
DERREENACRINNIG WEST WIND FARM GRID CONNECTION

PLANNING PERMISSION TO
REMOVE THE EXISTING GRID CONNECTION WORKS AND FOR
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FULL LENGTH OF A
NEW GRID CONNECTION BETWEEN THE EXISTING
BALLYLICKY ESB SUBSTATION AND THE PERMITTED
DERREENACRINNIG WEST WIND FARM.

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY



21737-26/10/2021-EIA-Non Technical Summary

OCTOBER 2021

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DERREENACRINNIG WEST WIND FARM**NON – TECHNICAL SUMMARY****OCTOBER 2021****CONTENTS**

PREAMBLE	1
1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1.1 <i>Planning Application Reference 19/0010</i>	4
1.1.2 <i>Application for Substitute Consent</i>	4
1.1.3 <i>Judicial Review</i>	5
2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT.....	6
3 CLIMATE CHANGE	7
4 NATIONAL POLICY.....	8
5 SITE SELECTION AND EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVES.....	8
5.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED FOR THE WIND FARM.....	8
5.2 ALTERNATIVE GRID CONNECTION.....	9
6 PROJECT DESCRIPTION	9
7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES	10
7.1 POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH	10
7.2 BIODIVERSITY.....	11
7.2.1 <i>Fauna along the Grid Connection Route</i>	15
7.3 CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACTS OF THE GRID CONNECTION OVERHEAD LINE	16
7.3.1 <i>Designated Conservation Areas</i>	16
7.3.2 <i>Habitats</i>	16
7.3.3 <i>Watercourses</i>	16
7.4 CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACT OF THE GRID CONNECTION UNDERGROUND LINE.....	16
7.5 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF THE GRID CONNECTION ROUTE AND THE WIND FARM SITE	17
7.6 SOILS AND GEOLOGY	18
7.6.1 <i>Potential Impacts of the Development</i>	19
7.6.2 <i>Cumulative Effects</i>	20
7.7 WATER	20
7.8 AIR AND CLIMATE.....	21
7.9 NOISE.....	22
7.10 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT.....	23
7.11 MATERIAL ASSETS INCLUDING TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT.....	24
7.12 ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.....	26
7.13 INTERACTIONS OF THE FOREGOING	27

8	ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	27
9	CONCLUSION.....	28

PREAMBLE

This document is the Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Impact Report (EIA) for the construction of a Grid Connection to connect the already consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm to the existing Ballylicky substation in Co. Cork. The Non-Technical Summary sets out, in nontechnical language, a description of the project, predicted impacts and any mitigation measures that can be taken to reduce negative impacts.

Environmental Impact Assessment is a process for anticipating the effects on the environment, which could be caused by a development. Where effects are identified which are unacceptable, these can then be avoided, reduced and mitigated against. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a written statement of the affects, if any, which a proposed development, if carried out, would have on the environment.

1 INTRODUCTION

An application for planning permission is sought by ESB Networks The Applicant" for planning permission for the removal of the partially built grid connection and for the development of the full length of a new grid connection over a distance of approximately 14.8 km, to connect the already consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm to the existing Ballylicky substation in Co. Cork within the townlands of Derreenacrinnig West, Barnagowlane West, Glanareagh, Gortnacowly, Ards Beg, Ardrah, Laharanshermeen, Maulraha, Maulikeeve, Derryarkane, Cappanaboul, Skahanagh, Gortroe, Shandrum Beg, Shandrum More, Dromloughlin, Ballylicky, Crossoge, Co. Cork. The location of the Grid Connection route is shown in **Figure 1.1**. The site of the proposed development is located between the townlands of Derreenacrinnig West and Ballylicky passing through various townlands as listed above.

The consented Wind Farm site is located approximately 12 km west of Dunmanway in the townland of Derreenacrinnig West. Drimoleague is located 7 km south of the site and Dunmanway is located 11km east of the site and is located within the administrative boundaries of West Cork.

