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Rooaunalaghta Green Energy Project

Appendix 7-9

Interpretation of NPWS records, DAU Consultation and Site Survey Data

ROOAUNALAGHTA
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BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE

Rooaunalaghta Green Energy Ltd.

Chapter 7 Ornithology

Appendix 7-9: Interpretation of NPWS Records, DAU Consultation and Site Survey Data

Woodrow Ref: P00016537
Date: October 2026

woodrow
APEM Group

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APEM Group Woodrow (2026). *Appendix 7-9: Interpretation of NPWS Records, DAU Consultation and Site Survey Data*. APEM Group Woodrow Report P00016537 – Rooaunalaghta Green Energy Ltd, 19/10/2026, V1, Final.

Revision and Amendment Register

Version Number	Date	Section(s)	Page(s)	Summary of Changes	Approved by
1	19/10/2026	All	All	V1 for issue	JS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Greenland white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) is a winter visitor to Ireland and forms part of a nationally important population associated with a network of wetlands, turloughs and agricultural feeding areas within the Lough Corrib catchment. The species is a Qualifying Interest of the Lough Corrib SPA and Lough Mask SPA and was specifically identified by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) during the consultation process as requiring detailed consideration within the ornithological assessment. NPWS advised that historical records of feeding activity existed both within and adjacent to the application site and highlighted the presence of known roosting sites at Rostaff Turlough and Shrule Turlough. The proposed development was also noted to occur within the wider foraging range of birds associated with the Shrule Turlough flock.

This appendix collates information obtained through consultation, review of existing datasets and project-specific ornithological surveys undertaken between September 2022 and September 2025. The aim of the appendix is to provide a transparent evidence base describing the occurrence, distribution and use of habitats by Greenland white-fronted goose within the study area and to explain the basis of the ecological importance assigned to the species within the EIAR.

2. EXISTING INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

2.1. NPWS Consultation

The NPWS Development Applications Unit identified Greenland White-fronted Goose as a key species requiring assessment due to the proximity of the proposed development to habitats used by Greenland White-fronted Goose in the wider Lough Corrib area. In scoping comments, NPWS advised that records of historical feeding activity existed both within and in the immediate vicinity of the application site and noted the presence of a historical roost at Rostaff Turlough approximately 1 km south of the site. NPWS also highlighted that a flock currently roosting at Shrule Turlough, approximately 3 km northeast of the proposed development, had been subject to GPS tracking and that the proposed wind farm site lies within the reported core foraging range of that flock. NPWS further noted that foraging ranges in Irish turlough landscapes may vary in response to seasonal flooding conditions.

In response to these comments, Greenland white-fronted goose was included as a target species within both the wintering waterbird and vantage point survey programmes. A Sensitive Data Request was also submitted to NPWS to obtain additional information regarding the occurrence of the species within the wider study area.

2.2. NPWS Distribution Records

NPWS records indicate that Greenland white-fronted goose has been recorded within several 1 km squares surrounding the proposed development site. These records demonstrate that the species occurs within the wider landscape and confirm the importance of the wider study area within the wintering range of the Lough Corrib population.

The NPWS dataset provides broad-scale distribution information but does not provide information on the frequency, intensity or functional importance of habitat use within individual squares. Consequently, project-specific survey data were required to determine how habitats within and surrounding the proposed wind farm site are currently utilised by the species.

