

**Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2**  
**Onshore Grid Infrastructure**

Proposed Development

Consultation Report

# 1 Proposed Development Consultation

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## 1.1 Overview

The proposed development is part of a wider Project, the Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2.

The Developer has engaged in a stakeholder engagement campaign with key stakeholders, since the start of the Project, both in terms of the Project and the specifics of the proposed development, the subject of this EIAR.

This campaign has been delivered in five phases. No phase was ever concluded, despite the initiation of a subsequent phase. Once a stakeholder was engaged, the Developer has sought to maintain an open and ongoing dialogue with them throughout the project development process and ensuring an opportunity for continuous feedback is maintained. The five phases of the campaign are outlined as follows:

**Phase 1 Strategic Engagement:** this included but is not limited to engaging to relevant Government Departments, state and semi state bodies, TD's, Senators and County Councillors for Co. Wicklow, and North Wexford, members of the Executive Team in Wicklow and Wexford County Councils.

**Phase 2 National Engagement:** this phase included engagement with state and semi state bodies, including many deemed as Statutory Stakeholders. In addition non statutory stakeholders were also engaged.

**Phase 3 Regional Engagement:** at this point in the engagement process the Developer sought to brief regional stakeholders on the Project, and on the benefits of offshore wind, secure feedback. This engagement comprised of outreach to Chambers of Commerce, regional assemblies, Municipal District Councils, Town Teams, PPN's, local offices for IDA and Enterprise Ireland, etc. At this stage the media were also briefed.

**Phase 4 Public Information Campaign:** Once the above stakeholders were informed, and feedback was secured, the Developer progressed to promote the project locally to the general public, through public meetings, specific fisheries engagement, schools engagement and the development of project materials.

**Phase 5 Consenting Process:** this represents the process of engagement that has been underway, in the main during 2020 to engage with stakeholders in relation to the preparation of the EIAR, statutory consent application and the scheme design for the proposed development. During this phase a Community Engagement Manager (CEM) was appointed.

The Developer sought to engage and hear from the widest range of stakeholders, including all those engaged during earlier phases. It should be noted that March 2020, was the point at which the county entered its first lockdown owing to COVID-19 and continues to remain in lockdown to varying degrees. While the Developer's preference is to engage communities and stakeholders face to face,

and in a location that is convenient to them, and local to the project, where relevant, COVID-19 has meant that communication has been increasingly online using new methods, as well as traditional written forms.

A detailed overall Consultation Report (for the Project) is included in the application which documents the consultation process to date.

Consultation has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders during the development of the EIAR in order to:

- Provide information on the proposed development;
- Ascertain and understand the views of stakeholders; and
- Seek input from stakeholders on the design, construction and assessment aspects of the proposed development.

It should be noted that this section describes project-wide consultation (both for the Project and the proposed development). Where appropriate, **Chapters 7 – 19** identify specific consultation that has been undertaken to support individual assessments and assessment chapters.

### 1.1.1 EIA Scoping Consultation

An informal EIA scoping exercise was undertaken, and an EIA Scoping Report was prepared and circulated to relevant stakeholders on 18 September 2020. The EIA Scoping Report described the key elements of the proposed development and outlined the level of detail and information to be included in the EIAR.

Feedback was sought from the following stakeholders to further inform the content and scope of the EIAR:

- An Bord Pleanála – SID unit
- Wicklow County Council
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- EirGrid
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Development Applications Unit: The National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Monuments Service
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland

- National Transport Authority
- Irish Water
- ESB Group
- Gas Networks Ireland
- Health and Safety Authority
- Health and Safety Executive
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Heritage Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon (The Arts Council)
- Marine Institute
- Office of Public Works
- An Taisce
- BirdWatch Ireland
- Irish Wildlife Trust
- Bat Conservation Ireland
- IDA
- Enterprise Ireland
- Aer Corps

Submissions were received in response to the EIA Scoping Report from a number of stakeholders. Points raised of relevance to the proposed development and the associated action taken by the EIA team are summarised in **Table 1** below.