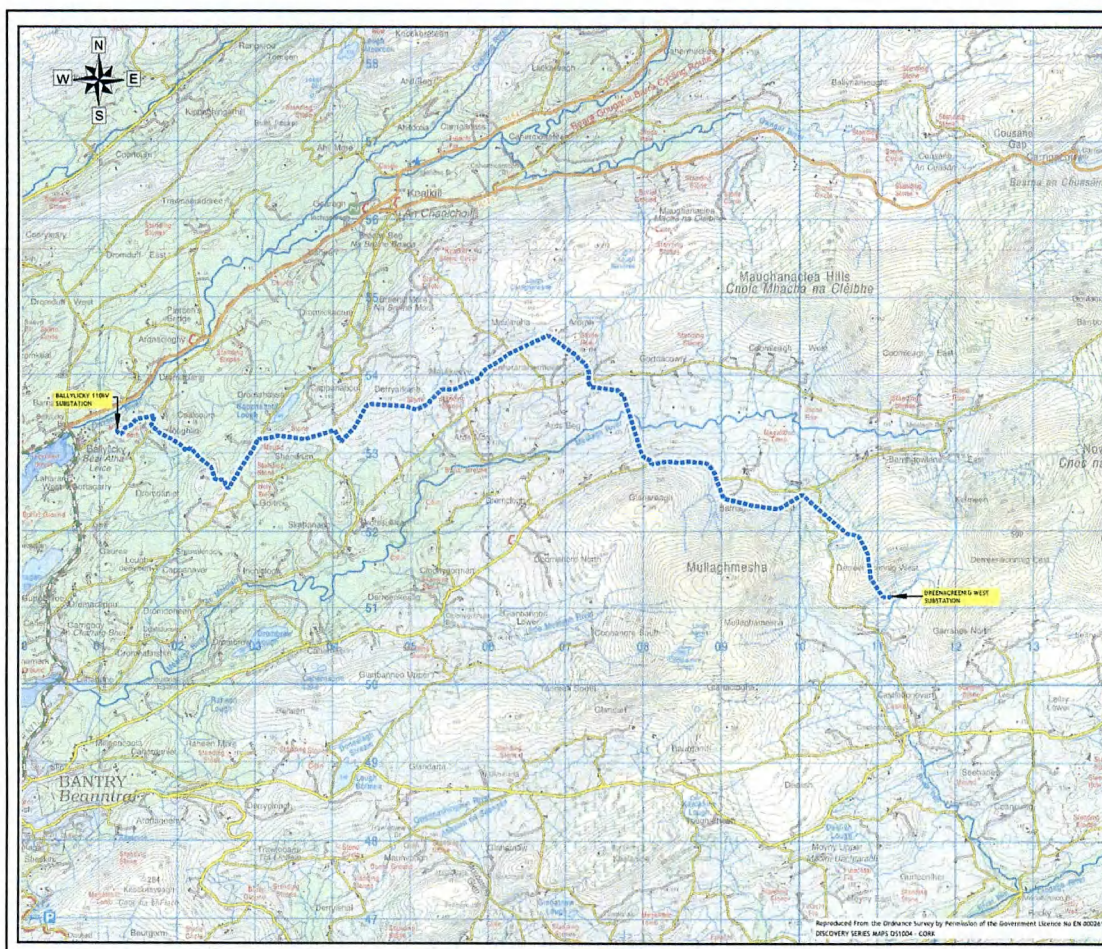


Figure 1.1 Site Location showing Grid Connection from Ballylicky Substation to Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm

ESB have carried out the partial construction of a new 20kV grid connection between the consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm, Derreenacrinnig, Co. Cork and the existing ESB Substation at Ballylicky, Co. Cork. This grid connection route traverses through the townlands of Ardrah, Ards More (East), Ards Beg, Barnagowlane West, Ballylicky, Crossoge, Derreenacrinnig West, Dromlickacruie, Derryarkane, Dromclarig, Gortroe, Gortnacowly, Glanareagh, Laharanshermeen, Maulikeeve, Maularaha, and Shandrum More. The partially completed existing grid connection will be removed as part of this planning application. The extent of the OHL to be removed is shown in Figure 1.2.