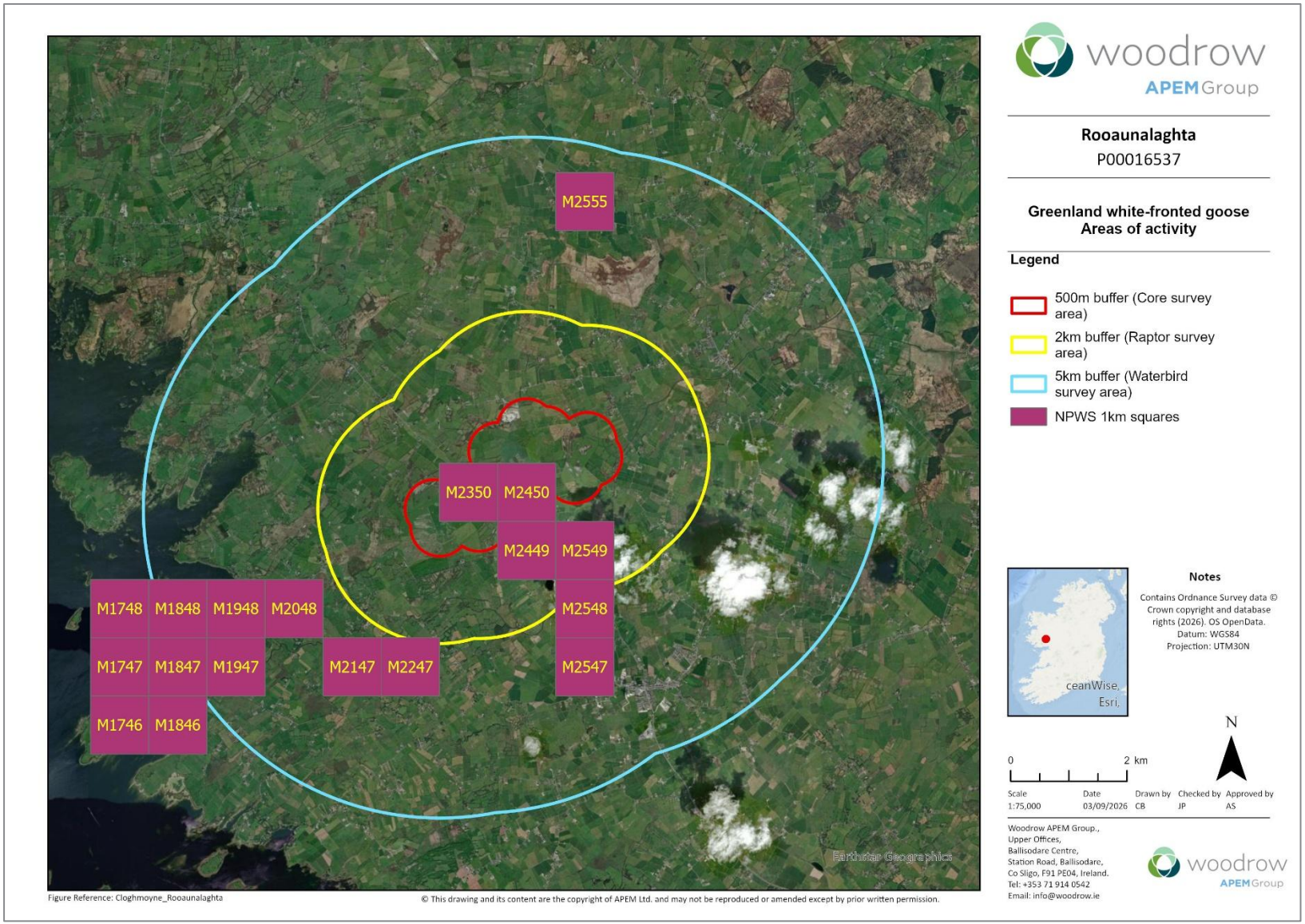


Figure 1: NPWS Greenland white-fronted goose range squares

3. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey information presented in this appendix was obtained through:

- Wintering waterbird surveys (I-WeBS methodology);
- Distribution and abundance surveys;
- Vantage point surveys;
- Winter walkover surveys; and
- Review of available desk-study information.

Survey work was undertaken between September 2022 and September 2025, providing three consecutive winter seasons of site-specific data on the occurrence, behaviour and distribution of Greenland white-fronted goose within the study area.

