Ireland is projected to achieve only a 23% reduction in total GHG emissions by 2030, far short of the 51% reduction target set under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

The EPA's latest greenhouse gas projections (published in May 2026) states the following:

> *"Ireland is not on track to meet the 51% emissions reduction target by 2030 (compared to 2018). Full implementation of a wide range of policies and plans across all sectors that deliver carbon savings is required to achieve a projected reduction of 25%."*[11]

Ireland is still not on a pathway to meet its legally binding national and European carbon budget targets by 2030. Under the 'With Existing Measures' or 'REM' scenario, it is estimated that Ireland will only have achieved a 13% reduction in Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) emissions in 2030 when comparing against 2005. In comparison, the "With Additional Measures" or 'RAM' scenario predicts a 23% reduction in this same period if implemented.

The operational stage of this proposed project will have significant long-term positive impacts on air quality and climate change. Further details relating to the positive effects of the proposed project on air quality and climate change are included in Chapter 14 and Chapter 15 of this EIAR.

[10] https://www.epa.ie/news-releases/news-releases-2025/epa-projections-show-ireland-off-track-for-2030-climate-targets.php Accessed on 16th July 2026.

[11] Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2025-2030 Accessed 14th September 2026.

4.6.5 Wind Energy Ireland (formerly the Irish Wind Energy Association) – Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry, 2012

Wind Energy Ireland (formerly known as the Irish Wind Energy Association or IWEA) published *'Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry' in 2008 with Guideline aims updated in 2012*[12]. The guidelines aim to encourage and define best practice development in the wind energy industry, acting as a reference document and guide to the main issues relating to wind energy developments. The purpose of the guidelines is to encourage responsible and sensitive wind farm development, which takes into consideration the concerns of local communities, planners, and other interested groups.

The guidelines outline the main aspects of wind energy development with emphasis on responsible and sustainable design and environmental practices, on aspects of development which affect external stakeholders, and on good community engagement practices. In approaching the development of IWEA's guidelines the aim was to be complementary to the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government's 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (2006).

4.6.6 Commission for Regulation of Utilities: Grid Connection Policy

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

On the 10 June 2020, the CRU further published the Enduring Connection Policy – Stage 2 (ECP-2) Decision (CRU/20/060). This decision marks a major milestone in the Enduring Connection Policy regime and provides for three batches of new generation connection offers to access the electricity network. Subsequently, the CRU introduced the Electricity Connection Policy - Generation and System Services (ECP-GSS) (CRU/2024101) in 2025, which applies to onshore renewable generation, storage and other system services technologies. The ECP-GSS regime provides for the regular processing of connection applications through biannual batch processes, with application deadlines generally occurring in March and September each year.

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

[12] https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/9660bdfb5a4f1d276f41ae9ab54e991bb600b7.pdf Accessed on 16th July 2026

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

In December 2016, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment DCCAE published a Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement. The code cites ten key areas that wind farm promoters must comply with when engaging with communities. These include:

1. Contact and visibility;
2. Arrangement for making contacts;
3. Engagement;
4. Compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations;
5. Community benefit;
6. Impact mitigation;
7. Independent advisory and information bodies;
8. Expert professional advice;
9. Ancillary development;
10. Reports.

It is intended to ensure that wind energy development in Ireland is undertaken in observance of best industry practices, and with the full engagement of communities around the country. Community engagement is required through the different stages of a project, from the initial scoping, feasibility, and concept stages, right through construction to the operational phase. The guidelines advise that ignoring or poorly managing community concerns can have long-term negative impacts on a community's economic, environmental, or social situation. Not involving communities in the project development process has the potential to impose costly time and financial delays for projects or prevent the realisation of projects in their entirety.

The proposed project fully complies with the *Code of Practice for Wind Energy Developments in Ireland*, ensuring that it has been designed and will be constructed, operated, and decommissioned in accordance with best practice environmental, technical, and community standards. Specifically, community engagement has been a strong focus throughout the design evolution process, and the proposed project includes a Community Benefit Fund in line with the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) which is estimated to be over €4 million over the first 15 years of the project. Please refer to Chapter 2 (Description of the Proposed Project) of this EIAR for further detail.

4.6.8 Shaping Our Electricity Future (SOEF)

The Shaping Our Electricity Future document, prepared by EirGrid is the primary roadmap developed by EirGrid to guide the transformation of the electricity system across Ireland and Northern Ireland. The most recent version of the roadmap (Version 1.1) was published in July 2023.

The roadmap sets out the scale of change required to achieve Ireland's target of generating at least 80% of electricity from renewable sources by 2030. It identifies the need for substantial reinforcement and expansion of transmission infrastructure to accommodate large volumes of

renewable generation, particularly wind and solar, and to meet increasing electricity demand. Key objectives of Shaping Our Electricity Future include:

- Delivering a transmission system capable of supporting at least 80% renewable electricity by 2030;
- Facilitating the connection of large-scale renewable generation, including onshore and offshore wind;
- Strengthening and expanding grid infrastructure to transport electricity across the network;
- Increasing system flexibility to accommodate variable renewable generation; and
- Ensuring security, reliability and resilience of the electricity system during the transition.

The strategy recognises that the transition to a low-carbon electricity system will require a more flexible, resilient and digitally enabled network, capable of integrating non-synchronous renewable generation while maintaining system stability and security of supply.