Figure 1.2 Site Location Plan showing the existing overhead grid connection subject of the removal as part of the Planning Applications

Planning History

A planning application was submitted by George O'Mahony for a 10 year planning permission for development of a wind farm comprising seven number wind turbines with a hub height of 55 metres and a rotor diameter of 52 metres, an electrical compound, sub-station building, four number car parking spaces, associated site roads and site works.

A decision to grant planning permission was made in October 2011 by Cork County Council under Reg. Ref. 10/857 for a wind farm, comprising 7 wind turbines, an electrical compound and sub-station and all related electrical equipment, subject to 29 conditions. The decision was appealed by third parties to An Bord Pleanála who subsequently upheld the grant of planning permission on 05th

December 2012, subject to 16 conditions under An Bord Pleanála PL88.239767 Decision. A copy of that Appeal Decision is set out at **Appendix A**.

Following the grant of planning permission, the wind farm developer received a connection offer from ESB in 2014. This connection was accepted as a non-contestable offer which means that the wind farm developers agree that the works would be carried out by the applicant, ESB. ESB subsequently commenced works on the Grid Connection as part of the Overhead Line [OHL] and Under Ground Connection [UGC]. Work to the Grid Connection commenced in October 2017. Prior to the construction of the grid connection, ESBI carried out an Exempted Development Screening Study for ESB of the proposed grid connection, to determine whether or not it would fall within the planning exemptions available for such development.

1.1.1 Planning Application Reference 19/0010

A planning application for the construction of the unbuilt grid connection was submitted to Cork County Council in January 2019 under planning application reference 19/10. That planning application related to the *“installation of approximately 3.2km of underground cable ducting and associated electrical cabling, approximately 1.2km of overhead line ...The works, which will take place at separate locations along the 14km grid connection route, are required to completed the grid connection from Derreenacrinnig West Windfarm to the ESB Ballylickey substation.”*

Planning Appeal Reference ABP/305790-19

The Decision to Grant was appealed by a Third Party to ABP under planning appeal reference ABP/305790-19. The decision of Cork County Council to grant planning permission was upheld by ABP on the 02/06/2020.

1.1.2 Application for Substitute Consent

An application for Substitute Consent under Section 177E of the Planning and Development Act 2000[As Amended] was sought by ESB [ESB] to regularise planning permission for the partially built grid connection to connect the already consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm to the existing Ballylicky substation in Co. Cork.

The application submitted to ABP sought to retain 5 sections of the partially constructed grid connection which consisted of 9.7 km of overhead lines [OHL] as shown on Drawing No. 4636-P-GCR-00-1.1.

The remedial EIAR included an evaluation of the existing Grid Connection route and was assessed in combination with the wind farm and that part of the grid connection which has not yet been

constructed and which is the subject of an application for planning permission to Cork County Council under planning reference 19/10.

Cork County Council had provided a prepared a report that was submitted to ABP which concluded that the grid connection forms part of the essential infrastructure of the permitted windfarm, is supported by national, regional and local policy, and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

ABP granted substitute consent on the 09/06/2020 under case reference SU04.305609 (305609). The Inspector's report had completed an EIA of development and was satisfied that the EIAR was prepared by competent experts. The Inspector concluded in paragraph 7.14.1 *"Having regard to the nature and scale of the development, to the environmental information available in connection with the current application, including the EIAR and other information provided by the developer and the submission from the planning authority, it is concluded that the development which is the subject of the current application is not likely to have had significant effects on the environment, either directly or indirectly or cumulatively with other developments including the permitted windfarm at Derreenacrinnig West and the completion of the grid connection to it."*

1.1.3 Judicial Review

The decision to grant substitute consent and the decision to grant planning permission by ABP were challenged by a third party by way of Judicial Review [JR] under Section 50 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. That challenge was upheld by the High Court [2020] 548 JR].

Whilst various grounds were cited in the challenge, the core grounds of the JR centred on the fact that the substitute consent procedure was in breach of European Law and that Ireland had failed to correctly transpose the requirements of Directive 2011/92/EU as amended. A core ground of the challenge was that the decision to grant substitute consent was premised on an earlier decision to grant leave to apply for substitute consent which took place without public participation. These grounds had been cited in previous unrelated cases before ABP. This resulted in legislative changes in December 2020 to the Planning and Development Act 2000. The JR was in the Courts system at the time the legislation was amended.

