

Consultation with An Bord Pleanála

1.0 CONSULTATION WITH AN BORD PLEANÁLA

The first pre-application consultation meeting was held with An Bord Pleanála via web conference on the 28th May 2020, with the second held on the 29th July 2020. The purpose of the first meeting was to introduce the Castlebanny wind farm development to the Bord in order to provide the Bord with the necessary information to enable it to decide on the strategic infrastructure development status of the project. The meeting was attended by Coillte and TOBIN representatives. The meeting discussion was centred around the following key points:

- Introduction to the Project Team
- Background to the Castlebanny Wind Farm Project
- SID Determination
- Policy
- EIAR Methodology
- Key Environmental Considerations
- Environmental and Consultation Activities to date
- Project Deliverables and Timelines.

At the meeting, the Bord detailed the pre-application consultation process. A presentation was given providing information on the site and the proposed development. The Bord provided some guidance on key topics to be included in the EIAR and some points that they wanted to see addressed therein. A discussion followed about consultation that had been carried out and specific details of the proposed development.

The second meeting was held via web conference on the 29th July 2020, with representatives of the Bord, Coillte and TOBIN in attendance. The main points discussed were as follows:

- Climate Impact Assessment
- Landscape Assessment
- Appropriate Assessment
- Consultations
- Application Pathway
- Project Duration.

In addition, topics discussed during the first meeting were revisited. The Bord emphasised the importance of calculation of the volume of carbon offset by the proposed wind farm, taking account of the carbon lost throughout all stages of the site development, operation and decommissioning of the turbines. The Bord also outlined that it would be open to considering alternative fixed term duration for the wind farm, noting that recent approvals were for 30 year duration.

The Bord confirmed on 16th December 2020 that the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure development and that a planning application should be made directly to the Board.

**Other Statutory and non-statutory consultation
(Including Kilkenny County Council)**

2.0 CONSULTATION WITH STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY BODIES

An EIAR Scoping Report was prepared and submitted to relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies in February 2020 (either by email or post) for review and comment. A copy of the EIAR Scoping Report is provided in Appendix 1-2 of the EIAR. The EIAR Scoping Report was accompanied by a cover letter introducing the proposed development and inviting comments or observations within a period of six weeks from the date of the letter. A copy of the Scoping Report, with a standard cover letter is provided in Appendix 1-2 of the EIAR and all responses received from consultees are provided in Appendix 1-3 of the EIAR.

The list of consultees and record of consultation is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 2: List of Consultees and Record of Consultation

Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
Kilkenny County Council – Director of Services	27 th March 2020	9 th October 2020	The response to the consultation led to the organisation of a preplanning meeting with the Director of Services and a Senior Planner with members of the project team. This was held on the 9 th of September 2020, in which an overview of the proposed project was presented. Among other topics, the status of the County Development Plan for Kilkenny was discussed, which is likely to be released in December 2020. In particular, the prospective applicant sought to provide information on the Recreation plan and the Community Engagement Process.	N/A
Kilkenny Council – Planning Department	27 th March 2020	4 th November 2020	A teleconference was held via Microsoft Teams with members of the planning department (KCC) on the 4 th November 2020. A presentation was given outlining the project purpose, impact assessments carried out and application process under SID guidelines. The main point of interest during the consultation was the visual impact. A selection of photomontages and Zone of Theoretical Visibility maps were examined. Additionally, the consultation process was outlined, with emphasis on the work carried out by the Community Liaison Officer (CLO), as well as the content available on the project website. KCC suggested the use of their local offices at Thomastown and Ferrybank for public access to planning application information for the proposed windfarm.	Considered during planning application preparation
Kilkenny County Council – Area Engineer	13 th October 2020	15 th October 2020	<p>A call took place on the 15th October between Laura Gaffney (TOBIN) and Stan Cullen (KCC), highlighted constraints to be taken into account for considering construction haulage routes. The key road was identified to be the R704, in terms of the impact assessment. A survey was proposed to examine the local road network if required, but preference will be for regional and national roads.</p> <p>The turbine delivery route identified approximately 12 pinch points, which may require a Road Opening License and will be subject to an Abnormal Load License. Detailing at junctions will be required to account for drainage, demountable signage and other impacts. Similarly, the Construction</p>	N/A



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
			Programme was discussed, examining impacts due to concrete pouring, borrow pits and civil works at the site	
Kilkenny County Council – Roads Department	16 th October 2020	16 th and 20 th October 2020	A response was provided by email on the 16 th from Seamus Foley, emphasising the importance of traffic impacts in both the construction and decommissioning stages of the windfarm. Discussion of traffic counts with respect to Covid-19, suggested volumes at present may not be fully representative of pre-Covid-19 volumes and encouraged use of suitable judgement to estimate numbers. A call took place on the 20 th of October between Laura Gaffney (TOBIN) and Seamus Foley (KCC). During the call it was agreed there would be no requirement for junction assessments. Requests were made by TOBIN for information from KCC regarding suitable traffic counts for the R704. KCC requested a Road Safety Audit of the proposed site entrance.	Considered in preparation of Chapter 16 (Traffic and Transport)
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	20 th February 2020	12/03/20	Response received from GSI. Recommended reference to GSI Geohazard maps. Confirms there are no County Geological Sites in the vicinity of the proposed wind farm. Recommends identifying areas for integrated constructed wetlands as part of flood risk management and using the GSI's groundwater map viewer. Recommends consulting the geotechnical database of the GSI.	Considered in preparation of Chapter 8 (Land, Soil and Hydrology)
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Development Applications Unit)	20 th February 2020	22 April 2020	The Department notes in respect of archaeology that it will await the submission of the Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Impact Assessment before commenting further. However, it does advise that it is the published policy of the Department that large-scale development be subject to archaeological monitoring during the course of groundworks.	Considered in preparation of Chapter 15 (Cultural Heritage)
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	7 th February 2020	7 th February 2020	The Department provided a summary of the current status of its review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines and also confirmed that under Section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, it is precluded from commenting directly on any particular projects or planning applications.	N/A



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine	20 th February 2020	N/A	No response	N/A
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	21 st February 2020	9 th March 2020	<p>TII acknowledged receipt of the scoping report and provided the following comments:</p> <p>The EIAR should identify the methods/techniques proposed for any works traversing/in proximity to the national road network in order to demonstrate that the development can proceed complementary to safeguarding the capacity, safety, and operational efficiency of that network.</p> <p>The scheme promoter should note locations of existing and future national road schemes and develop proposals to safeguard proposed road schemes. Consultations should be had with the relevant Local Authority/National Roads Design Office with regard to locations of existing and future national road schemes.</p> <p>In relation to grid connection and cable routing, proposals should be developed to safeguard proposed road schemes as TII will not be responsible for costs associated with future relocation of cable routing where proposals are catered for in an area of a proposed national road scheme. In that regard, consideration should be given to routing options, use of existing crossings, depth of cable laying, etc.</p> <p>Clearly identify haul routes proposed and fully assess the network to be traversed. Separate structure approvals/permits, and other licences may be required in connection with the proposed haul route. Consultation with relevant companies may also be required. All structures on the haul route should be checked by the applicant/developer to confirm their capacity to accommodate any abnormal load proposed.</p> <p>Where appropriate, a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) be carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines.</p> <p>TII Standards should be consulted to determine the requirement for Road Safety Audit (RSA) and Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA).</p>	Considered in project design and preparation of Chapter 16 (Traffic & Transportation)
An Taisce - The National Trust for Ireland	20 th February 2020	N/A	None	N/A



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
Fáilte Ireland	20 th February 2020	21 st April 2020	<p>Fáilte Ireland acknowledged receipt of the scoping report and provided a copy of Fáilte Ireland's EIAR Guidelines for the Consideration of Tourism and Tourism Related Projects for reference. The following comment was also provided:</p> <p>"we recommend [these guidelines] should be taken into account in preparing the EIAR. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance for those conducting Environmental Impact Assessment and compiling an Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR), or those assessing EIARs, where the project involves tourism or may have an impact upon tourism. These guidelines are non-statutory and act as supplementary advice to the EPA EIAR Guidelines outlined in section 2."</p>	Considered in preparation of Chapter 5 (Population & Human Health).
The Heritage Council	20 th February 2020	N/A	None	N/A
Southern Regional Assembly	20 th February 2020	21 st February 2020	The Southern Regional Assembly acknowledged receipt of the scoping report and advised that it had been referred to the Regional Planning Division. No further comment received.	N/A
Inland Fisheries Ireland	20 th February 2020	21 st February 2020	<p>IFI provided a brief specific commentary on the wind farm and also provided more generic type comments which are relevant to wind farm developments in the wider context.</p> <p>The specific comments related to the protection of the aquatic resource and associated riparian habitat noting that the Mullenhakill stream (and others) cross the proposed site and which feed into the Arrigle river, part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. IFI would like to see a detailed design and works methodology for a potential crossing of the Arrigle for the grid connection.</p> <p>The following generic comments were also provided: All watercourses must be assessed in detail in terms of aquatic biodiversity. Changes in river morphology should be avoided. Electrofishing surveys will be required for all waters. The presence of salmonid species, crayfish and lamprey species will be of particular concern. IFI are concerned about soils, their structure and types around all the turbines, turbine pads, associated access roads and site development. The potential for soil movement and landslides should be assessed.</p>	Considered in project design and preparation of Chapter 6 (Biodiversity: Flora & Fauna), Chapter 7 (Ornithology), Chapter 8 (Land, Soil and Hydrology), Chapter 9 (Hydrology & Hydrogeology), Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
			<p>Particular attention should be paid to the hydrology of any site where excavations, including excavations for road construction are being undertaken.</p> <p>Attention should be paid to drainage during both the construction phase and the operational phase. This includes waters being pumped from foundations or other excavations. It is particularly important during the construction phase that sufficient retention time in any settlement pond is available to ensure no deleterious matter is discharged to waters. It is strongly recommend that settlement ponds are maintained, where appropriate, during the operational phase to allow for the adequate settlement of suspended solids and sediments and prevent any deleterious matter from discharging.</p> <p>IFI have concerns about the construction of roads as these will tend to provide preferential flow paths for surface waters.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to the disposal of waste materials such that they will not give rise to discharges to waters.</p> <p>Details in relation to site offices and the services necessary for the site offices should form part of the EIA.</p> <p>The use of sedimentary rocks, such as shale, in road construction should be avoided. IFI recommend that specialist expertise should advise on the type of material required for road construction.</p> <p>Any instream works or other works which may impact directly on a watercourse should only be carried out during the open season which is from 1st July to 30th of September in each year</p> <p>The EIAR should indicate proposals to monitor the impact on watercourses within the site</p> <p>In relation to wind farm structures and infrastructure it is important that a sufficient bank side riparian zone is maintained to absorb and attenuate overland flows.</p> <p>The discharge of polluting or deleterious matter to any watercourse except under and in accordance with a licence may be an offence under the Fisheries Acts and/or under the Water Pollution Acts.</p> <p>Should works be approved a finalised CEMP must be agreed with Inland Fisheries Ireland before works commence</p>	
Waterways Ireland	20 th February 2020	24 th February 2020	Waterways Ireland advised that it has no comments to make on the proposed wind farm.	N/A



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
Irish Aviation Authority (IAA)	20 th February 2020	26 th February 2020	<p>IAA advised that it will await formal notification from An Bord Pleanála confirming the strategic infrastructure status of the development before furnishing any formal observation on the wind farm. However, based on the information presented in the scoping report, IAA did advise that it would be unlikely to have any specific concerns but did encourage engagement with the Air Corps / Department of Defence.</p> <p>IAA further advised that in the event of planning permission being granted, that the applicant should contact IAA to agree an aeronautical warning light scheme of the wind farm development and also to provide grid coordinates and ground and tip height elevation data for the wind turbines.</p>	Considered in project design and preparation of Chapter 11 (Material Assets: Aviation & Telecommunications)
Kilkenny Airport	20 th February 2020	-	None	N/A
Waterford Airport	20 th February 2020	30 th March 2020	<p>Waterford Airport advised that from its review of the scoping report it appears the height above sea level across the site varies considerably. The proposed location of turbines on the eastern side of the site are at significant heights above sea level, some of which may in combination with the turbine be in excess of 1,400ft above mean sea level.</p> <p>The proposed location of turbine number 1 which has the potential total height of nearly 1,300 feet is approximately 3 nautical miles from the north west edge of the Waterford Airport control zone, and 5 nautical miles from the instrument approach flight procedures for the prevailing runway 21.</p> <p>The Airport is concerned that wind turbines at such heights may have an impact on aircraft operations at Waterford Airport.</p> <p>An aeronautical study would be necessary covering as a minimum an assessment of the safety impact on the airport instrument approach flight procedures, the mandatory aerodrome safety surfaces, and any effects on the safety calibration flights ability to conduct the required flight checking programme for the navigational aids and instrument landing systems at Waterford Airport.</p> <p>A virtual meeting was held on the 1st October 2020 with Waterford Airport management who advised that they had additional concerns relating to their</p>	Considered in project design and preparation of Chapter 11 (Material Assets: Aviation & Telecommunications). A number of reports were commissioned and provided to Waterford Airport as discussed in Chapter 11 (Material Assets: Aviation & Telecommunications).