4.6.9 EirGrid Transmission Plan 2024 - 2033

EirGrid's Transmission Development Plans (TDPs) set out the programme of works required to develop and reinforce Ireland's electricity transmission network over the medium to long term. The most recent plan is the Transmission Development Plan 2024–2033, which outlines the next phase of network investment. Key objectives of the Transmission Development Plans include:

- Reinforcing and expanding the transmission network to enable renewable energy integration;
- Facilitating new grid connections for renewable generation projects;
- Enhancing system resilience and maintaining security of electricity supply;
- Supporting increased electricity demand arising from electrification; and
- Developing a flexible and efficient network capable of operating with high levels of variable renewable generation.

These plans are aligned with national climate policy and are designed to facilitate the integration of renewable energy, support increasing electricity demand, and maintain security of supply. They identify the need for both new transmission infrastructure and upgrades to the existing network in order to ensure that renewable electricity can be transported efficiently from areas of generation to centres of demand.

The plans also recognise that the electricity system is undergoing significant transformation, driven by the growth in renewable generation, electrification of transport and heat, and the need for greater system flexibility and resilience.

4.7 Regional Policy Context

4.7.1 Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES)

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) published a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional 2020-2032, which came into effect in June 2020. The primary statutory purpose of the RSES is to provide a long-term spatial and economic development framework for the Region, while supporting delivery of the NPF and the NDP. Policies in the RSES which are directly relevant to the proposed Wind Farm are discussed in detail below.

Climate Action and Low-Carbon Transition

The RSES recognises the urgent need to address climate change and to support Ireland's transition to a climate-resilient, low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economy. It promotes the decarbonisation of energy generation, increased deployment of renewable energy, and improved energy efficiency across all sectors.

Energy Efficiency and Sustainable Buildings

The RSES also promotes improved energy efficiency and reduced energy demand, particularly in the built environment, recognising this as a key measure in achieving climate and energy objectives. It supports high standards of building design, compact growth and the integration of low-carbon and renewable energy technologies in order to minimise energy consumption. Improved energy efficiency is viewed as complementary to the increased deployment of renewable electricity generation and the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

Strategic Energy and Electricity Grid Infrastructure

Section 8.6 of the RSES recognises that the electricity transmission and distribution network is a critical piece of national and regional infrastructure. Upgrading and expanding the grid is essential to:

- Accommodate increasing levels of renewable electricity generation, particularly from wind;
- Ensure a secure, reliable and high-quality electricity supply;
- Support regional economic development, including energy intensive and high technology industries.

The RSES identifies the Northern and Western Region as having significant potential to contribute to national renewable electricity generation, particularly through onshore wind energy, due to its strong wind regime and lower population density. In addition, The RSES states that the strengthening of the electricity grid will enable the Region to safely export surplus renewable electricity while also meeting future increases in electricity demand driven by electrification of heat and transport. Some of the key Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) applicable to the proposed project are listed below:

- **RPO 4.16:** The NWRA shall co-ordinate the identification of potential renewable energy sites of scale in collaboration with Local Authorities and other stakeholders within 3 years of the adoption of the RSES. The identification of such sites (which may extend to include energy

storage solutions) will be based on numerous site selection criteria including environmental matters, and potential grid connections.

- **RPO 4.17:** To position the region to avail of the emerging global market in renewable energy by:
  - Stimulating the development and deployment of the most advantageous renewable energy systems
  - Supporting research and innovation
  - Encouraging skills development and transferability
  - Raising awareness and public understanding of renewable energy and encourage market opportunities for the renewable energy industry to promote the development and growth of renewable energy businesses
  - Encourage the development of the transmission and distribution grids to facilitate the development of renewable energy projects and the effective utilisation of the energy generated from renewable sources having regard to the future potential of the region over the lifetime of the Strategy and beyond.
- **RPO 4.18:** Support the development of secure, reliable and safe supplies of renewable energy, to maximise their value, maintain the inward investment, support indigenous industry and create jobs
- **RPO 8.1:** The Assembly support the development of a safe, secure and reliable electricity network and the transition towards a low carbon economy centred on energy efficiency and the growth projects outlined and described in this strategy
- **RPO 8.2:** Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission network with particular reference to the regionally important projects contained within Table 11
- **RPO 8.3:** The Assembly support the necessary integration of the transmission network requirements to allow linkages with renewable energy proposals at all levels to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.
- **RPO 8.4:** That reinforcements and new electricity transmission infrastructure are put in place and their provision is supported, to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs. Ensure that development minimises impacts on designated areas.

Overall, the Northern and Western RSES explicitly supports the development of wind energy and associated grid infrastructure in suitable locations and recognises the Region's strategic role in achieving national renewable energy and climate targets.

In this regard, it is also noted that the review and preparation of a new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy has commenced by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly pursuant to the provisions of the 2024 Planning and Development Act.

The new RSES will be required to address matters including onshore renewable energy, regional landscape considerations and the translation of national renewable energy objectives into a regional planning framework, including the establishment of more detailed renewable energy and climate-related policy measures at regional and county level.