The Scoping Report was published on the project website as part of the second-round of non-statutory consultation, see link below:

- <https://www.sserenewables.com/media/shhd4g5z/271715-00-rep-04-eia-scoping-report-arklow-bank-onshore-grid.pdf>

### 1.1.2 Meetings with Statutory Bodies

As part of the EIA scoping process and the evolving design and EIAR, a number of meetings were held with statutory bodies and relevant stakeholders to provide additional information with regard to the proposed development and to ensure that all relevant feedback was provided, so as to inform the EIAR.

The following meetings were held:

- Meeting with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) on 18 September, 2020
- Meeting with Office of Public Works (OPW) on 26 January, 2021

- Meeting with Irish Rail, in January 2021, following an application for works adjacent to a railway
- Engagement with EirGrid during 2020 and 2021
- Meeting with GNI in January 2021

The matters raised at these meetings, together with how we have addressed these matters in the EIAR are summarised in **Table 1** below.

### 1.1.3 Consultation with Other Stakeholders

In relation to Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2, the Developer has sought to maintain an open dialogue with all elected representatives in Wicklow, and North Wexford. At key points throughout the lifecycle of the project their views have been sought, and they have been continuously briefed in relation to all important announcements. The Developer has also engaged with a number of other relevant stakeholders at a project-wide level, since 2018. This includes engagement with elected representatives, industry bodies, local businesses and business representative bodies (such as Arklow Chamber), utility companies, An Garda Síochána, among others.

During 2020, the Developer briefed the following stakeholders, often on multiple occasions:

- Ministers Darragh O’Brien, Eamon Ryan, and Peter Burke
- All TDs and Senators for Wicklow and Wexford
- All County Councillors for Wicklow and North Wexford
- Wicklow County Council Executive
- Wicklow County Council, Full Council Meeting
- Arklow and Wicklow Municipal District Councils
- Arklow Chamber of Commerce

Consultation with these parties was by email, newsletter and phone calls, with a number of meetings (face to face and virtual meetings, where COVID-19 restrictions required) also taking place. Generally, any responses were supportive, particularly in relation to the opportunity for community gain, such as funding, employment, training, education and engagement in the area. Any specific feedback in relation to proposed development and this EIAR, is summarised in **Table 1** below. Further detail is provided in the Project Consultation Report accompanying the application.

### 1.1.4 Pre-Application Consultation with An Bord Pleanála

Prior to being determined as a strategic infrastructure development (SID) application, a prospective applicant is required by the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to enter into pre-application consultation with the Board, to provide the Board with the information necessary to make a determination as to whether the proposed development is SID.

The Developer commenced pre-application consultations with the Board in February 2020. Two meetings were held with the Board, on 17 June 2020 and 02 September 2020. Details of the consultations are available at <http://www.pleanala.ie/casenum/306662.htm>.

Following a request from the Developer in October 2020, to conclude the pre-application consultation process, the Board concluded the consultations and in a letter dated 20 November 2020, stated that *“it is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended. Accordingly, the Board has decided that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Any application for approval for the proposed development must therefore be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 182A(1) of the Act”*.

### 1.1.5 Public Consultation

As outlined above, from the start of the Project, the Developer has been engaging with the general public, to ensure that appropriate and adequate information is provided to them, in respect of the Project (and in particular, the proposed development). This process is documented in the overall Project Consultation Report prepared by RPS, accompanying the application.

A variety of measures have been implemented by the Developer to ensure that open and ongoing two-way consultation was undertaken. Particular cognisance was given to ensuring that the consultation process was as accessible and inclusive as possible, given the challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions in place throughout.

The consultation process included the following measures, which are detailed in the Project Consultation Report:

- Appointment of a Community Engagement Manager (CEM), to facilitate engagement and to act as the point of contact for the community
- Provision of an information service, with:
  - A dedicated email address and phone line manned from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday and a messaging service outside these hours
  - a project postal address for hard copy submissions
  - an email address for the dedicated CEM
- A dedicated set of project webpages hosted by SSE Renewables website, found at the following address: <https://www.sserenewables.com/offshore-wind/projects/arklow-bank/> as well as a redirect in place from: <https://www.sserenewables.com/arklowbank>
- A public consultation campaign from 14 October to 11 November 2020, to provide information and to gather feedback and local knowledge to inform the Project as summarised below.

### 1.1.5.1 Public Consultation Events, Exhibitions and Briefings

The public consultation campaign ran from 14 October to 11 November 2020, as referenced above. This public consultation included a public consultation event on 04 November 2020, which due to COVID-19 restrictions was held online.