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
			planned future runway. It was agreed that a further study of this would be carried out to assess if there were any potential impacts.	
Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE)	20 th February 2020	-	None	N/A
Department of Transport, (formerly the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)	20 th February 2020	-	None	N/A
HSE South	20 th February 2020	21 st February 2020	A representative from the Consumer Affairs Department of HSE South responded to the scoping letter. The letter outlined that the information on file at the Department, was patient sensitive and protected under GDPR. They were not in a position to comment on the scoping document. The HSE head office address was provided for any further queries, and a scoping document was then forwarded to that address. No further response was received. .	N/A
Commission for Regulation of Utilities	20 th February 2020	-	None	N/A
Irish Water	20 th February 2020	-	None	N/A
Department of Defence	20 th February 2020	12 March 2020	The Department identified a number of routes which are critical low level routes in support of Air Corps operational requirements and noted that the Corps is opposed to wind farms within 3NM of the route centreline. Applications for developments in these areas greater than 45m above ground level must be referred to the Irish Air Corps for an assessment of potential impact on flight operations. The Department also advised specific conditions relating to lighting in the event of planning permission being granted.	Considered in project design and preparation of Chapter 11 (Material Assets: Aviation & Telecommunications)
Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)	20 th February 2020	12 March 2020	GSI made the following comments: GSI recommend that geohazards be taken into consideration, especially when developing areas where these risks and susceptibility are prevalent, and GSI encourage the use of their data when doing so.	N/A



Consultee	Consultation Date	Date of Response	Summary of Comments Received	Project Team Response to Comments Received
			<p>With regard to Flood Risk Management, there is a need to identify areas for integrated constructed wetlands. GSI recommends using the GSI's National Aquifer and Recharge maps on the Map Viewer to this end.</p> <p>GSI confirmed that there are no County Geological Sites in the vicinity of the proposed wind farm.</p> <p>GSI strongly recommend that their geotechnical database resource be consulted as part of any baseline geological assessment of the proposed development as it can provide invaluable baseline data for the region or vicinity of the proposed development area. This information may be beneficial and cost saving for any site specific investigations that may be designed as part of the development.</p>	

2.1 CONSULTATION WITH TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROVIDERS

An extensive consultation exercise was also carried out with telecommunications providers that may have services in the area which could have the potential to be impacted by the proposed wind farm development. The list of telecommunications consultees, feedback received, and design implications are discussed in Chapter 12 of the EIAR.

Community Report
(Public Consultation)

Community Report

Castlebanny Wind Farm

Co. Kilkenny

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Background.....	3
3	Community Engagement Resources	5
4	Summary of Community Engagement Carried Out	6
5	Influence of Engagement on the Evolution of the Wind Farm Design	10
5.1	Impacts associated with noise and visual impacts	11
5.2	Impacts associated with shadow flicker	11
5.3	Impacts associated with construction traffic and construction noise.....	11
5.4	Impacts on property.....	12
5.5	Community benefit fund.....	12
5.6	Impacts on water supply and water quality	12
5.7	Impacts on Flora and Fauna	12
5.8	Impacts on horses	13
6	Potential Enduring Benefits of This Project	13
6.1	Community Benefit Fund	13
6.2	Community investment opportunity	14
6.3	Employment opportunities	14
6.4	Recreation.....	14
7	Ongoing Liaison and Contact.....	14
8	Conclusion	15
9	Project Literature	16

1 INTRODUCTION

Springfield Renewables Ltd (Springfield), supported by Coillte and ART Generation is seeking planning permission from An Bord Pleanála to construct and operate a commercially viable wind farm project on lands at Castlebanny, in Co. Kilkenny.

Springfield commenced engagement with the local community during the early stages of project design with the objective of ensuring that the views and concerns of all members of the local community were considered as part of the project design and the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

In relation to national guidance on community engagement and consultation for wind energy developments, the *Wind Energy Development Guidelines* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006) state that:

“While it is not a mandatory requirement, it is strongly recommended that developers of a wind energy project should engage in active consultation and dialogue with the local community at an early stage in the planning process, ideally prior to submitting a planning application”.

This was further addressed in the *Preferred Draft Approach to Wind Energy Development in Ireland* (June 2017) which stated the following with respect to planning applications for wind farms:

“Planning applications must contain a Community Report prepared by the applicant which will specify how the final proposal reflects community consultation. The Community Report must also outline steps taken to ensure that the proposed development will be of enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned”.

The *Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines* (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019) has retained this position stating the following:

“In order to promote the observance of best practice, planning authorities should require applicants to prepare and submit a Community Report with their planning application and a condition on any subsequent planning permission should require developers to carry out the development in accordance with the approved Community Report”.

This Community Report outlines Springfield’s engagement and liaison with the community local to the area of the proposed wind farm.

2 BACKGROUND

Coillte and ART Generation have a long history of working with communities and our experience around the country has generated an inherent understanding of the communities in which we operate. We aspire to work **with** the communities surrounding our energy sites and wish to build projects that are good for us as commercial companies, good for our neighbours, and that contribute to the fulfilment of national and global Climate Change objectives.

Coillte has developed four wind farms in Ireland over the past decade and has learnt many valuable lessons in relation to working with local communities and the importance of including local people in decisions that affect them. In 2017, the Renewable Energy Team undertook a review of our Community Engagement process and embarked on the design of a radically enhanced approach with the support of AstonEco Management.

The key elements of this approach, referred to as our ‘Fair Play’ model are:

- Detailed and systematic engagement with all close neighbours to the project (within 2 km) from a very early stage of project design.
- Open, transparent dialogue and communications.
- Creating opportunities for open, two-way dialogue on key issues.
- Ensuring that the local community have access to all relevant information as soon as it is available, in an understandable format.

The approach emphasises a focus on the residents of dwellings within 2 km of the initial 21 turbine layout as these people will be closest to the development and will therefore be most sensitive to any potential effects caused by the development. In the past, engagement has commenced when the project is almost fully designed and being prepared for planning submission. In our 'Fair Play' approach we started engagement in the early stages of layout development. The approach also recognises the need to keep people further away from the development informed about the project as details become more defined.

In order to build better projects, we have recognised the imperative of enabling meaningful engagement between the project team and the local residents. This engagement has to pass beyond just information provision, and through open, transparent dialogue and move towards a more collaborative approach to infrastructure design that has a National interest but a local impact.

What are our external drivers for Stakeholder Engagement?

- Actively engaging in the conversation helps raise awareness and provides insight that can ensure successful project outcomes for everyone.
- Active and open dialogue with our community stakeholders is essential for the success of our projects. It is through two-way dialogue that the project can responsibly partner with local communities.
- The project is committed to strengthening partnerships with local communities.
- Public support is achieved by actively working with communities towards mutually desirable goals. Meaningful communication with stakeholders creates trust and mutual respect, as well as a shared understanding and vision of what a successful project can look like.
- Timely, proactive, open and honest communication is a cornerstone of our Engagement Charter. This approach helps to minimise possible adverse impacts on our neighbours and instead helps to achieve positive social, economic and environmental outcomes.
- In line with national policy, the project team are committed to meaningful consultation, which brings about constructive local dialogue, as well as mutual trust and understanding.

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

In order to implement this 'Fair Play' approach Coillte and ART Generation have resourced this project with a number of dedicated staff from the outset. The following key personnel have been involved in Community Engagement on the Castlebanny Project from within Coillte and ART Generation:

Shane Lowry is the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) for the project. Shane enjoys working with people and brings many years of experience across different business sectors. Shane's role is to ensure project communications are distributed to the local community and as the main point of contact for the community to discuss any queries or concerns that they might have.

Kieran O'Malley is Coillte's Project Manager for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm development. Kieran brings extensive experience having worked as a civil and environmental engineer for over 24 years.

Andy Fox is Coillte's Community Engagement Manager. Andy has spent the past 18 years working hand in hand with communities to drive towards sustainable local development. Andy has full responsibility for the development and implementation of Coillte's Community Engagement Strategy and Policy, with a focus on enhancing social acceptance across Coillte Renewable Energy's portfolio of development projects.

Richard Walsh is the owner of ART Generation. A native of Co Kilkenny, he has been involved in the development and operation of wind energy since 2002. Richard brings extensive experience and knowledge to the project alongside his deep understanding of the local area.

Tobin Consulting Engineers are leading a multidisciplinary team in carrying out studies, design and preparation of the planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) on behalf of Coillte and ART Generation. Tobin Consulting Engineers has wide ranging experience in all aspects of the feasibility assessment, environmental impact assessment, planning, design and construction of wind farms and other energy related projects.

4 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CARRIED OUT

Shane Lowry was appointed as the CLO for the proposed project in September 2019. Our initial work was with designated houses within the community to arrange agreement for and the placing of noise monitoring units around designated dwellings bordering the project perimeter.

As outlined above, Coillte emphasises a focus on the residents of dwellings within 2 km of the site as these people will be closest to the development and will be most sensitive to any potential effects caused by the proposed development. Before commencing the engagement, we needed to identify the 2 km zone to commence within. This was achieved by taking the initial turbine layout and applying a 2 km buffer. Within this area all dwellings, lived in, vacant and with the potential to be occupied were mapped. As the design progressed, we established a “buildable” or more accurate developable area. We then buffered this area by 2km and engaged with the residents in this area.

Introduction engagement:

The initial individual house engagement commenced in December 2019, with a project leaflet starting to be circulated to houses within 2 km of the project. This phase continued until the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions in mid-March 2020 as the CLO tried to make contact with as many residents as possible. The project leaflet introduced the project and the team and included a map and basic information reflecting the status of the project at the time. As part of this process, a low-call number and project email address were created to aid communication, and these were included in the project leaflet.

Through hand delivery of the leaflets, the CLO was able to meet and engage with many neighbours within the immediate zone. Any location where there was nobody at home was called to again on a different occasion, typically at a different time of day. Through discussions on the doorstep and follow up phone calls, the CLO was able to answer some of the early queries, noted feedback and discussed the engagement process, how it works for individuals and how they would be kept informed as well as how to contact the project team with any queries.