4.8 Local Policy Context

4.8.1 Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028, (hereafter referred to as "the Plan") was adopted by Mayo County Council on the 29 June 2022 and came into effect on the 10 August 2022. The Plan establishes policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Mayo and is aligned with the NWRA RSES, to give effect to National Strategic Outcomes and the National Climate Action Plan. Chapter 11 of the Plan provides Climate Action & Renewable Energy policy with the stated strategic aim:

> *"to transition to a low carbon and climate resilient county, with an emphasis on reduction in energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions, through a combination of effective mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change; in addition to maximising the opportunities to become a national leader in renewable energy generation, whilst increasing the resilience of our Natural and Cultural Capital to climate change by planning and implementing appropriate adaptation measures"*

The Plan sets a minimum target of 600 MW of renewable energy to be delivered across Mayo County over the Plan period. Although Mayo County Council have stated in newly adopted Renewable Energy Strategy that Mayo has 'already exceeded its renewable energy target of 600 MW', it has failed to acknowledge that the lifetime of the plan runs from 2022 – 2028. It has also failed to recognize the revised renewable energy locations in the First Revision to the NPF, which outline a renewable energy goal of an additional 1,389MW in the Northern and Western Region by 2030.

Despite the above, the newly adopted Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo (July 2026) has implemented a number of buffer zones on environmentally constrained areas which has ultimately resulted in the dezoning of a number of sites across the County previously designated as being suitable for such development, including the subject site.

Basing the updated RES on the premise that Mayo has reached its renewable energy targets as set out for the lifetime of the CDP, particularly given the lifetime of the CDP only runs for another two years, is premature and it is considered that this position will create misalignment with regional policy once a Regional Renewable Electricity Strategy has been created for this region. As such, it is considered that the updated Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo does not comply with ACP's Section 15 obligations in this regard.

Not only has this jeopardized County Mayo's minimum target for renewable energy, it is also very likely that the Plan will be misaligned and contradictory of the NWRA's forthcoming Renewable Energy Strategy, as well as the 2024 Planning and Development Act.

The Plan further recognises the importance of onshore wind energy as a renewable energy source with the Plan stating that it will "endeavour to continue to facilitate wind energy projects that accord with the Mayo RES [Renewable Energy Strategy], the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo and the relevant Section 28 ministerial guidelines.

The following renewable energy policies and objectives are provided under the Plan in support of the proposed project:

- **REP-1:** To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of a range of renewable energy sources at suitable locations within the county, where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities to ensure the long-term sustainable growth of the county.
- **REP-3:** To actively encourage and support the sustainable development, renewal and maintenance of energy generation infrastructure in order to maintain a secure energy supply, while protecting the landscape, archaeological and built heritage and having regard to the provisions of the Habitats Directive.
- **REP-4:** To ensure that developers of proposed large-scale renewable energy projects carry out community consultation in accordance with best practice and commence the consultation at the initiation of project planning.
- **REP-5:** To promote the use of efficient energy storage systems and infrastructure that supports energy efficiency and renewable energy system optimization, subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and consideration of environmental and ecological sensitivities.
- **REP-7:** To promote the harnessing of wind energy to contribute toward decarbonising County Mayo, including new emerging by-product markets.
- **REO-1:** To co-operate with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly in identifying Strategic Energy Zones as areas suitable for larger, energy generating projects, community and micro energy production, whilst ensuring environmental constraints and a regional landscape strategy are considered.
- **RE0-3:** To encourage and facilitate, where possible, the production of energy from established and emerging renewable technologies.
- **REO-6:** To ensure all renewable energy proposal comply with the provisions of the Mayo County Council Renewable Energy Strategy 2011-2022 (or as updated).
- **REO-8:** To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy, and having regard to the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) and Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy, or any revisions there of or future guidelines, and ensure consistency with the provisions of RPO 4.16 and RPO 5.2(b) of the RSES (2020-2032).
- **EDO 54:** To facilitate […] renewable energy resources (such as wind/ solar/ocean energy) that are dependent on their locality in rural locations, where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment, including the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, residential amenity or visual amenity. […];
- **EDO 66:** To support and facilitate the Green Economy in County Mayo.
- **EDO 69:** To support and facilitate renewable energy initiatives that facilitate a low carbon transition.

On the 2 December 2022, the Minister of State, Peter Burke, issued a Direction pursuant to Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) on the adopted Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 to ensure that the Plan sets out an overall strategy for

proper planning and sustainable development and meets the requirements of the Act. It is noted that the Direction does not pertain to the planning policy listed above. It, therefore, has no relevance to the proposed project.

4.8.1.1 Mayo County Council Wind Energy Strategy (WES) 2011-2022

The previous Renewable Energy Strategy was prepared for County Mayo in the context of EU and national renewable energy targets. The Strategy was underpinned by Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Directive Assessment (HDA). The SEA evaluated five potential strategy options and their effects on the environment and designated sites, including Natura 2000 sites. The HDA assessed the effect the Strategy would have on the conservation objectives of any Natura sites in the County and within 15 km of the County boundary.

Under the previous 2011 – 2022 strategy, the project site was identified as being located within a 'Tier 2 (Open for consideration)' location. In this Strategy, 'Open for consideration' identifies areas which may be considered for wind farms or small clusters of wind turbines but where the visual impact on sensitive or vulnerable landscapes, listed highly scenic routes, scenic routes, scenic viewing points and scenic routes will be the principal consideration. All turbine locations proposed as part of this proposed project are located within an 'Open for Consideration' area in the Wind Energy Strategy 2011 - 2022, and this is indicated in Figure 4-5 below for context.