The online event was to brief the community on the proposed plans, answer questions (previously submitted from the public and via live email and text), receive feedback from the attendees and to provide an opportunity for the community to meet the CEM. Eight members of the project team contributed to the live event and the public were also encouraged to complete a Feedback Form, which was available on the website.

Public exhibitions were also put in place at four locations in Co. Wexford and Co. Wicklow, being:

- Bridgewater Shopping Centre, North Quay, Arklow, Co Wicklow;
- Arklow Library, Main Street, Arklow, Co Wicklow;
- Town Hall, Market Square, Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow; and
- Seamount/Main Street, Courtown, Co Wexford.

Again, due to COVID-19 restrictions, these exhibitions were unmanned, with exhibition opening times corresponding to the opening times of each individual venue. Two of these, Seamount/Main Street in Courtown and Bridgewater Shopping Centre were unaffected by changing COVID-19 restrictions and ran until 11 November and 31 December 2020 respectively. The exhibitions at Arklow Library and the Town Hall in Wicklow were however affected (access could not be maintained) by increased COVID-19 restrictions during the consultation period.

In advance of the launch of the public consultation, the CEM also called to all households within approximately 1km of both the substation and landfall sites. These households were identified due to their proximity to key infrastructure components of the Project, the project team were keen to ensure that they were appropriately briefed, in advance of the wider consultation and could voice their concerns and queries, in person in so far as possible. Where no one was available, a letter was left to provide relevant information on the Project and contact details for the CEM, should any additional information be required.

To ensure that the local community and the general public were informed about the Project and the public consultation process, the Developer provided information in the following ways:

- Information on the overall Project was (and remains) on the websites referenced above; this information includes specific details on the offshore and onshore aspects, details of the proposed operation and maintenance facility (OMF), a recording of the online community briefing event, a project brochure, locations where project information could be read in person and contact details for the CEM;

- A Project Brochure (see Project Consultation Report accompanying the application) provided an overview of the Project and was available in several locations both in hard copy and digital format; at the exhibition stand at the Bridgewater Shopping Centre; from the website and by request in the post;
- A comprehensive advertising campaign, including local radio (East Coast FM) and local newspapers, as well as on Wicklownews.net. This campaign ran for the duration of the consultation phase;
- Information posters were erected at various locations such as credit unions and shopping centres (subject again to COVID-19 restrictions); and
- Approximately 15,000 information leaflets were distributed to homes and retail outlets.

### 1.1.5.2 Feedback from Public Consultation

Feedback from the public consultation process was received by phone, email, post, as well as via feedback forms at Bridgewater Shopping Centre and from verbal communications. Records of all such consultation feedback were maintained.

Details of the feedback received are included in the Project Consultation Report accompanying the application. The feedback received of relevance to the proposed development and this EIAR is summarised in **Table 1** below and reference is made to how the concern / issue raised is addressed in the EIAR, if applicable.

**Table 1 Issues / Aspects Raised During Consultation Process**

Consultee	Issue/Aspect Raised	How/where this is addressed in EIAR?
National Parks Wildlife Service (NPWS)	NPWS highlighted the potential for whooper swans and curlews in an area of grassland north of the landfall site; they also noted that there is a peregrine falcon resident in a tower at the IFI site.	Monthly vantage point surveys were undertaken in areas identified by NPWS as being of interest. See Chapter 12 Biodiversity.
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)	IFI noted the importance of fish stock in the Avoca River and other watercourses along the route, also noted time constraints on instream works and preference for trenchless crossings. IFI also requires the CEMP to include a frack-out contingency plan and that a site assessment of substation site, to confirm any contamination should be undertaken.  IFI also noted that access tracks temporary crossing of watercourses	See Chapter 12 Biodiversity for details of potential impacts on fish stocks; Chapter 5 Description of Development describes the proposed development, while Chapter 6 Construction Strategy describes the construction strategy and details watercourse crossings, as well as measures to be implemented re potential frack-out and contamination at