Before the imposition of Covid-19 restrictions in mid-March, the project team had met or had calls with over 76% of households within 2Km, and where unavailable, the balance of houses were engaged through a follow up introduction letter and invite to contact the team via a mail drop.

Individual calls and emails received by the project were responded to either in person, by phone/ text as requested or by email as they arose.

Next Phase Engagement:

A project website was launched in May 2020 and all materials circulated in the local area were uploaded on to this site. The site was updated on an ongoing basis from then onward. The project website also included contact details for any queries.

In August 2020, a detailed project brochure was prepared which included information about the site and the proposed development, site layout map and information on the community benefit scheme. The brochure also included information on the planning process, the site design process, information on key aspects of the environmental studies and some of the environmental benefits associated with the proposed project and next steps.

This coincided with easing of Covid-19 restrictions, which allowed for distribution of the comprehensive project brochure and accompanying letter during mid-August to households within 2Km of proposed turbines.

Where there were contact details available from previous discussions, we called to inform individuals in advance and asked if they would like to meet (*adhering to Covid-19 restrictions guidelines*) or to receive a brochure via the letterbox for review with an invitation to call once they had read the brochure.

For this round of engagement there were meetings and / or calls/texts with over 75% of households within 2Km. Residences where contact details were not available were engaged through a mail drop into each letterbox with a project brochure and accompanying letter with an invitation to make contact with the team. The project brochure was also uploaded onto the project website for the general public to view.

Individual calls and emails received by the project were responded to either in person, by phone or text or by email as they arose. Small group meetings also took place both in person and over zoom based on the restrictions in place at the time as requested by interested parties.

Meetings with local political representatives:

In parallel with the general community engagement, during August and September 2020 there were meetings with all of the local councilors representing the two electoral districts within which the project is located, Callan - Thomastown and Piltown, and the Kilkenny based TD's. They were given an overview of the project along with some copies of the project brochure and contact details in case they had any further queries after the meetings.

Online virtual tour and information platform:

As an in-person open event was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions, an online virtual presentation was prepared. This was accessible from the front page of the project website and went live on the 13th October 2020.

An invitation letter to the on-line presentation was issued October 14th onward through a mail drop and where necessary via post, text and email to cover all households within 2Km of the project and was extended past the 2Km area to surrounding houses. An advertorial was published in the local newspaper, the Kilkenny People, which included details of the online resource. Local Parishes were emailed with a request for details to be included in the next Parish Newsletter. Information posters were also put up in a shop window in Ballyhale village which included details of the online resource and Community Liaison Officer contact details.

As of 18th January 2021, there were 1007 visits to the virtual tour. A number of calls and emails were received from the public after they had viewed the presentation.

A summary of community engagement is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Summary of Community Engagement for Castlebanny Wind Farm

Date	Engagement (Describe)
Sept 2019	Community Liaison Officer appointed for the project. CLO called and arranged with selected households to have a noise monitor located on their property in September.
Sept 2019	Installation of noise monitors at selected dwellings. Liaison with residents as part of process.
14 th Dec 2019	Dedicated Project local number and email goes live
14 th Dec 2019	Commenced engagement in the 2 km zone.
19 th Dec 2019	Request for pre-application consultation letter to determine whether the project is a Strategic Infrastructure Project issued to An Bórd Pleanála. This was notified on ABP website.
2 nd January 2020	Article in the Kilkenny People about project based on the pre-application consultation request letter to An Bórd Pleanála. ¹
Jan - Mar 2020	Circulation of leaflet and ongoing engagement with households within 2 km continues.
Feb - Mar 2020	Project Introduction letter with invitation to contact circulated through a mail drop to those houses still not available or contactable.
12 th March	Initial Covid-19 restrictions are put in place nationally
April 2020	Where we had contact details we posted the project newsletter and accompanying letter with an invite to make contact to the remaining balance of households who had not replied to the previous Mail drop.
May 2020	Dedicated project website launched. ² Website includes project information and Community Liaison Officer contact details and previous leaflet and updates uploaded.
Aug – Sept 2020	Detailed brochure and accompanying letter circulated to all houses within 2 km of any proposed turbine location by the project CLO, and in tandem uploaded onto the project website for the general public to view. Engagement was undertaken adhering to Covid-19 guidelines for follow on meetings. Individual calls/texts and emails received by the project were responded to either in person, by phone/ text as requested or by email as they arose.
Aug – Sept 2020	In parallel with the general community engagement, there were meetings with all of the local councilors representing the electoral districts of Callan – Thomastown and Piltown and the Kilkenny based TD's. They were given an overview of the project along with some copies of the project brochure and contact details in case they had any further queries after the meetings.

¹ <https://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/home/505647/large-wind-farm-proposed-for-south-kilkenny.html>

² <https://www.castlebannywindfarm.ie/>

Sept 2020	Meetings were arranged between project team and local stakeholders to discuss issues and concerns.
13 th Oct 2020	Project virtual tour organized in lieu of project open evening(s) due to Covid19 restrictions goes live (see project website).
14/15 th Oct 2020	An invitation letter to the on-line presentation issued through a mail drop and where necessary posting, texted, emailing to cover all households within 2Km and extended out further past the 2Km area to surrounding houses.
21 st Oct 2020	Advertorial was published in the Kilkenny People which included details of the online resource.
21 st Oct 2020	Information posters were also put in a disused shop window in Ballyhale village which included details of the online resource and Community Liaison Officer contact details.
4 th Nov 2020	Local Parish newsletters emailed with request for inclusion of details of project virtual tour in the next Parish newsletter.

Table 2 below sets out the number of occupied dwellings located within 2 km of the proposed turbines.

Table 2 – Occupied Dwellings Within 2 km of Proposed Turbines

Distance from Turbines	No. of Dwellings	Cumulative Total
750 - 1000 m	23	23
1000 – 1500m	46	69
1500 – 2000 m	71	140

A summary of the key issues raised during the course of engagement are set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Summary of Key Issues Raised During Community Engagement

Topic	Issue Raised
Turbine Noise	Potential effect on residential amenity Potential effect on health associated with noise, low frequency sound, infrasound and amplitude modulation Potential effects on noise sensitive persons
Visual Impact	Potential effect on residential amenity Scale of the turbines is very large
Shadow Flicker	Potential effect of shadow flicker
Construction Traffic and Noise	Potential effects arising from use of local roads during construction – large trucks on narrow roads Potential effects of noise associated with construction traffic on quiet roads Potential effects of construction noise (machinery, borrow pit excavations, etc. on residential amenity
Property	Potential effects of the project on property values in the area Potential effects on ability to obtain planning permission for dwelling in the future
Community Benefit Fund	Questions around how the community benefit fund would be structured. Suggestions that those nearest the project should benefit more from the scheme. Concerned that distant communities and groups will get most of the benefit from the community fund while those nearest have the greatest effects.
Water	Potential effects on water supplies (ground water levels). Potential effects on water supplies (drinking water quality) Potential effects on water associated with St. Molin's Well
Biodiversity	Potential effects on local flora and fauna.
Horses	Potential effects of turbines on horses

These themes were discussed throughout the engagement process and were answered in a transparent and open manner. Ultimately not all themes could be or were addressed to the satisfaction of all, but the project team remains open in trying to find fair and equitable solutions for all including sharing information sources at our disposal. All of the above themes are also addressed clearly in the EIAR.

5 INFLUENCE OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE WIND FARM DESIGN

As outlined in Section 4 above, the main concerns of local residents include impacts relating to wind turbine noise, visual impacts, shadow flicker and associated impacts on residential amenity, construction traffic and construction noise, impacts on water supply and water quality and impacts on the flora and fauna in the area.

5.1 IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH NOISE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

These issues were addressed as part of the layout design process. A decision was made early in the design process to ensure that a minimum distance of 750m would be maintained between nearest dwellings and turbines. This is more than the current recommended setback of 500m as set out in the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. The setback of 750m also complies with the Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 which are not, as of the time of writing this report, official policy and may change in their final form. These draft guidelines recommend a minimum setback of 4 times the tip height of proposed turbines to protect residential amenity – this would equate to a minimum setback of 740m based on proposed tip height of 185m.

Various configurations and layouts were considered as part of the initial design considerations which included 33 turbine 170m tip height and 25 turbine 185m tip height arrangements. Based on detailed visual impact assessment undertaken as part of the environmental impact assessment, a 21 turbine 185m tip height layout was deemed to be the most suitable and provides a balance between efficient use of the project site area and consideration of visual impacts on the local and wider area.

A number of residents requested images of what the project would look like from their particular location. The photomontages prepared for the project are not intended to show the view from every dwelling but to be representative of local, regional and sensitive views in a wide area around the project. In these cases, where the photomontages did not cover a particular cluster of dwellings, informal images were prepared and issued to these residents to help get a sense of what the project might look like from their location.

The 21-turbine layout was subject to a detailed noise impact assessment and it was determined that, based on the proposed layout and turbine characteristics, the proposed layout would meet the noise requirements set out in the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. It is anticipated that the proposed layout could also conform to the requirements of new wind energy development guidelines, based on the Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 although it is considered that these are likely to change in the final published version.

A review of the literature relating to health effects associated with wind turbine noise finds no evidence of any significant health effects associated with low frequency noise or infrasound. Amplitude modulation is a rare occurring event that is not possible to predict and can be managed through adjustment of turbine operations where it does occur. Further details on this can be found in the noise and vibration and landscape and visual impact assessments in Chapters 12 and 13 of the EIAR respectively.

5.2 IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH SHADOW FLICKER

This issue was considered as part of the environmental impact assessment process and the proposed layout can conform with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 of maximum 30 minutes of shadow flicker per day or 30 hours per annum at any sensitive receptor by management of the operation of the turbines during periods when there is a potential for shadow flicker.

Further to this, in accordance with emerging best practice and the draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019, the project is committed to eliminate shadow flicker through the management of turbine operations.

Further details on this can be found in the shadow flicker assessment in Chapter 10 of the EIAR.

5.3 IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC AND CONSTRUCTION NOISE

The main impact associated with construction traffic in the initial design was considered to be along the local road L-7451 between the R704 and the current entrance to the main site area. Following concerns raised by local residents, it was decided to move the main point of access to an existing

junction further east along the R704 with just a single crossing point on the L-7451. The location of this crossing point on the L-7451 was moved over 150m further to the north from the existing site access to further reduce traffic related noise on nearby residences. Concerns were also raised relating to the location of a site compound adjacent to the crossing point of the L-7451. This was moved further into the site to minimise construction related noise on the nearest residents.

The noise assessment considered all construction related noise associated with machinery and traffic and all site activities and found that the proposed layout complies with all relevant regulations.

Further details on this can be found in the noise and vibration and traffic and transport assessments in Chapters 12 and 16 of the EIAR respectively.

5.4 IMPACTS ON PROPERTY

There are a number of wide-ranging international studies that consider potential effects of wind farms on nearby property values. The findings from these studies vary but, in most cases, indicate a slight negative, variable or neutral effect. Some indicate that community engagement and community benefits may improve outcomes in this area. The significant community benefit fund and near neighbour scheme associated with the project have the potential to make the local area more attractive. Impact on property values is discussed in further detail in the assessment of population and human health in Chapter 5 of the EIAR.

5.5 COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

The community benefit fund will be arranged in accordance with current best practice and will be informed by proposed new government guidelines due in June 2021. Part of the community benefit fund will be allocated to a Near Neighbour scheme, which, under RESS1, requires a minimum payment of € 1,000 per annum to all residential properties within 1 km of turbines with discretion to increase this amount and to extend up to 2 km. The project team will be engaging with the local community post planning to inform the governance structure of the fund and the aims and objectives of the scheme. It is typical for such funds to have a distance limit for proposals to access the scheme and/or weighting criteria for proposals based on distance from the project.