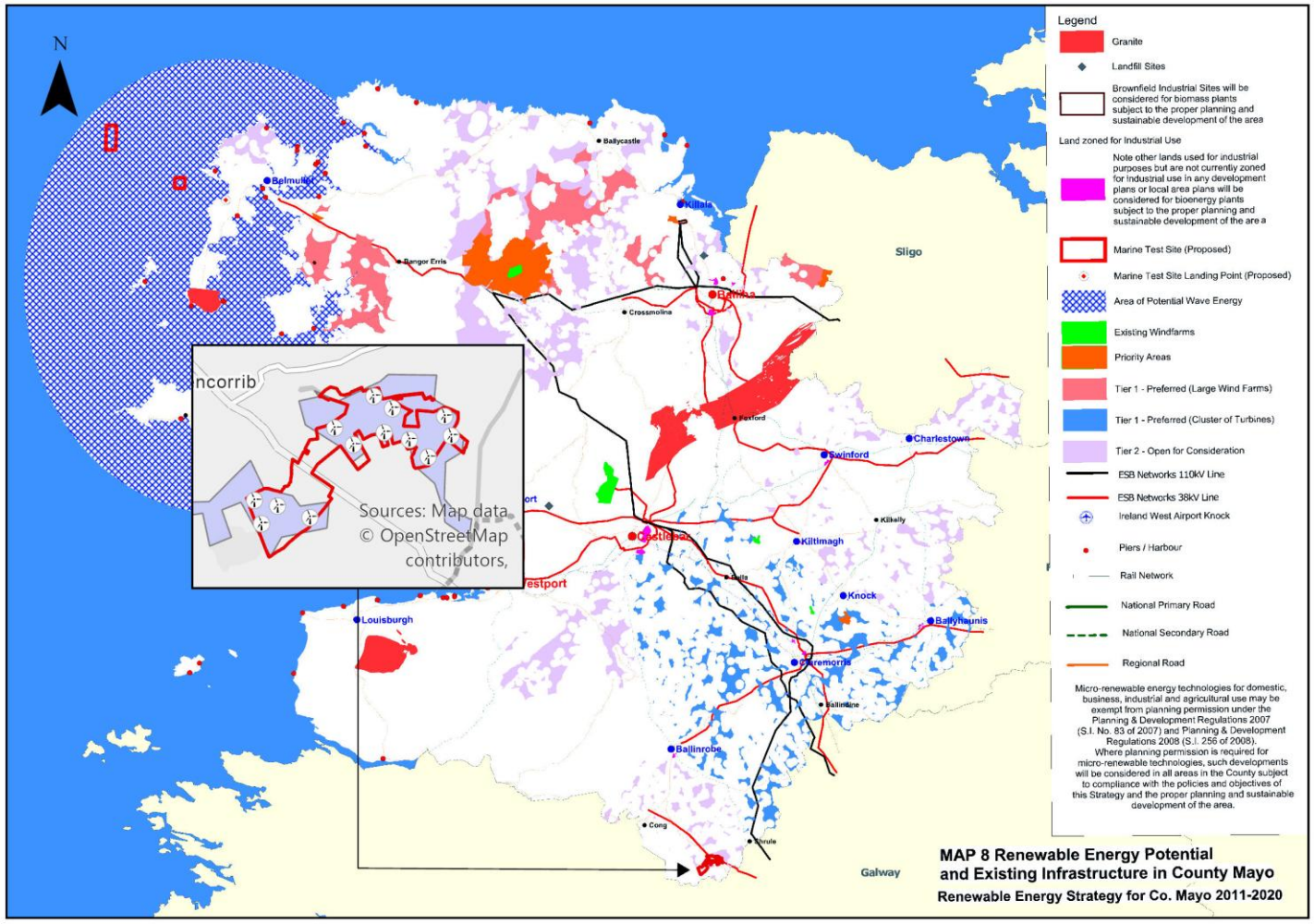


Figure 4-5: Mayo County Wind Energy Strategy Map with Locations of Proposed Turbines

4.8.1.2 Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy July 2026 (Variation No. 2 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028)

Variation No. 2 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028 introduces a Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) for the County, which proposes a series of amendments to the existing Wind Energy Strategy (WES). A notable and material change within this updated strategy is the designation of extensive areas of land from "Open for Consideration" to "Unsuitable" for wind energy development. This reclassification has significant implications for the spatial distribution of renewable energy opportunities within the County.

A review of the RES zoning maps highlights the introduction of extensive buffer zones around certain lakes within the County, most notably Lough Corrib, Lough Mask (Measca), Lough Conn, and Lough Cullin. These lakes are designated as Natura 2000 sites, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), reflecting their ecological sensitivity and importance for biodiversity, particularly for bird species. In recognition of this, a precautionary approach to development in proximity to such waterbodies is appropriate.

While the protection of designated sites forms an established component of planning and environmental policy, the application of a buffer of this extent is not clearly supported by site-specific assessment. A uniform buffer approach does not reflect variations in local environmental conditions, land characteristics, topography, or the potential role of mitigation measures in reducing impacts.

The imposition of a buffer of this scale results in a significant area of land being excluded from consideration for renewable energy development. This has implications for the overall availability of land to support renewable energy projects and may influence the capacity to contribute to national and regional renewable energy targets, including those associated with climate policy and the transition to lower carbon energy sources.

The Northern and Western Region, within which the proposed project is located, had an energised onshore wind capacity of approximately 1,791 MW in 2023 and has been allocated a further 1,389 MW of capacity to be delivered by 2030. This represents approximately 35% of the national onshore wind target and highlights the important role of the region in supporting Ireland's energy transition. The imposition of such a buffer in County Mayo results in the effective sterilization of significant land parcels for development and directly contradicts regional policy in this regard. In addition, it is prudent to note that the Mayo CDP lifespan runs from 2022 – 2028, and therefore Variation No. 2 is considered to be premature and misaligned with regional and national policy.