4. SURVEY RESULTS

4.1. Winter 2022-23

Ten records of Greenland white-fronted goose were obtained during the 2022/23 survey season. Observed behaviours included feeding, loafing, swimming, roosting and flight activity. Flock sizes ranged from five to 27 individuals.

The majority of records were concentrated around Rostaff Turlough and adjacent agricultural land situated south of the proposed development.

Table 1: Greenland white-fronted goose records, non-breeding season 2022-23

ID	Date & time	Species	Survey Type	No. of birds	Behaviour	Notes
5	23/11/2022 15:46	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	18	Swimming	On south side near Curlew
6	10/11/2022 15:39	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	15	Fly-land	Mixed group flew from south settling with other WG on water
7	10/11/2022 15:15	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	13	Loafing	Loafing around on grass
8	10/11/2022 15:09	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	27	Feeding	Mix of ages and sex.
9	09/11/2022 15:47	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	6	Roosting	On 'island' in flooded field
10	08/11/2022 16:52	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	17	Feeding	Mixed group beside lough, some in water feeding and some roosting
11	08/11/2022 15:55	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	5	Flying	Flying sw to ne
12	08/11/2022 15:40	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	17	Swimming	On west side with mallard
13	30/10/2022 12:28	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	9	Loafing	Resting in hollow beside lough. May have been there since start as didn't see any land earlier
14	30/10/2022 10:17	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	20	Circling	Mixed group flew in and circled but headed east