5.6 IMPACTS ON WATER SUPPLY AND WATER QUALITY

Concerns were raised about the potential for impacts on the water table associated with drawdown of water from dewatering of site excavations and on pollution of the water supply from site activities. Many properties have local wells and St. Molin's Well was identified as a sensitive location for water quality.

The proposed layout and all potential impacts on water levels and water quality associated with proposed construction activities were considered as part of the environmental impact assessment. There was an assumption made that all dwellings have a water supply 50m from the dwelling in the side nearest to the wind farm infrastructure. The assessment concludes that there is not likely to be any significant impact on water levels at domestic wells or other water supplies, including St. Molins Well or any significant impact on water quality associated with the proposed site activities. Accordingly, no changes to the layout were necessary based on this.

Further details on this can be found in the hydrology and hydrogeology assessment in Chapter 9 of the EIAR.

5.7 IMPACTS ON FLORA AND FAUNA

Concerns were raised about the impact on flora and fauna in the site area. Detailed site surveys and assessments were undertaken to consider potential impacts on all aspects of biodiversity including habitats, mammals, bats, birds, etc. The initial survey findings informed the layout design such that potentially sensitive areas were avoided in the initial layout design. More detailed surveys were

undertaken following from the preliminary infrastructure layout designs and some amendments were made to the layout to avoid sensitive areas e.g. badger setts. Based on these assessments, it is considered that there will not be significant impacts on biodiversity in general and no further changes to the layout are required.

Further details on this can be found in the biodiversity and ornithology assessments in Chapters 6 and 7 of the EIAR respectively.

5.8 IMPACTS ON HORSES

There is no scientific evidence of negative impact on horses associated with wind farms. There are numerous wind farms in Ireland and internationally and it is reasonable to assume that horses and other livestock graze nearby. If there was a significant effect on horses, it would have been brought to attention of relevant authorities. Some wind farms have developed equestrian trails that pass adjacent to wind turbines with no significant negative effect.

6 POTENTIAL ENDURING BENEFITS OF THIS PROJECT

Castlebanny Wind Farm has the potential to bring significant positive benefit to the local community. The project will create sustainable local employment, it will contribute annual rates to the local authority, and it may provide opportunity for local community investment in the project in line with the new Renewable Energy Support Scheme. A community benefit fund will be put in place for the RESS period of the project to provide direct funding to those areas surrounding the project.

6.1 COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

Two important areas of Government policy development are nearing completion which will have a bearing on the establishment of future community benefit funds, the updated Wind Energy Guidelines and the second Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS). Both sets of policy are expected to be finalised during Q2/Q3 2021 which will provide the Government requirements on future community benefit funds for renewable energy projects. We will fully take into account these two important policies as we present the Springfield approach to this community benefit fund.

Springfield expects that for each megawatt hour (MWh) of electricity produced by the wind farm, the project will contribute €2 into a community fund for the RESS period i.e. 15 years of operation.

If this project is constructed as currently designed, we estimate that a total of approximately 7.5 million euro will be available in the local area for community funding over the RESS period of the project. The above figure is indicative only and will be dependent on the generation capacity of the wind farm which is influenced by a number of factors including:

1. Number of wind turbines.
2. Capacity and availability of energy production of those turbines.
3. Quantity of wind.

How the fund will be used and administered?

The Community Benefit Fund belongs to the local community. The premise of the fund is that it should be used to bring about significant, positive change in the local area. To make this happen, our first task will be to form a benefit fund development working group that clearly represents both the close neighbours to the project as well as nearby communities. This group will then work on designing the

governance and structure of a community entity that would administer the Community Benefit Fund. We aim to commence this work if and when the project achieves a positive planning decision.

6.2 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

What is meant by Community Investment?

The proposed Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) sets out that future renewable energy project proposals enable the possibility for local communities to invest in projects in a meaningful way as a means to directly gain from the financial dividends that a project can provide should it be consented, built and operated. In response to this, Coillte have been working hard with external agencies to develop workable models of Community Investment. As with the benefit fund, we aim to take this work into the community following the work on the Benefit Fund and once clear guidance has been provided by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

6.3 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

It is estimated that the proposed project will create approximately 100 jobs during the construction phase and 2 - 3 jobs during the operational and maintenance phases of the proposed development. During construction, additional employment will be created in the region through the supply of services and materials to the development. In addition to this, there will also be income generated by local employment from the purchase of local services i.e. travel and lodgings.

6.4 RECREATION

Humphrey Murphy BA, MBS, MMII Grad, MSc pending, of ILC was engaged to develop a recreation plan to consider the recreation potential of the site and the wider area and to prepare a strategy for engagement and development of recreation facilities within the site and connections with recreation sites and associated community groups and enterprises in the wider area.

Humphrey has experience in sports planning, tourism, and energy management and has worked in the strategic development and consultation process for a range of infrastructure, training, and accreditation models in Ireland, the UK, mainland Europe and in Russia. This has included development of recreation facilities at other constructed wind farms in Ireland such as Galway Wind Park.

The initial recreation plan for the site includes a parking and seating/picnic area, approximately 13 km of looped walks and outdoor exercise stations.

A variety of local organisations were contacted on behalf for the project to get their feedback and suggestions for an inclusive plan which is ongoing. The project team will continue to build relationships with these groups to further develop the recreational amenity as the project progresses.

7 ONGOING LIAISON AND CONTACT

A number of different phases have been detailed below with differing levels of engagement anticipated depending on the levels of project activity. Underpinning all of the engagement below will be a dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the project who is contactable by email and phone. These details will remain on the project website which will be in place for the duration of the project. As the project progresses, regular updates will be posted to this website.

Post Planning submission until 6 months pre-construction

During this period (12 -24 months) a number of key community related activities will continue to be progressed. The first is a participatory design process for the Castlebanny Community Benefit Fund (CBF). Approximately 6 months after the project has been submitted into the planning system the team will start a process of reaching out, initially to residents within the 2km zone and then slightly further afield, in order to bring together a small group of people who are interested in working on the design and structure of a community based entity that would ultimately run this Community Benefit Fund. At the point at which the project receives a positive planning outcome this process will then start with a scoping exercise followed by a series of facilitated workshops. It is hoped that representatives involved in existing local development initiatives will be stakeholders in this process and will therefore contribute to this strategy.

The second piece of work is to explore the potential for Community Investment in the project as outlined in the new Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS). This will probably follow on from the CBF work stream and is predicated by the release of clear guidance on this from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

Pre- Construction and Construction phase

6 months prior to the commencement of construction on the project we will initiate the set-up of a liaison group. The project will meet with this group on a monthly basis to prepare for the construction phase and monitor activities during construction. This group will develop plans on communicating effectively with residents directly impacted by construction activities and deliveries, especially traffic planning to minimise disruption.

The project will also engage with local suppliers prior to the construction phase in order to outline the projects future needs and promote the use of local suppliers and service providers wherever possible. This may take the form of a “meet the buyer” event.

Operational Phase

The project will continue with a proposed annual meeting with the liaison group to update the group on project performance and address any issues identified. The Community Liaison Officer will also be available throughout this period to directly address any issues raised by local residents. As stated above, the project website will also be maintained as a method of providing regular, up to date information on the project. There will be regular updates on performance of the community benefit fund and regular calls for proposals for funding.

Decommissioning Phase

A year prior to the commencement of decommissioning of the project, the project team will engage with the established liaison group as well as all residents within the 2km zone to outline the decommissioning plan and address any issues identified at that time.

8 CONCLUSION

As outlined throughout this Community Report, there has been engagement on the project throughout the planning design phase to date. We fully recognise however that development of a proposed wind farm is a long and complex process and that there is ample time to jointly develop our community offerings with our near neighbours and other stakeholders, and we will be progressing these after the planning adjudication and decision phases should the project receive planning consent.

9 PROJECT LITERATURE

PROJECT LEAFLET

PROJECT NAME

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

PROJECT BENEFITS

PROJECT RISKS

PROJECT TEAM

PROJECT CONTACT

PROJECT STATUS

PROJECT HISTORY

PROJECT FUTURE

PROJECT NOTES

PROJECT REFERENCES

PROJECT APPENDICES

PROJECT GLOSSARY

PROJECT INDEX

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROJECT REFERENCES

PROJECT APPENDICES

PROJECT GLOSSARY

PROJECT INDEX

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROJECT REFERENCES

PROJECT APPENDICES

PROJECT GLOSSARY

PROJECT INDEX

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROJECT REFERENCES

PROJECT APPENDICES

PROJECT GLOSSARY

PROJECT INDEX

PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

PROJECT REFERENCES

PROJECT APPENDICES

Castlebanny Wind Farm

Winter 2019

What's inside:

- Coillte and ART Generation
- Our Focus
- Our Environment
- Castlebanny
- Meet the Team
- Next Steps
- Contact Us



Coillte and ART Generation

Coillte and ART Generation are jointly exploring the potential for a renewable energy project close to Mullinavat in Co Kilkenny. We aim to develop a responsible project in a way that will bring benefit locally, regionally and nationally.

Both Coillte and ART Generation teams have extensive experience in the development, delivery and operation of wind energy developments throughout Ireland.

ART Generation

ART Generation is a wholly Irish owned renewable energy company based in Ireland. It is a well-established energy development company with responsibility for managing the development, construction and operation of projects throughout Ireland including Foyle Windfarm in Co. Kilkenny. ART Generation most recently developed three wind farms in the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary.

Coillte

Coillte, as Ireland's largest landowner, has a responsibility to contribute to the decarbonisation of the economy across all areas of its business. Through the Renewable Energy team, Coillte has been involved in the development of four windfarms at Raheenleagh, Castlepook, Cloosh and Sliabh Bawn contributing

more than 300MW of clean power to the Irish energy market.

Climate Action Plan

In line with the 2019 All of Government Climate Action Plan, both Coillte and ART Generation are firmly committed to achieving Ireland's ambition of 70% of renewable electricity generation by 2030.

Our Environment

TOBIN Consulting Engineers are the lead planning and environmental consultants for the Castlebanny Wind Farm Project.

TOBIN Consulting Engineers is a multi-award winning Irish-owned and Irish-operated company providing services in Environment & Planning, Building & Infrastructure and Water. TOBIN has extensive experience in the completion of Environmental Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, Engineering Design and Planning Submissions for sustainable renewable energy infrastructure across the country.

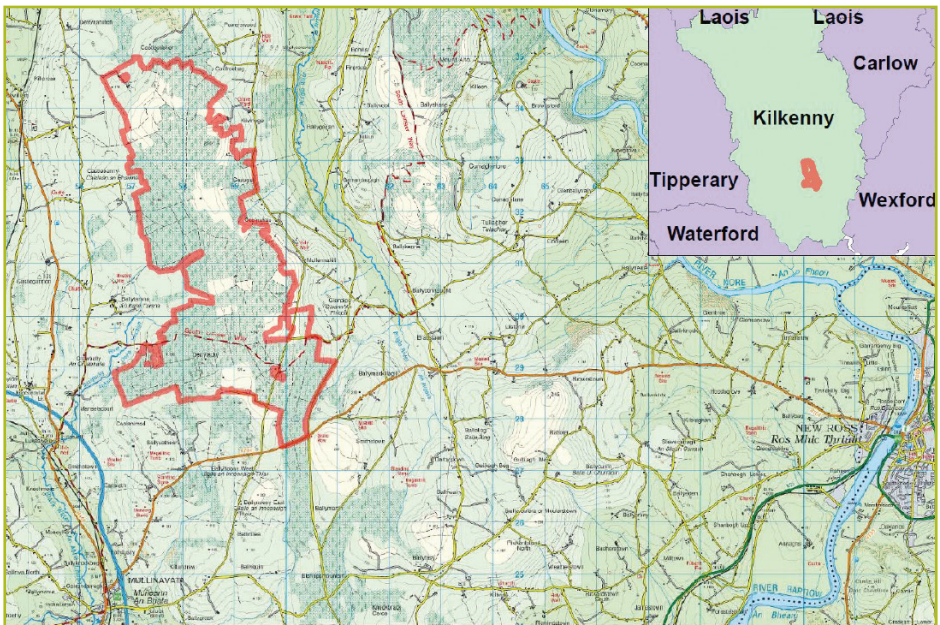
Wind Development projects undergo rigorous environmental analysis under a series of headings including: Population and Human Health, Biodiversity, Land, Soil, Water, Air, Climate, Material Assets, Cultural Heritage and Landscape.