Consultee	Issue/Aspect Raised	How/where this is addressed in EIAR?
	and drainage channels to facilitate movement of construction plant should be addressed within the EIAR.	the substation site. Chapter 10 Water addresses potential impacts on water quality.
Wicklow County Council (WCC) Planning Department	Regarding the cabling, positive comments were received from WCC regarding the choice of underground cabling as there would be no visual impact. The presence of the SAC to the north of the landfall was highlighted with regard to the cabling. WCC also noted the reports that would be required – AA screening or AA and NIS. WCC recommended to consult with TII and Wicklow County Council Roads Department regarding potential road crossings as soon as possible.	See Chapter 12 Biodiversity and the Natural Impact Statement (NIS) in relation to the presence of the SAC; see Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual for a detailed landscape and visual assessment. TII and WCC Roads Department were also consulted.
WCC Roads Department	The developer has engaged with the WCC Roads Department on the crossing locations of the cable route and particularly the crossing of the M11.	See Chapter 6 Construction Strategy which describes the proposed crossing methodology.
EirGrid	<p>The developer has engaged with EirGrid during 2020 and 2021 on the connection of the Project to the NETN including EirGrid review of above ground designs for the proposed onshore 220kV substation and it's loop-in connection to the Arklow – Lodgewood 220kV circuit. During this engagement EirGrid raised several points relating to specific design details.</p> <p>The developer also engaged EirGrid to perform grid stability studies for the Projects connection to the NETN.</p>	See Chapter 5 Description of Development, which reflects substation and loop-in design following consideration of points raised by EirGrid.
GNI	Regarding potential interactions between cable route and GNI pipelines, GNI noted their existing knowledge of the area and provided input on GNI requirements. On gas pipeline crossing at Forest Road, GNI noted to minimise the time the	See Chapter 6 Construction Strategy which describes the proposed crossing methodology.

Consultee	Issue/Aspect Raised	How/where this is addressed in EIAR?
	pipeline was exposed, and that crossing design does not need to be formally approved in advance of works.	
Irish Rail	Meeting held after application by developer for works adjacent to a railway; developer introduced the development and took them through possible interfaces with Irish Rail infrastructure. Irish Rail raised concerns with traversing the Arklow – Gorey railway line for the purposes of removing and constructing towers between railway and south bank of the Avoca River.	See Chapter 6 Construction Strategy, which details the approach now proposed for access to the area, and as reflected in the planning (red line) boundary.
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	Any trees to be removed will require a felling licence	See Chapter 12 Biodiversity
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	TII noted that consent will be required to cross the M11	See Chapter 1 Introduction, as well as Chapters 5 Description of Development and 6 Construction Strategy.
Office of Public Works (OPW)	Appropriate consents will be needed for watercourse crossings	See Chapter 1 Introduction, as well as Chapters 5 Description of Development and 6 Construction Strategy.
Elected Representatives/NGOs	Community Gain – importance of measures in this regard – including funding, employment (and associated supply chain), adult education/training and engagement opportunities	See Chapter 5 Description of the Development and Section 5.9 in particular, for details in respect of proposed Community Gain measures
Irish Water	IW confirmed that a water supply connection could be provided for the proposed substation	See Chapter 5 Description of Development which describes the proposed development and Chapter 17 Material Assets
Public Consultation	Concerns raised about lack of consultation about other projects in the area – and the need to ensure adequate consultation at all stages	See details of consultation undertaken herein and as detailed in Project Consultation Report
Public Consultation	Concern about possible night-time works and noise impact of same and	See Chapter 11 – Noise and Vibration

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Issue/Aspect Raised</b>	<b>How/where this is addressed in EIAR?</b>
	noise impact from piling and HDD works.	
Public Consultation	Description of development; infrastructure/buildings required at landfall, along cable route.	See Chapter 5 Description of Development which provides details of the proposed development.
Public Consultation	Concerns raised about impact from construction works on local residents	The EIAR addresses how potential impacts during the construction stage are avoided or mitigated. In particular, see Chapter 6 Construction Strategy, which describes the proposed construction methodology, the CEMP (Appendix 6.1) as well as Chapter 7 Air Quality, Chapter 11 Noise and Vibration, Chapter 13 Traffic and Transportation and Chapter 18 Population and Human Health
Public Consultation	Concerns were raised about the potential visual impact of the overall project	While most concerns related to the offshore infrastructure (turbines), see Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual for a detailed landscape and visual assessment, including cumulative impacts with the offshore infrastructure