Public Consultation

The public consultation period for Variation No. 2 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028 ran from 28th April 2026 to Tuesday 26th May 2026, during which a total of 46 submissions were received.

The Draft Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy received numerous significant submissions primarily focused on the strategy's methodology, renewable energy zoning, and lack of

alignment with national climate policy. Greensource Sustainable Developments Ltd and Inis Onshore Wind argued that the strategy was overly restrictive and premature, citing extensive landscape, peatland, upland and settlement constraints which they considered to unnecessarily limit wind energy development, particularly within areas of highest wind resource potential. Both submissions also questioned the appropriateness of progressing the strategy ahead of the revised NWRA RSES.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) raised concerns regarding aspects of the methodology and policy framework. Key issues raised by the OPR and DCEE related to the 1km settlement buffer, reliance on existing landscape and flood mapping datasets, and policy provisions requiring proof of grid capacity, favouring undergrounding of powerlines, and imposing additional pre-planning requirements for renewable energy projects.

In response, the Chief Executive's Report rejected requests to pause the RES process and largely dismissed calls for a fundamental review of the strategy. However, it accepted most recommendations from the OPR and DCEE, resulting in a number of amendments including the removal of the 1km settlement buffer, updates to flood risk mapping, deletion of restrictive grid and infrastructure policies, and incorporation of environmental mitigation measures arising from the SEA and Appropriate Assessment processes.

Overall, while a number of amendments were made to the RES following submissions from the OPR and the DCEE, these changes were largely confined to specific policy provisions and mapping corrections. Crucially, there were no material changes to the underlying wind zoning methodology or to the mapped suitability designations in response to the consultation process. Multiple requests received from submissions to revisit the methodology, expand the landbank available for wind energy development, redesignate lands from "Unsuitable" to "Open for Consideration", or defer the strategy pending completion of the revised RSES were not accepted.

While the Council accepted several OPR and DCEE recommendations, including the removal of certain grid-related restrictions and amendments to electricity infrastructure policies, a number of more substantive concerns were not addressed. In particular, the Council declined to undertake a review or update of the existing Landscape Character Appraisal, despite the OPR concerns regarding its age and continued use in informing the wind suitability mapping. The Chief Executive's Report instead concluded that the existing appraisal remained fit for purpose pending completion of the future Regional Landscape Character Assessment.

As a result, the adopted RES retains the same landscape-led spatial framework that underpins the designation of extensive areas of Mayo as unsuitable for wind energy development. Consequently, notwithstanding the policy amendments introduced through the consultation process, the overall extent and distribution of lands identified for wind energy development remain largely unchanged, and the key concerns raised regarding the zoning methodology and landscape assessment approach were not addressed.

UNESCO Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark

Page 36 of the updated Strategy states the following in relation to the UNESCO Joyce County and Western Geopark:

> *"ensure that the integrity of landscapes at the Céide Fields which holds potential as a UNESCO sites, and the landscapes of the UNESCO Joyce County and Western Geopark are safeguarded and protected from inappropriate development particularly large-scale wind energy development and related infrastructure. "*

It is noted that the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark has recently been designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark. When reviewing the criteria for UNESCO Global Geoparks (Operational guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks 2015), it is apparent that the proposed project has an opportunity to enhance the designation in terms of promoting awareness of climate change and the need for the sustainable use of Earth's natural resources.

> *"UNESCO Global Geoparks should use that heritage, in connection with all other aspects of that area's natural and cultural heritage, to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on, including but not limited to increasing knowledge and understanding of: geoprocesses; geohazards; climate change; the need for the sustainable use of Earth's natural resources; the evolution of life and the empowerment of indigenous peoples"*[13]

It is prudent to note that the presence of wind energy development within a UNESCO Global Geopark is not, in itself, incompatible with UNESCO Geopark designation. In fact, the existing Galway Wind Park is located partially within the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark and the Geopark subsequently attained UNESCO Global Geopark status. Similarly, other operational wind energy developments are located within other UNESCO Global Geoparks in Ireland, including the Slieve Rushen Wind Farm within the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark. There are numerous other UNESCO Global Geoparks that enjoy their designations and actively promote the credentials of operational wind farms within their boundaries, some examples include the Meikle Wind Farm, which consists of 61 wind turbines and is the largest wind facility in British Columbia and is located within the Tumbler Ridge Geopark in British Columbia, Canada and, Midtfjellet Vindpark which consists of 55 wind turbines in Sunnhordland UNESCO Global Geopark in Norway and is the largest operational wind farm in Norway. These examples demonstrate that appropriately sited and designed wind energy developments can not only coexist with UNESCO Global Geopark designations, but can enhance the credentials of the designation and the Rooaunalaghta Green Energy Project presents an opportunity to promote the sustainable use of Earth's natural resources for the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark.

Implications on the Proposed Project

With specific reference to the proposed project, the subject site is located at the periphery of the identified buffer zone associated with Lough Corrib. As a result of the RES zoning, a significant portion of the site has been designated as "Unsuitable" for wind energy development.

[13] Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks, UNESCO, 2015

It is submitted that this classification does not accurately reflect the environmental sensitivities or development potential of the site.

The site is not located within a designated Natura 2000 site and is physically removed from the core ecological receptors associated with Lough Corrib. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that a wind energy development at this location would give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of the SPA or other designated interests, subject to the implementation of site-specific mitigation measures and adherence to best practice in design and operation. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) accompanying this planning application for further detail.