Castlebanny

The proposed wind farm is situated near Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny on a large site, approximately 7km in length and 3km in width, about 4,000 acres in total. The proposed wind farm area has the capacity to accommodate up to 24 turbines and generate enough clean electricity to power more than 70,000 homes and avoiding the emission of over 100,000t of CO₂ per annum.

The potential project will fully comply with the latest wind energy guidelines and we commit to a minimum set back

distance from turbines to residential dwellings of 750m. A significant annual community benefit fund will be established in line with forthcoming Government policy which will include both funding for wider community initiatives and a Near Neighbour scheme focused on houses in close proximity to the project. Community Investment opportunities will also be explored as outlined in the governments new Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS).





Meet The Team

Richard Walshe is the owner of ART Generation. A native of Co Kilkeny, he has been involved in the development and operation of wind energy since 2002. Richard brings extensive experience and knowledge to the project alongside his deep understanding of the local area.

Kieran O'Malley is Coillte's project manager for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm development. Kieran brings extensive experience having worked as a civil and environmental engineer and renewable energy project developer for over 24 years.

Shane Lowry is our Community Liaison Officer. Shane enjoys working with people and brings many years of experience across different business sectors. Shane is your local contact for the proposed project at Castlebanny.

Andy Fox is Coillte's Community Engagement Manager. Andy has spent the past 15 years working hand in hand with communities to drive towards sustainable local development. Originally from Kenya and the UK, Andy now lives in Co. Wicklow.

Next Steps

1. Environmental studies will continue for the study area.
 2. Community engagement will continue in the locality sharing information and listening to queries and concerns.
 3. Quarter 1 2020 will see further communications and project details emerge as we develop our understanding of the project potential.
-

Contact Us

We welcome any engagement and interaction with you on any aspect of the proposed wind farm.

You can contact us by email at castlebannywindfarm@coillte.ie

or call a member of the project team on **087 286 5553** (Mon-Fri: 9am-5pm)

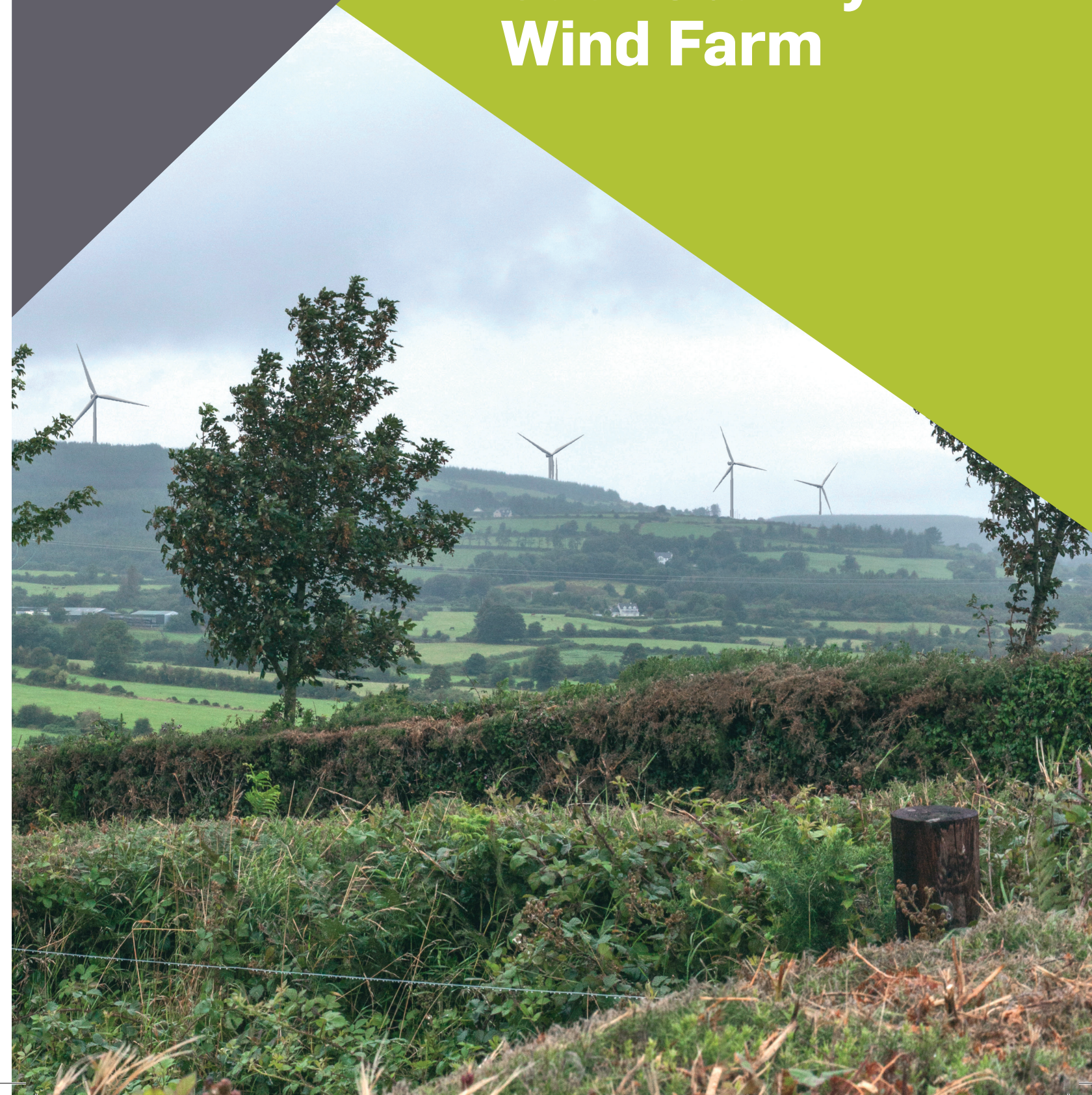
Address:

Coillte Office
Hartnetts Cross,
Macroom,
Co. Cork,
P12 XA50.

For more information visit:
www.castlebannywindfarm.ie
(launching soon)

PROJECT BROCHURE

Castlebanny Wind Farm



Dear Homeowner,

First and foremost, we hope this finds you safe and well in these challenging times, and adjusting as best as possible to new ways of going about daily life.

As you may be aware, Coillte's Renewable Energy business in partnership with ART Generation has been actively exploring a wind farm development opportunity close to Mullinavat, Co Kilkenny. The community engagement model which we use within our team has given us an opportunity to meet with a very high proportion of people residing within 2 km of the potential wind farm.

The proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project is now at a stage where all the environmental assessment data has been gathered and collated to inform a proposed layout. This brochure sets out a detailed overview of all aspects of the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project and we look forward to addressing any queries that may arise. We propose to address any queries by phone call or in person subject to being able to respect the Government Covid-19 guidelines in place at the time.

We are planning a further event to share information on the project in the near future. The nature of this event will depend on Government advice at the time but will include an online project information platform as a minimum.

Please be assured that we will continue to make every effort to ensure that we provide you with all the information you need in order to fully understand the details of this proposed project. We are also committed to making available the necessary resources within our team to support any engagement.

Once you have had a chance to read through this brochure and should you have any areas of the project you wish to discuss further, please make contact with any of the team in the coming weeks using the contact details at the back or on the project website (www.castlebannywindfarm.ie).

Please stay safe and well in these difficult times.

Yours sincerely,



Kieran O'Malley

Kieran O'Malley
Project Manager
Coillte



Andy Fox

Andy Fox
Community
Engagement Manager
Coillte



1. INTRODUCTION

This brochure has been prepared to:

- provide an update on the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project; outline a brief description of the infrastructure that is proposed
- describe the expected benefits of the proposed development and how it may positively impact local communities and initiatives
- describe the technical and environmental studies which have been completed as part of the design and environmental assessment process

outline the steps to be taken prior, during and after the planning permission application has been submitted to the Planning Authority

Why Onshore Wind?

In May 2019, the Government declared that Ireland was in the midst of a climate and biodiversity emergency. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that mean annual temperatures in Ireland have risen by 0.7° Celsius (C) over the past century and are likely to rise by 1.4°C to 1.8°C by the 2050's and by more than 2°C by the end of the century due to climate change. Climate change refers to the change in climate that is attributable to human activity arising from the release of greenhouse gases in particular from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, peat) for transport, electricity generation and agriculture. The Environmental Protection Agency states that future impacts associated with climate change include¹:

- more intense storm and rainfall events
- increased likelihood and magnitude of river and coastal flooding
- water shortages in summer in the east
- adverse impacts on water quality
- changes in distribution of plant and animal species

As Ireland's largest landowner, Coillte has the capacity and with that the responsibility to contribute significantly to Ireland's efforts to combat climate change and reduce carbon emissions. Our forestry business sequesters 1.1m tonnes of carbon annually and our land asset, with its suitability for wind farm development, puts us at the forefront of being able to deliver on the Government's Climate Action Plan (June 2019) which announced a target of 70% of Ireland's electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

This commitment will form part of the forthcoming climate change legislation for publication in the near future.

- A target of net zero economy-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 which will include:
 - » A target for the renewable share of electricity generation of 70% by 2030. Provision for five-yearly carbon budgets, consistent with the emissions reduction pathway to 2030 and 2050

More specifically, the Climate Action Plan 2019 states that:

'To meet the required level of emissions reduction, by 2030 we will:

Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%, indicatively comprised of:

- *at least 3.5 GW of offshore renewable energy*
- *up to 1.5 GW of grid-scale solar energy*
- *up to 8.2 GW total of increased onshore wind capacity'*

The current capacity of installed onshore wind energy in Ireland is approximately 4,200 MW. The 'Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018 – 2027' outlines the need for an additional 3,000-4,500 MW of renewable energy as an investment priority.

Wind energy makes sense for Ireland for many reasons. It is a clean fuel source which does not pollute the air like power plants that rely on combustion of fossil fuels, such as coal or natural gas. Wind turbines do not produce atmospheric emissions that cause acid rain or greenhouse gasses. Wind energy is a domestic natural resource, available in abundance in Ireland and the resource is free. Domestic production of electricity from wind reduces reliance on imports of fossil fuels. Recent technology developments in onshore wind energy have resulted in significant improvements in the cost of energy and wind energy is the most economic form of renewable energy generation. Coillte's land asset is ideally suited to wind farm development due to the predominance of rural landholdings in areas of high wind resource and low environmental sensitivity. As a wind farm occupies such a small proportion of a site area, many other land uses can co-exist such as Coillte's forestry business, recreation offering and biodiversity management.

The further development of renewable energy sources is a vital component of Ireland's strategy to tackle the challenges of combating climate change and ensuring a secure supply of our future energy needs. The proposed project is being brought forward in response to these challenges.