In March 2021, the High Court issued an Order quashing both decisions related to the grid connection issued by ABP in June 2020.

In December 2020, amended planning legislation was adopted by the Oireachtas in relation to the substitute consent process, in order to provide for increased public participation. Specifically it provides for public participation in the Seeking Leave to Apply for Substitute Consent stage.

The current application is being made under Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as it seeks to permission to remove the existing grid connection infrastructure initially, and to reconstruct it. Therefore, the amended substitute consent legislation is not relevant to this planning application.

ESB has considered various options in relation to consenting the grid connection and concluded that the Section 34 process is the most prudent way to proceed. Whilst planning legislation provides for a planning consent to be achieved via a combination of a Section 34 application and a Substitute Consent application as previously consented by ABP, ESB notes the issues raised in the JR in relation to splitting the consenting process into different applications and has decided to proceed on the basis of a singular Section 34 application.

2 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Environmental Impact Statement is presented in two volumes, of which this is **Volume I**.

- **Volume I** - **Non-Technical Summary / EIAR Report**
- **Volume II** - **Appendices**

This EIAR has been prepared by Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited, Consulting Engineers, Finisklin Business Park, Sligo, F91 RHH9 ("JOD"), on behalf of the Applicant.

This EIAR takes into account the overall project as a whole and all direct and indirect effect, and cumulative impacts and interactions, including all relevant ancillary and subsidiary elements of the overall project. This EIAR is prepared in accordance with the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU and, to the extent possible and appropriate in the absence of national legislation or adopted guidance.

The EIAR is structured as follows:

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Project Description
- Section 3: Planning Policy
- Section 4: Population and Human Health
- Section 5: Biodiversity
- Section 6: Land, Soils and Geology
- Section 7: Hydrology and Hydrogeology
- Section 8: Air and Climate
- Section 9: Noise
- Section 10: Landscape and Visual
- Section 11: Material Assets

- Section 12: Cultural Heritage
- Section 13: Interactions of the Foregoing

Each topic is discussed, with sections detailing the following:

- The Existing Environment,
- Potential Impacts of the proposed development,
- Mitigation Measures,
- Any monitoring measures required.

When considering the characteristics of the proposed development, reference is made to layout, design, size and scale. Projections of the likely levels of impact on any particular environmental topic can be made. Remedial and/or mitigation measures are recommended, helping to eliminate or reduce negative impacts.

3 **CLIMATE CHANGE**

The global demand for energy is increasing, linked to growing populations and the associated increase in urbanisation and industrial development. The primary source of energy remains non-renewable fossil fuels. Energy is produced by combustion of these fuels. This thermal energy is either used directly as an energy form or is used in the production of secondary energy forms (e.g. transport, electricity).

This energy production process results in the atmospheric emission of various gaseous compounds, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) and various compounds of sulphur oxides (SO_x) and nitric oxides (NO_x). The latter compounds SO_x and NO_x have been identified as contributing to acid rain, which results in damage to forestry, watercourses and associated ecology.

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is a greenhouse gas. The emissions of greenhouse gases are now recognised as having serious damaging effects on the environment. The effects of the gases result in increased global temperatures with consequent effects on sea levels due to ice-cap melting and altered weather patterns.

The UN sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has projected increases in sea levels leading to severe flooding and IPCC scientists expect major ecological changes to occur as a result. The IPCC has also estimated that the average global temperature will increase by up to 5.8°C over the next century. The initial effects of these changes are considered by experts to be already manifesting themselves.

4 **NATIONAL POLICY**

In the light of Ireland's commitment to reduce emissions from energy and in the context of increasing national demand for electricity, the Government has introduced a number of measures. These include the efficient use of electricity and the production of electricity from non-fossil renewable sources, in particular wind energy.

The "Climate Action Plan 2019" was published by the Government on 17 June 2019. The aim of the plan is to make Ireland a world leader in responding to climate change. The Plan is ambitious, affecting almost every sector of the economy. The key difference however, between this Plan and previous ones is that it creates new governance structures necessary to implement the far-reaching changes. The key focus of the Plan is to identify how the Government plans to reduce Ireland's growing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 was enacted on the 23rd July 2021. The Act sets out that Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade. The Act provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments and to become a leader in addressing climate change.