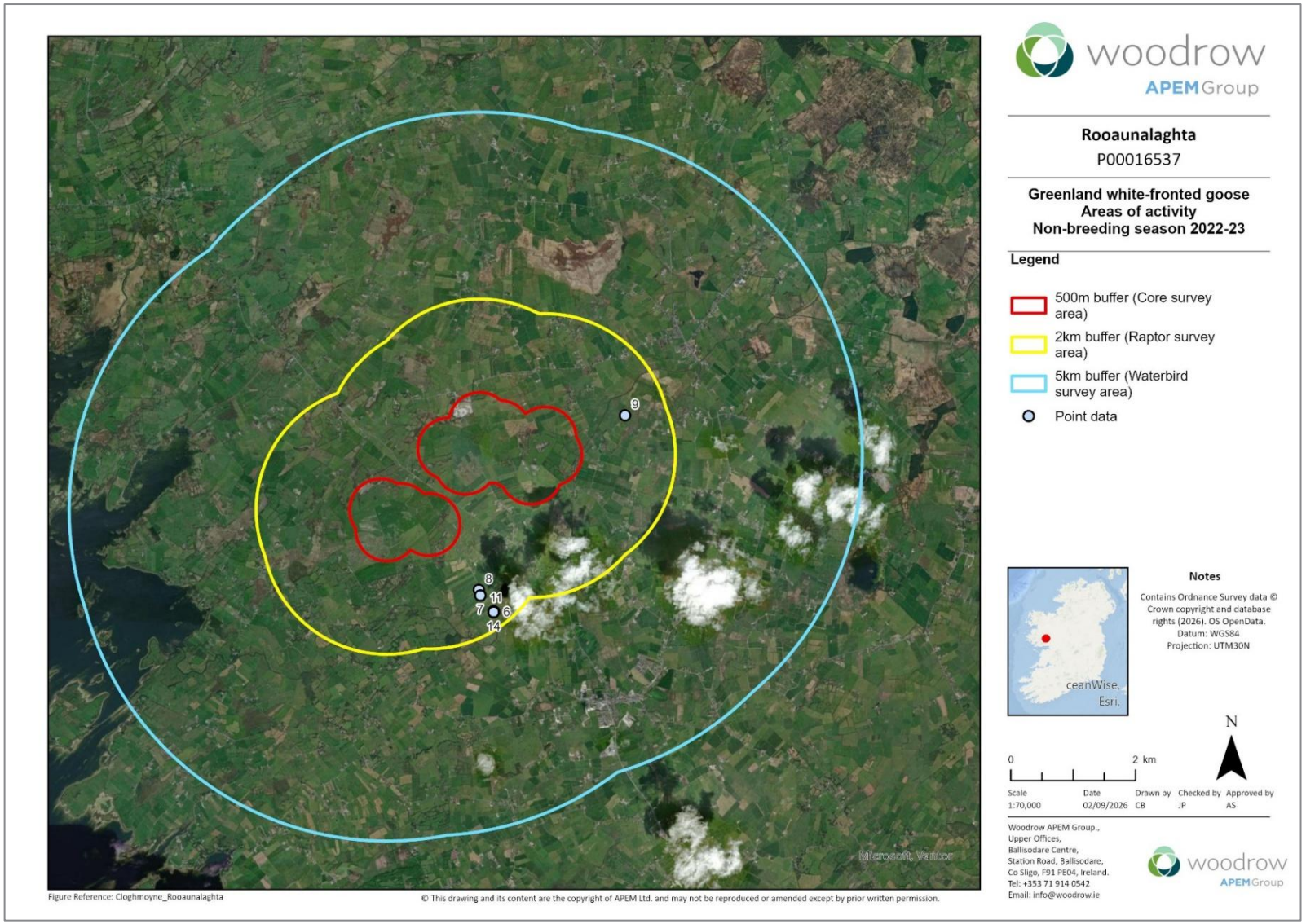


Figure 2: Greenland white-fronted goose areas of activity, non-breeding season 2022-23

4.2. Winter 2023-24

Six records were obtained during the 2023/24 survey season, all of which came from October. These included observations of roosting, swimming, flushed and flying birds. Four records were noted during winter waterbird surveys, and two during VP surveys.

The largest flock recorded during the survey programme comprised 73 individuals observed roosting in agricultural land southeast of Rostaff Turlough on 25 October 2023.

All records occurred within the wider landscape surrounding the proposed development and were associated with Rostaff Turlough and adjacent farmland.

Table 2: Greenland white-fronted goose records, non-breeding season 2023-24

ID	Date & time	Species	Survey Type	No. of birds	Behaviour	Notes
1	25/10/2023 13:31	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	73	Roosting	Large group on field to the SE. Mostly roosting in grass. Some feeding or walking about. Whiter juvs among them
2	10/10/2023 15:05	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	7	Flushed	With large group of Mallard. Took off with them but landed on west side of turlough.
3	10/10/2023 14:52	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	2	Swimming	Swimming at side of water
4	10/10/2023 14:46	White-fronted goose	Winter Waterbird Survey	10	Flying	Flew from nearby, circled and headed west. One individual much paler
16	26/10/2023 10:52	White-fronted goose	VP Survey	6	Flying	Possibly flying from Rostaff turlough. Heading W
17	11/10/2023 08:35	White-fronted goose	VP Survey	16	Flying	Came from NE, veered W. Calling occasionally

4.3. Winter 2024-25

A single observation was recorded during the 2024/25 survey season comprising a flock of 17 birds undertaking a commuting flight through the wider study area.

Table 3: Greenland white-fronted goose records, non-breeding season 2024-25

ID	Date & time	Species	Survey Type	No. of birds	Behaviour	Notes
15	16/11/2024 08:26	White-fronted goose	VP Survey	17	Commuting	