1 <https://www.epa.ie/climate/communicatingclimatescience/whatisclimatechange/whatimpactwillclimatechangehaveforireland/>

Community Engagement

A Community Liaison Officer was appointed to the project in Q3 2019 and extensive community engagement has been undertaken with neighbours living close to the proposed site since then. This is part of Coillte's engagement approach for those who are most impacted by the proposed development and living within 2km of a proposed turbine. The Project Manager, Community Liaison Officers and ART Generation personnel have undertaken a programme of work to ensure that accurate information is shared and that stakeholders have a forum where queries can be posed and addressed.

The format of this programme includes printed information, house visits, a website and discussions with community and recreation groups, businesses, schools, etc. This brochure forms part of this process and all the information within this brochure is intended to provide an understanding of the proposed wind farm, its design and its environmental credentials. There will be a further engagement event, the format of which will be dictated by the health and safety recommendations in place at the time associated with Covid-19.

The Team

Coillte Renewable Energy is part of the Land Solutions division within Coillte which is responsible for generating recurring revenue by partnering, developing and adding value where Coillte-owned lands are suited to activity other than forestry, such as renewable energy. Coillte has been involved in the development of 4 operating wind farms including Raheenleagh (Wicklow), Sliabh Bawn (Roscommon), Cloosh (Galway) and Castlepook (Cork) which have a combined total capacity of over 300 megawatts (MW).

ART Generation is a Kilkenny based wind farm development company with extensive knowledge and experience in the development, construction and operation of wind farm projects throughout Ireland. It was the original promotor of Ballymartin and Smithstown wind farms in South Kilkenny. It most recently developed three wind farms in Tullaroan/Kilmanagh (Kilkenny) and Ballysloe (Tipperary).

The company has a portfolio of operational and pipeline projects throughout Ireland.

The team involved in this project includes a Project Manager, Community Liaison Officer and ART Generation as well as the support of a number of specialists in the areas of Grid development, Community Engagement, Planning and Policy and GIS and Wind Resource Management.

Tobin Consulting Engineers are leading a multidisciplinary team in carrying out studies, design and preparation of the planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) on behalf of Coillte and ART Generation.

Tobin Consulting Engineers has wide ranging experience in all aspects of the feasibility assessment, environmental impact assessment, planning, design and construction of wind farms and other energy related projects.

About The Site

The proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm is located in south-east Kilkenny approximately 2.2 km south-east of Ballyhale, 4.5 km north-east of Mullinavat and 5.8 km south-west of Inistioge. The total land parcel is approximately 1400 ha and the site is predominantly covered in active Coniferous forestry plantation areas on both Coillte and local landowners properties. The Arrigle River runs south-north to the east of the site area and the Derrylackey River runs to the west of the site. The topography of the site can generally be described as gently sloping, rising from c.130 OD in the east and 120 OD in the west to a high point of 250 OD in the north and 265 OD in the south. The site is bounded by the R704 to the south and local roads to the east, north and west while the South Leinster Way traverses the southern part of the site. The Arrigle River (which forms part of the River Barrow And River Nore Special Area of Conservation) runs south-north near the eastern boundary of the site. Several tributaries of the Arrigle and the Derrylackey River encroach on the periphery of the site.

In general terms, the area surrounding the site can be described as rural with dispersed settlement type. There are three commissioned wind farms located south/southeast of the site namely; Ballymartin Windfarm, Smithstown Windfarm and Rahora Windfarm.



Photomontage from local road at New Chapel, west of proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm.

Why This Site?

Identifying a site suitable for a wind farm encompasses several considerations. Suitability of the Castlebanny site can be attributed to the following characteristics:

- the proposed wind farm is not located within a Natura 2000 site (i.e. Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or a Special Protection Area (SPA)) nor a Natural Heritage Area (NHA)
- the site is in close proximity to an existing 110 kV line ensuring minimal environmental impact and economic grid connection
- initial landscape and visual impact assessment indicates that proposed location is suitable for a project of scale
- the site has good annual average wind speeds;
- a significant setback from houses can be achieved, with the closest dwellings at a 750m setback from the turbines
- there is a network of existing forestry roads within the site that can be utilised

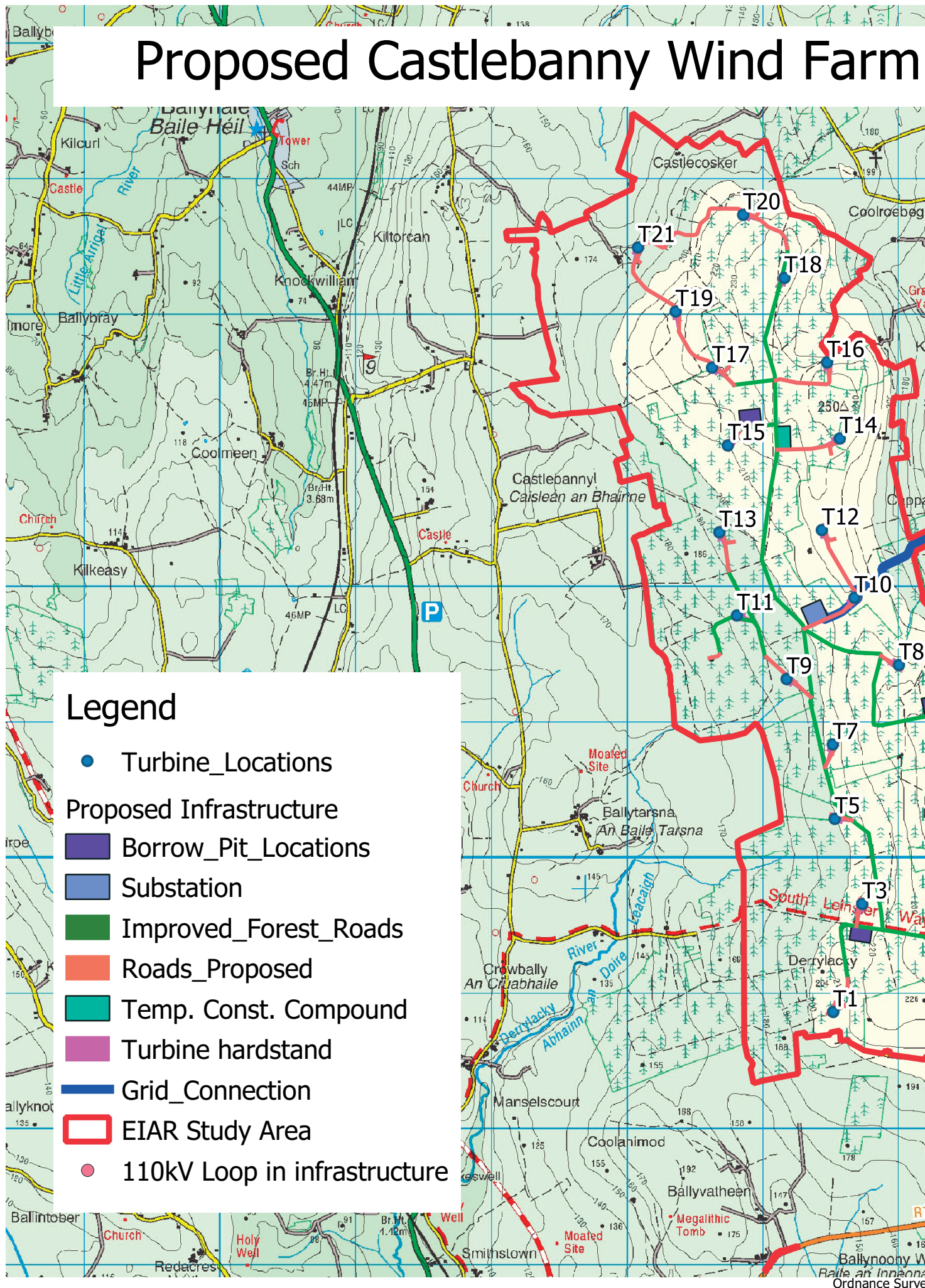


2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

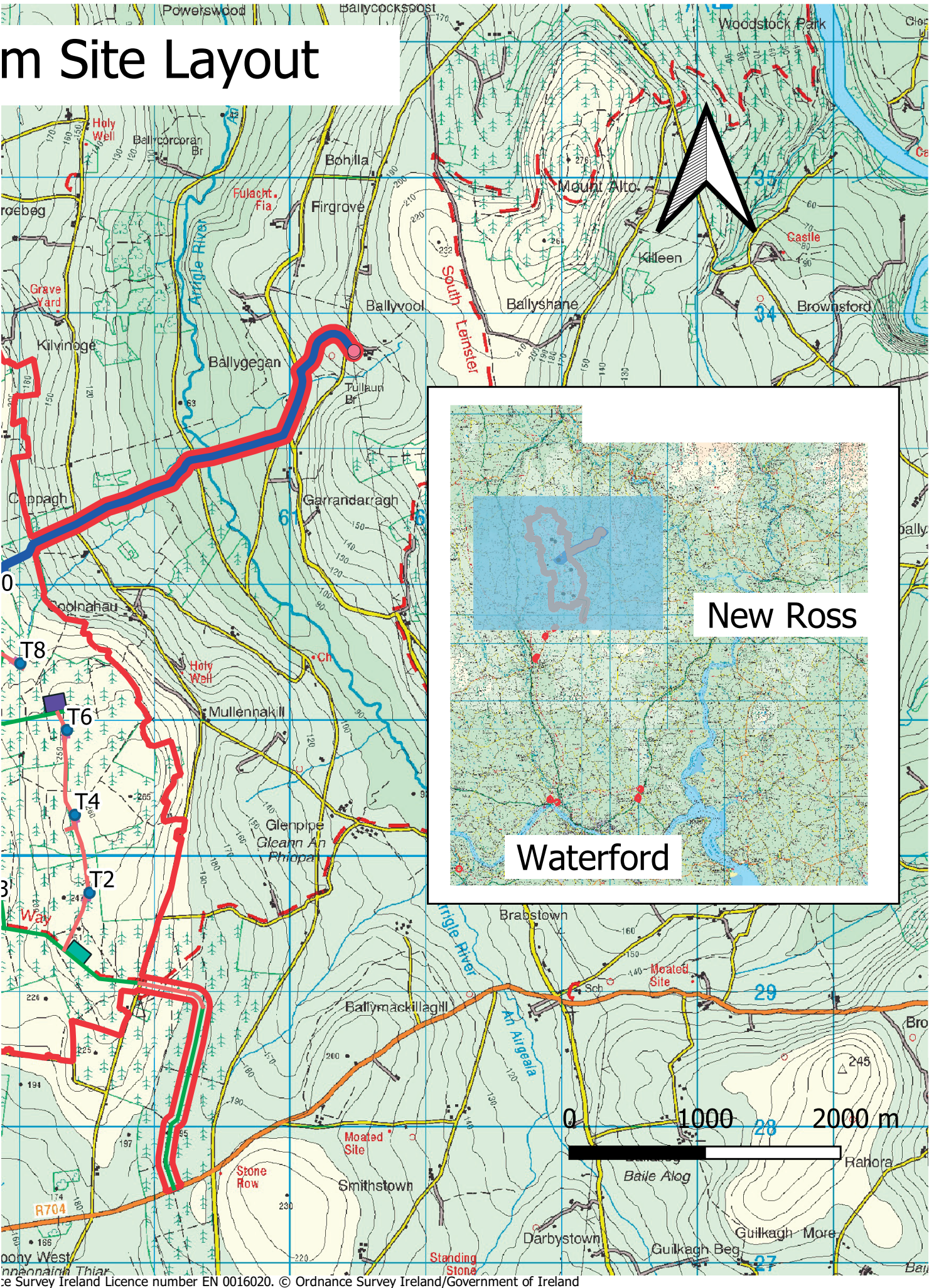
Currently, the proposed wind farm includes the following:

- 21 wind turbines up to a maximum tip height of 185 metres with all associated foundations and hardstanding areas
- onsite 110kV substation with loop in 4 km underground grid connection to the existing 110kV overhead line in the townland of Ballyvool
- upgrading of existing site access tracks and construction of new site access tracks as required
- 3 onsite borrow pits to source stone material on-site
- 1 onsite met masts up to a height of 100m
- provision of amenity facilities to allow and encourage public access to the site for walking and cycling on site access tracks
- 2 temporary construction compounds, one of which will be used as a permanent public car park for accessing the proposed amenity facilities after the construction phase
- all underground cabling required to connect the on-site substation to each wind turbine
- tree felling and all associated site development works
- temporary road upgrade works at a number of locations to allow delivery of oversize loads to the wind farm

Proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm



m Site Layout



3. COMMUNITY BENEFIT AND INVESTMENT PROPOSAL

How will this project benefit the local community?