5 **SITE SELECTION AND EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVES**

The EIAR provides a description of the alternatives considered by The Applicant in the design of the Existing and Permitted Development and the Permitted Wind Farm. It considered the following:

- The 'Do Nothing Scenario'
- Alternative Locations
- Alternative Layouts
- Alternative Grid connection options
- Alternative processes for the Proposed Development
- Alternative scales for the proposed turbines

Alternatives were assessed having regard to commercial, construction, operational, technical, and key environmental constraints.

5.1 **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED FOR THE WIND FARM**

The following alternative site locations were examined:

- Option 1 – Glanbannoo Upper

- Option 2 – Garranes North
- Option 3 – Derreenacrinnig West

5.2 ALTERNATIVE GRID CONNECTION

The grid connection route was not considered in the 2010 EIS. The planning permission for the Grid Connection and its likely impacts are assessed in this EIAR. Three level options were explored as part of the Grid Connection Assessment. These options are presented in Figure 2.9 of the EIAR. Option 1 was considered to be the preferred route option as it posed the least environmental constraints and was a more cost-effective option than Option 2 and 3.

The range of alternatives can include a 'Do Nothing' alternative where appropriate. This examines likely land use changes or other interventions, the likely effects of climate change, and the significance of these changing conditions.

Not proceeding with the current proposal (i.e. the grid connection) would serve to significantly frustrate the completion of a fully permitted and partially constructed wind farm. This will undermine current Government targets under Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2019 and The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which places Ireland on legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of 2030.

Having regard to all the above, the 'Do Nothing' alternative was not considered to be appropriate. A rigorous grid connection route assessment was carried out as part of the EIA process.

6 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant is seeking planning permission for the removal of the partially built grid connection works for the erection of the full length, over a distance of approximately 14.8 km of a new grid connection between the Ballylicky ESB substation and Derreenacrinnig West Windfarm.

The proposed development involves the following works:

- (a) Removal of approximately 9.6 km of 20 kV overhead line (OHL) along the route, the OHL to be removed consists of 138 wood poles (ranging from 9m to 12.5m above ground) supporting electrical conductor lines and ancillary structures and equipment.
- (b) Following removal of the OHL, it is proposed to construct approximately 10.75 km of 20 kV overhead line (OHL) along the route, the OHL to be constructed consists of c. 157 wood poles

- (ranging from 9m to 12.5m above ground) supporting electrical conductor lines and ancillary structures and equipment.
- (c) installation of approximately 3.3 km of underground cable ducting and associated electrical cabling, and all other ancillary works including joint bays, culverts, marker posts and all associated developments.

The Development traverses the townlands of Derreenacrinnig West, Barnagowlane West, Glanareagh, Gortnacowly, Ards Beg, Ardrah, Laharanshermeen, Maulraha, Maulikeeve, Derryarkane, Cappanaboul, Skahanagh, Gortroe, Shandrum Beg, Shandrum More, Dromloughlin, Ballylicky, Crossoge, in Co. Cork ("the Development Site").

The Grid Connection between the consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm and the Ballylicky substation is required to connect the consented wind farm to the national grid. The Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm will have the capacity to generate up to 5.8 MW with 7 no turbines in the Enercon E44/E48 range. The energy generated will need to be transferred from the on-site substation to the national grid and therefore there is a requirement to develop the necessary c.14 km of Grid Connection to connect to the 110kV substation.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

7.1 POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

Chapter 4 of The EIA examines the potential population and human health impacts of the overall development which includes the partially built existing grid connection, the consented wind farm, the proposed grid connection and the cumulative impacts of both the grid connection and wind farm and all on-site infrastructure. Chapter 4 of the EIAR assessed Population and Settlement Patterns, Economic Activity and Tourism, Employment and landuse.

Reduced greenhouse gas emissions arising from the development and functioning of the windfarm, which the grid connection seeks to facilitate, can reasonably be understood to have positive impacts on the wider population and human health.