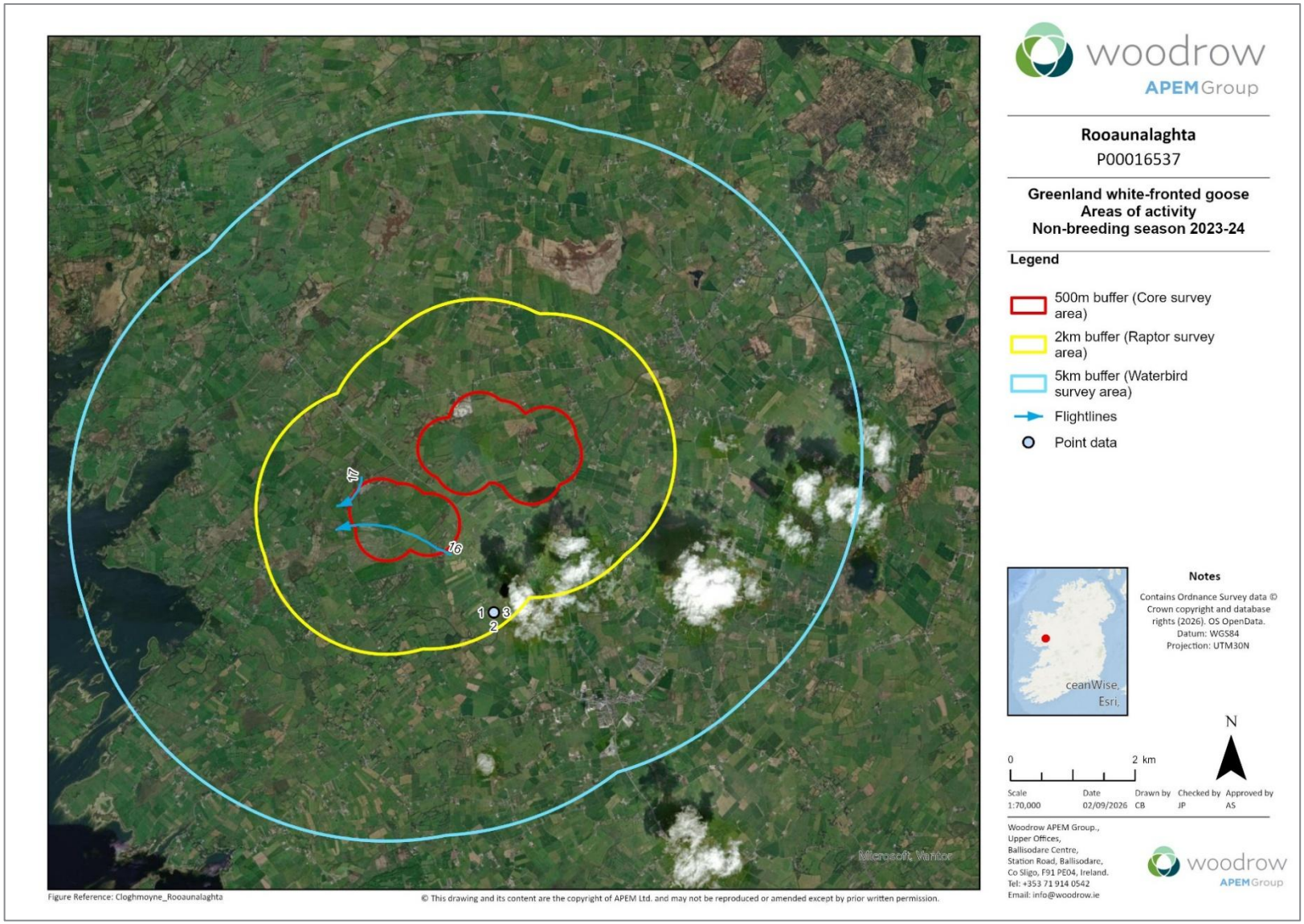


Figure 3: Greenland white-fronted goose areas of activity, non-breeding season 2023-2024