Castlebanny Wind Farm has the potential to bring significant positive benefits to local communities. The project will support sustainable local employment, it will contribute annual rates to the local authority and it will provide opportunity for local community investment in the project in line with the new Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS).

As with all wind farm projects which Coillte develop, a community benefit fund will be put in place to provide direct funding to those areas surrounding the project.

What will the community benefit fund look like?

Two important areas of Government policy are in development which will have a bearing on the establishment of future community benefit funds, the updated Wind Energy Guidelines and the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS). Both sets of policy are expected to be finalised in 2020 which will provide the Government requirements on future community benefit funds for renewable energy projects. We will fully take into account these two important policies as we present the proposed project's approach to community benefit.

It is anticipated that for each megawatt hour (MWh) of electricity produced by the wind farm, the project will contribute €2 into a community fund for the RESS period i.e. first 15 years of operation. If this commitment is improved upon in upcoming Government Policy we will adjust accordingly.

If this project is constructed as currently designed, this would mean that in excess of € 500,000 per annum will be available in the local area for community funding for the RESS period consistent with Government policy.

The above figure is indicative only and will be dependent on the generation capacity of the wind farm which is influenced by a number of factors including:

1. Number and type of wind turbines eventually permitted
2. Capacity and availability of energy production of the delivered turbines
3. Quantity of wind (dependent on wind conditions in any year)

How the fund will be used and administered?

The Community Benefit Fund belongs to the local communities surrounding the proposed wind farm. The premise of the fund is that it should be used to bring about significant, positive change in the local area.

Following the submission of the planning application, there will be workshops organised to facilitate consideration of the priorities for the local fund. The output from these workshops and any other proposals from the community will inform the structure of the Community Benefit Fund.

Near Neighbour Scheme

It is acknowledged that the people living closest to a wind farm are the most important stakeholders and a proportion of the Community Benefit Fund will be set aside as a dedicated "Near Neighbour Fund". The exact structure of this will be confirmed as part of the development of the overall Community Benefit Fund but would typically provide support of varying degrees for properties up to 2 km from turbines. This is supported by the requirements set out in the first RESS. These are set out in Section 7.2.6 of the RESS1 Terms and Conditions



https://www.dccae.gov.ie/documents/RESS_1_Terms_and_Conditions.pdf as shown below – this could be adjusted in future RESS schemes that may relate to this project.

'The Generator or its agent will administer the funds contained in the Community Benefit Fund and shall distribute such funds for the duration of the relevant RESS 1 Project's RESS 1 Support as follows on an annual basis:

(a) in respect of Onshore Wind RESS 1 Projects, a minimum of €1,000 shall be paid to each household located within a distance of a 1 kilometre radius from the RESS 1 Project;

(b) a minimum of 40% of the funds shall be paid to not-for-profit community enterprises whose primary focus or aim is the promotion of initiatives towards the delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 4, 7, 11 and 13, including education, energy efficiency, sustainable energy and climate action initiatives;

(c) a maximum of 10% of the funds may be spent on administration. This is to ensure successful outcomes and good governance of the Community Benefit Fund. The Generator may supplement this spend on administration from its own funds should it be deemed necessary to do so; and

(d) the balance of the funds shall be spent on initiatives successful in the annual application process, as proposed by clubs and societies and similar not-for-profit entities, and in respect of Onshore Wind RESS 1 Projects, on "near neighbour payments" for households located outside a distance of 1 kilometre from the RESS 1 Project but within a distance of 2 kilometres from such RESS 1 Project.'

What is meant by Community Investment?

The proposed RESS sets out that future renewable energy project proposals enable the possibility for local communities to invest in projects in a meaningful way as a means to directly gain from the financial dividends that a project can provide should it be consented, built and operated. In response to this, Coillte have been working hard with external agencies to develop workable models of Community Investment. As with the benefit fund, we aim to take this work into the community during 2021, to continue to explore this exciting possibility and see how best to embed its design within the community.

Recreation Plan

A recreation plan is being prepared for the phased development of a recreational amenity at the project location. This will be developed as follows:


- **Phase 1** – this will include access point, basic facilities, signage for looped walks/cycles. This will be included with the planning application for the proposed wind farm
- **Phase 2** – this will consider development of the facilities included in Phase 1 based on further discussions with the community to provide additional facilities and access to respond to community needs. The Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments would be installed as part of the wind farm construction
- **Phase 3** – this considers how to link the project site with other recreational facilities in the wider area to create a cohesive recreation attraction to the wider area. This would be developed following construction of the wind farm and funded from the Community Benefit Fund

The overall theme for the recreation plan is a safe place for visitors to exercise and spend quality time together. The absence of traffic, gentle slopes and road layouts provide the perfect supporting environment to achieve this aim.

Additional Benefits

Additional benefits arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development include:

- up to 100 people directly employed at peak construction. 2-3 long term, high quality technical jobs in operation and maintenance
- substantial annual rates paid to Kilkenny County Council. Rates paid to Kilkenny County Council for the proposed development will have a positive impact on local infrastructure and amenities such as roads, public lighting, street cleaning, libraries, fire services and public amenities. Under current council rate guidelines, estimated annual rates of between € 1.8 and € 2.3 million would be collected by Kilkenny County Council
- indirect employment created through supply of a wide range of products and services



Photomontage from South Leinster Way,
east of proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm



4. SITE DESIGN PROCESS

The design process for the proposed wind farm starts with a review of existing information to avoid or minimize potential impacts. This includes limiting the angle of slope of the ground where development can occur, including a setback distance from watercourses and residences, as well as a setback distance from any nearby European designated habitat sites.

The following design parameters were applied;

- avoid steep areas where possible – steep ground slope
- avoid watercourses where possible – 50 m buffer
- avoid dwellings – 750 m buffer
- avoid biodiversity rich or sensitive areas
- avoid telecommunications links
- optimise design for visual impact

A turbine layout was then developed to take account of all the constraints mentioned above and their associated buffer zones and the separation distance required between the turbines. The location and alignment of the associated infrastructure, such as roads, crane hard stands and substation, was then developed following confirmation of the proposed turbine layout. In addition to the above, the locations of the proposed wind turbines and all other proposed infrastructure locations have been informed by rigorous site investigations and assessments carried out over a two-year period including:

- Ecological Surveys
- Ornithological Surveys
- Geotechnical, Hydrological and Geological Site Investigations

- Shadow Flicker Modelling
- Noise Modelling
- Archaeological Surveys
- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Wind Resource Modelling

The constraints map has been continuously updated throughout the development design process based on the findings of each of the site investigations and assessments that have been completed. The constraints map will be available to view on the project website.

Scoping and Consultation

Development projects such as wind farms require a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). In order to ensure that the EIA process was appropriate to the project and locality, an information document was prepared and circulated to a list of statutory consultees to ensure that the EIAR was addressing all relevant topics.

5. THE PLANNING PROCESS

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

The EIAR will focus on the areas outlined here and will accompany the planning permission application.

Tobin Consulting Engineers are compiling the EIAR with the input of a number of other specialist consultants.

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Description of the Proposed Development
Chapter 3	Civil Engineering
Chapter 4	Alternatives
Chapter 5	Population and Human Health
Chapter 6	Biodiversity
Chapter 7	Ornithology
Chapter 8	Water
Chapter 9	Land and Soil
Chapter 10	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 11	Shadow Flicker
Chapter 12	Landscape
Chapter 13	Cultural Heritage
Chapter 14	Air and Climate
Chapter 15	Material Assets
Chapter 16	Interaction of the Foregoing
Chapter 17	Schedule of Environmental Mitigation

Planning Application

An application for planning permission for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm will likely be submitted directly to An Bórd Pleanála as the project is of sufficient scale to be deemed Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). During the project design and environmental assessment, consultation was carried out with An Bórd Pleanála, and the local planning authority, Kilkenny County Council, to discuss the project. The planning application will be supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). A separate project website has been created and will be used, as required by An Bórd Pleanála, to present the full application and all the supporting documents and drawings. This will allow public access to documentation for review.

6. POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

The assessment examines the potential impacts of the project (both beneficial and adverse) on the local and regional community. The key issues examined include population and settlement, employment and economic activity, land-use, residential amenity, community facilities and services, tourism, and health and safety.

Regarding the proposed wind farm development, the potential significant wellbeing and nuisance effects of the proposed scheme on the local human environment have been identified as follows:

- dust emissions from construction activities
- noise emissions during construction activities and operation

- public safety
- visual impacts during operation
- shadow flicker during operation
- traffic nuisance during construction
- tourism and recreational impacts
- interference with telecommunication signals during operation

Each of these issues has been fully assessed and are being documented as part of the EIAR.

7. BIODIVERSITY

The site principally consists of conifer plantation and improved pasture. There are some areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland, small wetlands and patches of scrub. There are a few small pockets of remnant blanket bog and wet heath. Small streams flow from the site towards the Arrigle River to the east, a tributary of the River Nore, while the western part of the site drains towards the Black Water, which flows south to the River Suir. Watercourses in and near the site are mostly of High or Good Status, according to EPA water quality data. The site is used by badger,

pine marten, fallow deer, common frog and six species of bats, including Leisler's bat. The birds on site are typical of conifer plantation and improved pasture habitats and include Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and Woodcock. The rare butterflies dingy skipper and small heath are also present. The closest nature conservation area to the site is the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which includes the Arrigle River, at over 1,500 m distance from most of the proposed development with the exception of the grid connection which will cross the Arrigle River.

8. WATER

On a regional scale, the site at Castlebanny is located across the Suir and Nore Catchments. The proposed wind farm is located between the Arrigle River to the east of the site which feeds into the Nore River. Derrylackey River to the west of the wind farm feeds into the Blackwater River. All rivers ultimately discharge to the River Barrow. The water quality of the local rivers is typically good.

Groundwater at the site can be classed as highly sensitive due to the presence of some shallow subsoils and areas of exposed bedrock. The bedrock is classified as a poor aquifer therefore the risk of contamination travelling long distances is unlikely i.e. less than 0.5 km. No public water schemes or Group Water Schemes have been identified within 2 km of the site.

The River Barrow and River Nore SAC is the nearest designated site located hydrologically downgradient of the site, but the proposed development will be designed to ensure there are no potential significant impacts to any designated sites.

Drainage management will be employed to control drainage water within the site during construction, ensuring that surface runoff from the developed areas of the site will continue to be of good quality and no flood risk to the downgradient setting. Impacts on water during the construction phase of the wind farm will be imperceptible to none. A surface water monitoring programme will be put in place during the construction phase of the wind farm site. Based on proposed mitigation measures, there is no potential for significant impacts on the hydrology and groundwater as a result of the proposed wind farm development.