As evidenced in Figure 4-6 below, although a significant portion of the site has been re-designated from 'Open to consideration' to 'Unsuitable', the remainder of the subject site has retained the 'Open for Consideration' designation for such development, thus resulting in a total of 3 no. turbines of the proposed project located in an 'Open to Consideration' area.

It is put forward that the abrupt and unexpected implementation of the Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy July 2026 on the proposed project is representative of the updated Strategy's approach and methodology in that it is fragmented and lacks any sort of strong coherence in terms of analysing specific sites on an individual basis. As such, the implementation of the new RES has resulted in sites such as the subject site being designated as both 'Unsuitable' and 'Open for Consideration' without any rationale or justification for same. Although a portion of the site is identified as "Unsuitable" within the updated Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy, the significant change in zoning classification affecting the subject lands notwithstanding the absence of any material change in the underlying characteristics of the site is not determinative of the planning outcome and must be considered within the broader statutory and policy framework governing renewable energy development.

Please refer to Section 3.4 of the Planning Statement included as part of this planning application which discusses the implementation of the Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy July 2026 in detail.

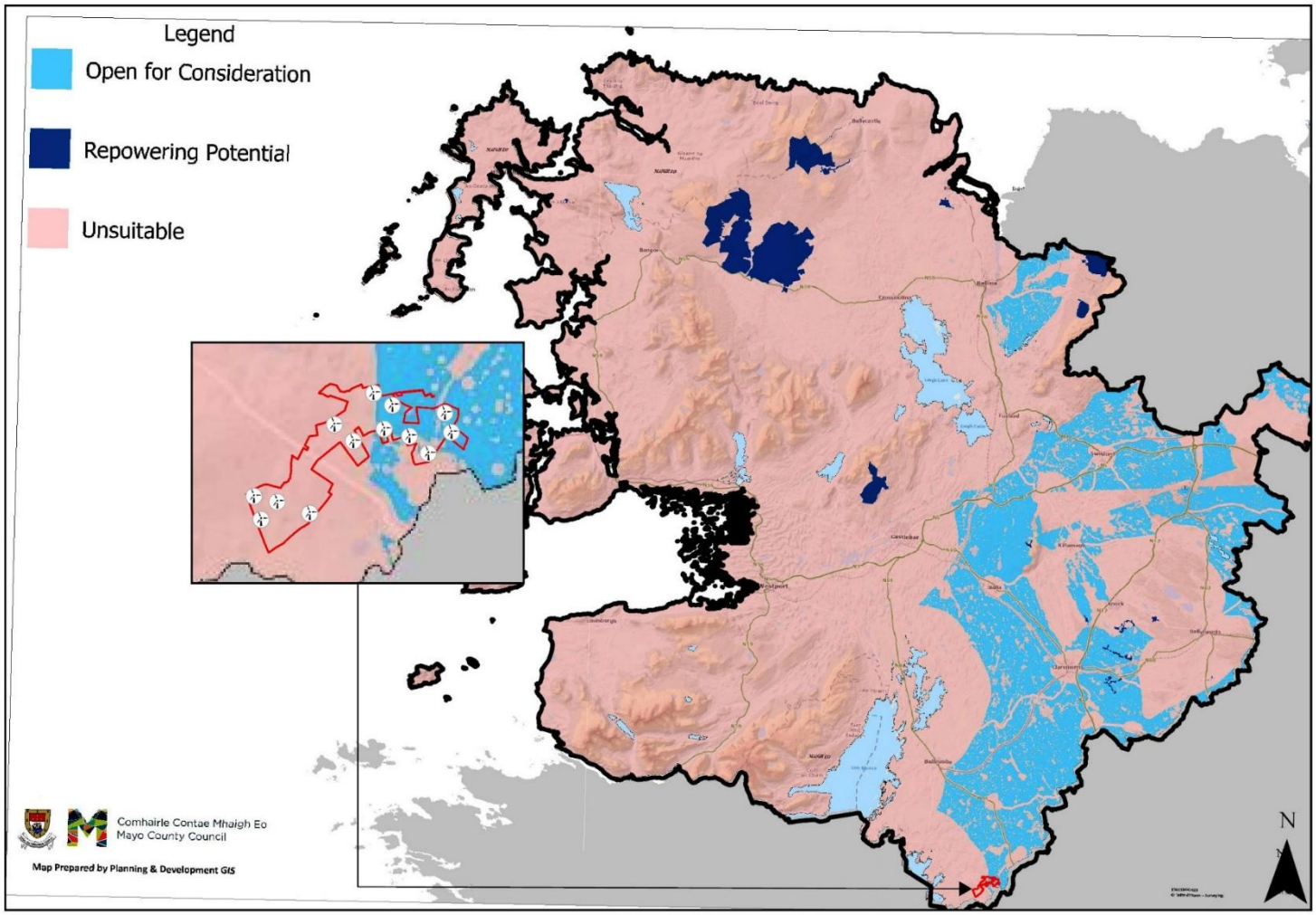


Figure 4-6 - Wind Strategy Map (Map 6.14, Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy July 2026)

4.8.2 Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028 was adopted by Galway County Council on 9 May 2022 and came into effect on 20 June 2022. The Plan establishes the strategic framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Galway and is aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES).