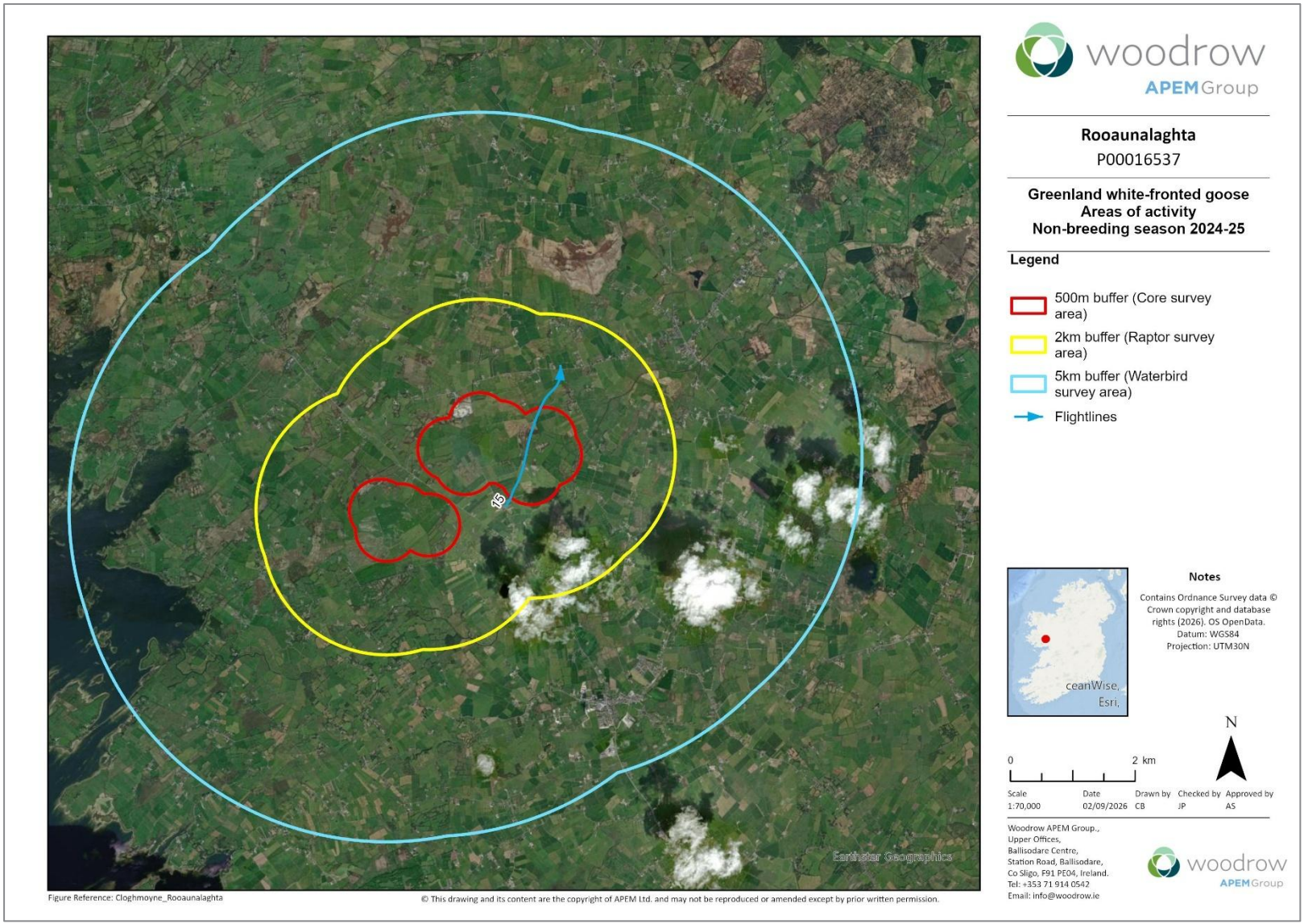


Figure 4: Greenland white-fronted goose areas of activity, non-breeding season 2024-25

5. SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

Across the three-year survey programme, Greenland white-fronted goose was recorded on 17 occasions. A total of 278 birds were recorded, with flock sizes ranging from two to 73 individuals.