9. LAND AND SOILS

The geology of the site is made up of either till i.e. clay or a thin layer of subsoil which in turn are underlain by weathered and solid bedrock. Detailed site investigation works, including field mapping of exposures, shallow subsoil drilling and trial pit excavations were undertaken to assess the geology of the site for construction purposes.

Construction of the wind farm infrastructure will require the removal of subsoils and possibly rock to create solid foundations.

Excavation of bedrock from proposed on-site borrow pits and suitable off-site aggregate sources will provide appropriate construction material for access roads, turbine bases and general hard-standing foundations. Removal and reuse of subsoils and bedrock does not represent a significant impact on the geology of the site.

No significant impacts or cumulative impacts on the soil and geological environment are anticipated as a result of the proposed wind farm and its grid connection route options.

10. AIR AND CLIMATE

This chapter describes the likely significant impacts the construction and operation of the proposed wind farm development will have on air quality and climate.

While there may be an imperceptible temporary negative impact to local air quality in the immediate vicinity of the development arising from vehicle exhausts and dust generation during the construction phase, the overriding long term impact will be positive.

Once operational, electricity generated by the wind farm will displace electricity that would otherwise have been generated by fossil fuel power stations, therefore reducing CO₂ emissions by between 110,000 and 150,000 tonnes CO₂ per annum, improving air quality and contributing to the fight against climate change.

11. NOISE

The main sources of noise from a wind turbine include aerodynamic noise (rotating blades in the air) and mechanical noise (gearbox and generator). Noise only occurs above the 'cut-in' wind speed and below the 'cut-out' wind speed. The typical 'cut in' wind speed of a modern turbine is 3 meters per second (m/s) and the 'cut-out' wind speed is approximately 25 to 30 m/s.

Construction noise will occur during excavation and earth moving, laying of roads and hard standings, transportation of materials and erection of the wind turbines. The construction phase will be phased and temporary.

Noise and vibration assessments were undertaken for the operational, the construction and decommission phases of the proposed development. The cumulative impact with other wind farms was also considered.

Vibration, low frequency noise and infrasound are also addressed in the study.

To inform the noise impact assessment, baseline noise monitoring of the existing noise environment was carried out over a 4–6 week period in early Autumn 2019.

Following the establishment of the existing noise levels prior to development, appropriate noise level limits were then determined in line with Government policy and guidance. The noise limits seek to strike a balance between the noise restrictions placed on a wind farm, the protection of amenity and the national and global benefits of renewable energy development. The predicted noise emissions from the wind farm are then compared against these limits. The predicted wind farm noise emissions must not exceed the appropriate noise limit.



12. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

The assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects assesses the effects of the development on the landscape as a resource and on the fabric and character of the landscape. Assessment of visual effects relates to the change in views and visual amenity experienced by groups of people.

The proposed development is located in an area categorised as a dynamic landscape, in which change is anticipated. County Kilkenny's Landscape Character Areas have been mapped for the county, and the proposed development is located near the border of the "South-Western Hills" and "South-Eastern Hills" Areas.

The Landscape Appraisal of Co. Kilkenny has noted that "the south-western and south-eastern uplands were considered to have development potential". It notes in particular that "the hilltops and upland areas were generally perceived as most suitable for forestry plantations and the undulating nature of these units was considered to have the capacity to absorb wind farm, powerlines and infrastructure developments".

13. CULTURAL HERITAGE

The South Eastern Uplands of Kilkenny is a landscape with a rich cultural heritage that includes prehistoric settlements and monuments and medieval religious and secular sites. The area to the south of the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm has a particular concentration of prehistoric features including megalithic tombs, standing stones and burned mounds (fulachtaí fia).

Two archaeological sites on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) are located within the boundary of the proposed wind farm: a ringfort or rath (KK032-029) in Cappagh townland in the north of the area and a structure (KK036-040) in the east of the area, in Coolnahau townland. The structure is described as a 'large, overhanging rock with space under walled around to make a rectangular room', and it is traditionally associated with St Moling or St Mulling, a 7th-century monk and bishop who is said to have dwelt here as a hermit. Beside the eastern end of the planned grid connection cable route is another rath, in Ballyvool townland (KK032-033),

and one of the turbine delivery route works areas is next to the site of Ballynoony Castle (KK040-003), which appears as an earthwork on historic maps.

Sites of architectural significance in the surroundings of the proposed wind farm include those listed on the Kilkenny County Council Record of Protected Structures (RPS). Within the proposed wind farm area there are no RPS sites: the nearest are a national school and railway station, more than 1km distant.

As a result of the archaeological and cultural heritage assessment, mitigation measures are recommended to ensure the identification, protection and recording of any sites that may be impacted by the proposed wind farm. Archaeological testing and monitoring will be proposed to identify any previously unrecorded sites and appropriate management measures will be developed for both recorded and unrecorded cultural heritage sites.

14. MATERIAL ASSETS

An Aviation study has been completed to investigate if there would be any issue with Waterford airport flights and calibration checks.

A traffic study has also been carried out to consider the additional traffic associated with the construction of the wind farm and the delivery of the turbine components. Separately a delivery route assessment has been carried out which has considered turbine delivery from Belview Port in Co. Kilkenny.

A scoping exercise was carried out with telecommunications providers, and the proposed wind farm has been designed to avoid any significant impacts to telecommunications links.

The proposed grid connection will consist of underground cables which will connect to an existing overhead line. See proposed grid route on Proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm Site Layout figure.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The proposed development could generate up to approximately 120 MW per hour of renewable, clean electricity. Over the lifetime of the project, between 3 and 4.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are expected to be offset compared to traditional electricity generation. During construction and turbine manufacture, some carbon is lost to the atmosphere, but this is anticipated to be offset by the wind farm itself within a relatively short period of operation. These details are provided in the EIAR.

Wind farms emit no toxic substances or air pollutants, unlike coal or gas power stations.

The energy generated by the proposed development, will offset associated emission of greenhouse gases from electricity-generating stations dependent on fossil fuels, thereby having a positive effect on climate. It will have the capacity to provide enough electricity to power over 70,000 homes in County Kilkenny. The EIAR provides further information on this.

The proposed wind farm will take up only a small portion of the total site area; the existing land-use of mainly commercial forestry with some agriculture will continue in conjunction with the proposed development.



16. NEXT STEPS

Engagement with local residents and other consultees will be ongoing. There will be a public engagement event held prior to submitting the planning application – the nature of this event will be determined by government advice and recommended practices in place at the time associated with Covid-19 restrictions.

Once the EIAR is complete, Coillte and ART Generation will be ready to submit a planning application to An Bórd Pleanála for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm. It is anticipated that the planning application will be submitted in the latter part of 2020.

The planning application will include the following;

- Cover Letter to An Bord Pleanála
- Cover Letter to Local Authorities
- Planning Application Form
- Letter(s) of Consent
- Site Notice
- Newspaper Notices
- Pre-Application Consultation
- Planning drawings and drawing schedule
- EIA Portal Confirmation Notice
- Natura Impact Statement

Notification of the intention to submit an application supported by an EIAR will also be sent to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's EIAR portal and the confirmation will be included with the planning pack.

All documents and drawings will be uploaded to a project specific website which will be dedicated to this planning application.

17. MEET THE TEAM

Richard Walshe is the owner of ART Generation. A native of Co Kilkeny, he has been involved in the development and operation of wind energy since 2002. Richard brings extensive experience and knowledge to the project alongside his deep understanding of the local area.

Kieran O'Malley is Coillte's Project Manager for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm development. Kieran brings extensive experience having worked as a civil and environmental engineer and renewable energy project developer for over 24 years.

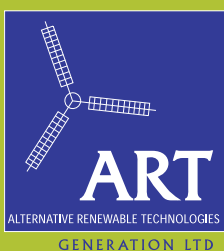
Shane Lowry is our Community Liaison Officer. Shane enjoys working with people and brings many years of experience across different business sectors. Shane is your local contact for the proposed project at Castlebanny.

Andy Fox is Coillte's Community Engagement Manager. Andy has spent the past 18 years working hand in hand with communities to drive towards sustainable local development. Originally from Kenya and the UK, Andy now lives in Co. Wicklow.

18. CONTACT US

Phone: 1890 800 502
Email: castlebannywindfarm@coillte.ie
Address: Attention: Kieran O'Malley,
Coillte Office,
Hartnetts Cross,
Macroom,
Co. Cork P12 XA50 *
Website: www.castlebannywindfarm.ie

* Note that email, website comment or phone contact is preferable at this time as there is limited access to the Coillte offices



Head Office
Newtownmountkennedy
Co. Wicklow
Tel: +353 1 2011111
Fax: +353 1 2011199
Email: info@coillte.ie

Coillte.ie

POSTER IN BALLYHALE

On display from 21st October 2020 to 2nd December 2020.





ADVERTORIAL IN KILKENNY PEOPLE

In edition circulated on 22nd October 2020.

Planning application for Castlebanny Wind Farm Set to be Finalised

Coillte Renewable Energy and ART Generation are uniquely positioned to make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of Ireland's economy as it finalises a planning application for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm development.

Coillte, the state-owned commercial forestry company, and local Kilkenny based wind farm development company ART Generation, are preparing a planning application to submit to An Bórd Pleánala for the proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm in the coming weeks.

The application follows an extensive year-long community engagement programme in parallel with the design and EIA process, which has actively sought input from the local community, and particularly those living closest to the proposed wind farm site.

The project's aim is to develop a renewable energy project responsibly, in a way that will bring benefit locally, regionally and nationally. It is uniquely positioned to make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of Ireland's economy and to achieving the goals outlined in Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The proposed Castlebanny Wind Farm project forms part of that contribution to helping the state and Kilkenny County meet its targets and play its role in promoting and sustaining a cleaner, secure, healthier environment for our children and future generations.

The proposed development is comprised of:

- Up to 21 wind turbines with a proposed hub height of approximately 110 metres and an overall blade tip height of up to 185 metres;
- Onsite 110kV substation with a 4 km underground grid connection to the existing 110kV overhead line in the townland of Ballyvool;

- 3 onsite borrow pits to source stone material on-site;
- 1 onsite met mast up to a height of 100m;
- Provision of amenity facilities to allow and encourage public access to the site for walking and cycling on site access tracks;
- 2 temporary construction compounds, one of which will be used as a permanent public car park for accessing the proposed amenity facilities after the construction phase;

The project team has adopted a best-in-class and conservative approach to determining a proposed project layout for consideration in the planning submission. The team has also been working with local stakeholders to develop a recreation plan for the site and to create links with nearby amenity and recreation areas. Following the application's submission to An Bórd Pleánala, the team plan to maintain a strong and constructive working relationship with the local community exploring this further.

Should the project receive planning permission and enter construction, there will be a Community Benefit Fund put in place for the project estimated at approximately €500,000 per annum. This will be divided into two components, a Near Neighbour Fund and a Wider Community Fund to provide direct project funding to those areas surrounding the project. The project will also actively explore the potential for direct community investment for those seeking to financially invest and participate in the wind farm when clear guidance is provided by DCCAE. During the construction phase, up to 100 people will be directly employed by the project drawing upon service providers based locally and regionally.

This project has the potential to generate approximately 120 megawatts of clean, renewable electricity capable of powering approximately 70,000 Irish homes and would make a substantial contribution towards Ireland's stated goal of producing 70% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. This represents CO2 savings equivalent to taking approximately 50,000 cars off the road.

As the normal project open event is not possible under the current Covid-19 restrictions, the team has developed an online presentation of the project for members of the public to view. This presentation can be accessed from the project website (www.castlebannywindfarm.ie).

The full Planning Application will be available to view online on a dedicated website (www.castlebannyplanning.ie) once the final submission has been made to An Bórd Pleánala.