Chapter 14 of the Plan, *Climate Change, Energy and Renewable Resource*, sets out the Council's strategic approach to climate action and renewable energy development. The chapter includes the following strategic aim:

> *"To reduce the carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets, support indigenous renewable sources in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and improve security of supply and the move to a competitive low carbon economy."*[14]

The Plan recognises the important role renewable energy development will play in the transition to a low-carbon economy and in meeting national climate targets. One of the Strategic Aims of this chapter is as follows:

> *"To reduce County Galway's dependency on imported fossil fuels and to provide alternative energy sources by harnessing the County's potential for renewable energy sources while strengthening the grid transmission networks."*[15]

The following Climate Change and Renewable Energy policy objectives are particularly relevant to the proposed project:

CC 1 – Climate Change: Support and facilitate the implementation of European, National and Regional objectives for climate adaptation and mitigation taking into account other provisions of the Plan (including those relating to land use planning, energy, sustainable mobility, flood risk management and drainage) and having regard to the Climate mitigation and adaptation measures

CC 2 – Transition to a Low Carbon, Climate-Resilient Society: It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to support the transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, by way of reducing greenhouse gases, increasing renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency

CC 5 – Climate Adaptation and Mitigation: To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across County Galway through the encouragement and integration of appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all development and decision-making processes

CC 6 – Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES): To support the implementation of the Renewable Energy Strategy contained in Appendix 1 of the Galway County Development Plan in facilitating the transition to a low-carbon county.

EG 2 Electricity Transmission Networks:

[14] Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, Chapter 14, Section 14.1
[15] Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, Chapter 14, Section 14.2

(a) To support the development of the transmission grid network in order to sustainably accommodate both consistent and variable flows of renewable energy generated in County Galway.

(b) Proposed renewable energy generation projects shall fully consider the capacity of the existing transmission grid network in determining the optimal grid connection for the project, in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

(c) In respect of proposed renewable energy developments, transmission grid capacity should be considered as a constraint where the Transmission Development Plan, or any other equivalent plan of the TSO, does not identify infrastructure reinforcement measures unless transmission grid capacity can be demonstrated.

(d) Notwithstanding ecological and environmental considerations, grid connection routing for development proposals should show all alternative routes that were considered, and should avoid materially impacting the road network, where possible. Undergrounding should be considered where it will significantly negate any identified impacts.

(e) It is important that the necessary transmission and distribution infrastructure is facilitated and put in place in order to maximise the renewable energy potential of County Galway. Liaison with Eirgrid, as a TSO, and alignment with their transmission plans and strategies will be of vital important in this respect.

In addition, Chapter 14 identifies a suite of renewable energy policy objectives which support the sustainable development of renewable energy resources and associated infrastructure, subject to environmental protection, landscape considerations, infrastructure capacity and compliance with relevant planning and environmental legislation. Policy RE1 below is relevant to the proposed project:

RE1 Renewable Energy Generation and ancillary facilities: To facilitate and support appropriate levels of renewable energy generation and ancillary facilities in the county to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.

Galway County Council Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES)

The Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028 incorporates a Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) as Appendix 1 of the Development Plan itself. The Strategy provides a county-wide framework for the sustainable development of renewable energy resources and supporting infrastructure. It is informed by Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) processes and seeks to balance renewable energy development with the protection of environmental, landscape, heritage and community assets.

The LARES recognises County Galway's significant renewable energy resource, particularly for onshore wind energy, and identifies areas where renewable energy development may be considered, subject to detailed assessment of environmental and planning constraints. Proposals for wind energy development are assessed having regard to the provisions of the Galway County Development Plan, the LARES, the Galway Landscape Character Assessment,

the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2006), and any subsequent updates or replacements of these documents.

The elements of the proposed project located in County Galway, such as the 110 kV loop-in substation and a portion of the GCR, are considered within this policy framework and align with the strategic objective of supporting indigenous renewable energy generation and contributing to Ireland's transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy, subject to compliance with all relevant environmental, landscape and planning considerations.

Ministerial Directions and Variations to the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

On 28 September 2022, the Minister of State issued a Direction under Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of certain provisions of the Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028. The Direction related primarily to zoning and wastewater policy matters and did not amend the overarching renewable energy and climate action policies contained within Chapter 14. Accordingly, the renewable energy policy framework outlined above remains applicable to the assessment of the proposed project.

Separately, Proposed Variation No.1 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 was enacted in February 2026, and this Variation responds to requirements arising from the Revised National Planning Framework (April 2025), Section 28 Guidelines. No changes to chapter 14 or any climate or renewable energy policies / objectives occurred as a result of this Variation.

4.9 SUMMARY

There is strong international and European policy support for renewable energy development. The EU's 2050 climate neutrality objectives require energy production to become almost carbon-free, and while a range of renewable technologies will contribute towards achieving these objectives, onshore wind remains a key component of Ireland's decarbonisation strategy.

Ireland is legally bound under international agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, and must comply with associated EU climate and energy legislation. These commitments provide a clear policy basis for the continued expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, including onshore wind energy.

National policy strongly supports the accelerated deployment of renewable energy. However, Ireland continues to face significant challenges in meeting its climate obligations. The Climate Change Advisory Council's *Annual Review 2022* confirmed that Ireland had again missed its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets, while the *Annual Review for All* (2024) highlighted the need for planning systems to ensure that future energy infrastructure is resilient to projected climate impacts.

More recently, the EPA's *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2026* concluded that Ireland remains off-track to achieve its legally binding target of a 51% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 relative to 2018 levels and is not on course to meet its EU Effort Sharing Regulation obligations.