Table 4: Summary of Greenland white-fronted goose survey results

Metric	Value
Survey seasons	2022/23-2024/25
Total records	17
Total individuals recorded	278
Mean flock size	16.4
Maximum flock size	73
Principal area of use	Rostaff Turlough and adjacent farmland
Roosting within turbine envelope	None recorded
Feeding within turbine envelope	None recorded
Recurring flight corridor through turbine array	None identified

6. SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND SITE USE

Survey records exhibited a highly clustered distribution centred on Rostaff Turlough and surrounding agricultural land. Of the 17 records obtained during the survey programme, 15 originated from locations south of the proposed development associated with Rostaff Turlough, while the remaining observations were recorded northeast of the site.

Repeated observations of feeding, loafing, roosting and swimming birds indicate that Rostaff Turlough functions as the principal area of use identified during the survey programme. The largest flock recorded during the surveys was observed at this location, and all records of sustained habitat use were associated with the turlough system and adjacent agricultural fields.

In contrast, no feeding concentrations, roost sites or regularly occupied areas were identified within the proposed turbine layout. Furthermore, survey mapping demonstrates a consistent separation between the core activity areas used by Greenland white-fronted goose and the proposed development footprint.

Flight activity was limited and dispersed. Most observations comprised local movements associated with Rostaff Turlough and adjacent farmland. No evidence was obtained of a regularly used flight corridor crossing the proposed turbine layout, and the single commuting flight recorded during 2024-25 represents an isolated observation rather than a recurrent movement pattern.

7. COMPARISON OF NPWS RECORDS AND SURVEY DATA

NPWS records confirm the occurrence of Greenland white-fronted goose within the wider landscape and demonstrate that habitats surrounding the proposed development form part of the broader range of the Lough Corrib population. The NPWS data also indicate historical use of habitats within and adjacent to the application site and highlight the proximity of known roosting sites at Rostaff and Shrule Turloughs.

The project-specific survey programme provides a more detailed assessment of contemporary habitat use within the study area. While the NPWS records indicate broad-scale occurrence within the wider landscape, survey results demonstrate that actual use of habitats within the survey area is strongly concentrated around Rostaff Turlough and associated agricultural land. No evidence was obtained that habitats within the proposed wind farm site currently support regularly used feeding areas, roosting sites or other functionally important habitat.

The survey evidence therefore refines and contextualises the broader NPWS dataset by demonstrating that, although the site lies within the wider range of Greenland white-fronted goose, contemporary use of the proposed development footprint is limited.

8. EVALUATION OF ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Greenland white-fronted goose is recognised as a species of national conservation significance and forms part of a nationally important wintering population associated with the Lough Corrib catchment. The species is also a Qualifying Interest of nearby Special Protection Areas.

However, ecological importance within an EIAR is assigned with reference to the importance of the receptor at the development site rather than solely its national conservation status. While Greenland white-fronted goose occurs within the wider study area, the survey evidence demonstrates that the proposed wind farm site does not support a nationally important component of the population.

No regularly used feeding habitat, roosting habitat, staging area or movement corridor was identified within the proposed turbine layout. Instead, the species was principally associated with Rostaff Turlough and surrounding agricultural habitats located outside the development footprint.

Accordingly, Greenland white-fronted goose is considered to be of **Local (Higher) importance** within the context of the proposed development.

9. CONCLUSION

A combination of NPWS records, consultation responses and three years of site-specific ornithological surveys confirms that Greenland white-fronted goose occurs within the wider landscape surrounding the proposed development and forms part of the nationally important Lough Corrib wintering population. However, survey evidence demonstrates that use of the proposed wind farm site itself is infrequent and spatially limited.

Recorded activity was concentrated around Rostaff Turlough and adjacent agricultural land where feeding, roosting and loafing behaviour was repeatedly observed. No important feeding areas, roost sites or regularly used movement corridors were identified within the proposed turbine layout.

The available evidence therefore indicates that the proposed wind farm site does not comprise a functionally important component of the local wintering population. While Greenland white-fronted goose remains a species of national conservation importance in the wider landscape, its relationship with habitats within the proposed development footprint is limited. Consequently, the species is assigned an ecological importance of **Local (Higher)** within the proposed wind farm site.