As a small island nation, Ireland faces the challenge of delivering a secure and affordable energy supply while reducing emissions and supporting economic growth. Ireland is fortunate to possess some of the best and lowest-cost renewable energy resources in the world, with wind energy now established as a critical component of the national electricity system. Government policy, through Climate Action Plans 2024 and 2025, seeks to increase renewable electricity generation to 80% by 2030, with onshore wind playing a central role in achieving this objective.

Wind energy provides a clean, renewable and sustainable source of electricity, reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, improving energy security and shielding consumers from volatility in international energy markets. It also remains the dominant source of renewable electricity in Ireland, accounting for approximately 82.7% of renewable electricity generation in 2023[16].

The need for the proposed project is therefore driven by the requirement to:

- support Ireland's international, European and national climate commitments;
- enhance national energy security and reduce reliance on imported fuels;
- contribute towards renewable energy and emissions reduction targets;
- provide a cost-effective source of electricity; and
- assist in meeting growing electricity demand arising from economic growth and electrification.

[16] https://www.seai.ie/sites/default/files/publications/energy-in-ireland-2024.pdf. Accessed 2 July 2026.

Ireland also faces a substantial capacity challenge. Climate Action Plans 2024 and 2025 establish a target of 9 GW of installed onshore wind capacity by 2030. At the end of 2024, approximately 4.8 GW had been installed, leaving a significant shortfall to be delivered within the remainder of the decade[17].

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015–2021 further provide a clear legislative framework for emissions reduction and climate action. In this regard, planning authorities are required, under Section 15 of the Act, to carry out their functions in so far as practicable in a manner consistent with national climate objectives, climate action plans and adaptation strategies. The significance of these obligations was reinforced by the Supreme Court decision in *Coolglass Wind Farm Limited v An Coimisiún Pleanála*[18], which emphasised the importance of climate considerations in planning decision-making. See the Planning Statement for more detail in this respect.

The proposed project is also supported at a regional level. Under the revised National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), Regional Assemblies are required to facilitate the delivery of renewable energy capacity necessary to achieve national targets.

The Northern and Western Region, within which the proposed project is located, had an energised onshore wind capacity of approximately 1,791 MW in 2023 and has been allocated a further 1,389 MW of capacity to be delivered by 2030. This represents approximately 35% of the national onshore wind target and highlights the important role of the region in supporting Ireland's energy transition[19].

The proposed project is consistent with the objectives of the RSES, which support the development of secure, reliable and sustainable renewable energy infrastructure.

As detailed earlier, the newly adopted Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo (July 2026) has now resulted in a portion of this site being designated as 'Unsuitable' for such development, despite the previous Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo having an 'Open to Consideration' designation on the entire site. The initial site selection process was informed by the previous Wind Energy Strategy, and the overall site feasibility process was thorough and rigorous in terms of assessing site suitability for such development. As such, it is put forward that the proposed project represents an appropriate development at a suitable location which will directly assist Ireland in meeting National and EU climate change targets.

Separately, the proposed new loop-in 110 kV substation at Killamanagh, Co. Galway, represents essential enabling infrastructure required to connect the proposed wind farm to the national grid. The provision of this infrastructure is consistent with local policy objectives in the Galway County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 which support the reinforcement and expansion of the

[17] https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/wind-energy-december-2024-key-statistics.pdf. Accessed 2 July 2026.

[18] *Coolglass Wind Farm Limited v An Coimisiún Pleanála* [2025] IEHC 1

electricity network to accommodate increasing levels of renewable energy generation and facilitate Ireland's transition to a low-carbon energy future.

The project has been designed to align with the policies and objectives of the Development Plan. The site selection process has avoided urban areas, designated ecological sites and other environmentally sensitive locations. A comprehensive assessment has been undertaken to assess potential impacts on biodiversity, water quality, landscape, visual amenity, cultural heritage and residential receptors. Please refer to the following documents included as part of this planning application for further detail:

- Reasonable Alternatives (Chapter 3 of this EIAR);
- Biodiversity (Chapter 6 of this EIAR);
- Hydrology and Hydrogeology (Chapter 9 of this EIAR);
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) (Chapter 13 of this EIAR);
- Archaeology (Chapter 16 of this EIAR);
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR), and;
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

Overall, the proposed project supports both Galway and Mayo County's renewable energy objectives, including those relating to climate action and renewable energy generation, while ensuring the protection of environmental and community interests. However, as discussed in detail in the Planning Statement accompanying this planning application, the newly adopted Mayo County Council Renewable Energy Strategy (July 2026) has resulted in a portion of the subject site now being deemed as 'Unsuitable' for such development. Although the initial site selection process was heavily informed by the previous Renewable Energy Strategy which deemed the entire site as 'Open for Consideration' for such development, it is considered that the proposed project represents an appropriate scale of development on the subject site. Please refer to the Planning Statement accompanying this application for further detail.

In addition, the project will provide tangible socio-economic benefits through employment, local expenditure, commercial rates, and the provision of a Community Benefit Scheme. The development will therefore contribute positively at local, regional and national levels while supporting Ireland's transition to a low-carbon energy future.

The proposed project will have several significant long-term and short-term benefits for the local economy including job creation, provision of amenity, local authority commercial rate payments and a Community Benefit Scheme. During construction, additional employment will have been created in the region through the supply of services and materials to the development. In conjunction to this, there will also be income generated by local employment from the purchase of local services.