Given that no negative impacts have been identified, no mitigation measures are proposed.

Allowing for the implementation of embedded mitigation, no significant effects have been identified in respect of socio-economic receptors arising from the construction of the grid connection and therefore no mitigation measures are required to reduce or remedy any adverse effect.

In addition, there is predicted to be a positive affect on other areas related to human beings such as climate and agriculture as a result of the reduced emissions of greenhouse gases because of this project. As such no mitigation measures are considered necessary.

The cumulative effect of the Development i.e. the Wind Farm and Grid Connection and other Irish renewables generation is considered to be a fundamental change in the climate effects of Ireland's energy supply, which is an important, positive effect that is significant under the EIA regulations and will contribute to Ireland's legally binding reduction targets. The Development will continue to contribute to the offset of burning of fossil fuels which has the potential to positively impact human health.

7.2 BIODIVERSITY

Chapter 5 of the EIAR assess Biodiversity. The chapter was carried out by Doherty Environmental who was commissioned by Jennings O'Donovan to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment ("EcIA") for the EIA Development").

Legislation, Policy and Guidance

This biodiversity chapter has been undertaken with full account of legislation, policy and guidance relating to species and habitat protection, importance, and survey protocol.

Schedule of Works

Doherty Environmental Consultants Ltd. was commissioned in March 2017 to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment of the proposed Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm Grid Connection route. A desktop review of the proposed grid connection route was completed in early March 2017. Targeted habitat surveys were undertaken by Doherty Environmental Consultants Ltd on the 6th & 7th March 2017, May 2017, 19th, 22nd and 26th October 2018.

Additional surveys were completed along the proposed grid connection route for the current proposed route. These surveys were completed on 10th September 2021. The aim of these surveys was to confirm or otherwise the validity and applicability of the results from previous field surveys completed in 2017 and 2018.

Designated Nature Conservation Areas

Lands along the grid connection route and within and surrounding the consented Wind Farm are not subject to any nature conservation designations under national and European legislation. Table 5.2 of The EIAR lists all designated nature conservation areas occurring within a 15km radius of the grid connection route and the consented Wind Farm along with the approximate distances to each of these

designated conservation areas. These designated areas are illustrated on Figures 5.1 to 5.3 of the EIAR.

Table 7.1: Designated Nature Conservation Areas within 10km of the proposed site

Name and Site Code	Site Code	Designation Type	Distance from Site
Derryclogher Bog	004193	SAC & pNHA	750m to the south.
Glengarriff Harbour	004032	SAC & pNHA	6.1km to the west
Caha Mountains	000665	SAC & pNHA	10.9km to the southwest
Bandon River	002171	SAC	11.7km to the east
Conigar Bog	002324	NHA	10.1km to the west
Leahill Bog	000383	NHA	12.9km to the west
Slaheny River Bog	002417	NHA	12.9km to the north
Lough Namaddra & Lough West	001069	pNHA	9.1km to the northwest
Lough Nagarriva	001369	pNHA	9.8km to the northwest
Cusroe, Whiddy Island	000110	pNHA	6.5km to the southwest
Rosnashunsoge	001537	pNHA	8.1km to the west
Domestic Building near Glengarriff	002049	pNHA	6.4km to the west, northwest
Loughavaul	000098	pNHA	9.8km to the west
Gusroe Whiddy Island	000110	pNHA	6.5km to the southwest
Carriganass Castle	002099	pNHA	3.2km to the north
Bandon River Valley, South of Dunmanway	001035	pNHA	11.6km to the east
Lough Allua	001065	pNHA	14.9km to the north
Sheelane Island	001977	pNHA	11.4km to the west
Gougainebarra Lake	001057	pNHA	11.4km to the north
Currakeal	001826	pNHA	8.1km to the northwest
Ballagh Bog	001886	pNHA	11.1km to the north

Habitats Directive Assessment

The proposed grid connection corridor is not on, in or near any European site. A Screening Assessment of the proposed development, incorporating the electricity cable grid connection and the consented Wind Farm was carried out for the European Sites occurring within its zone of influence. It was concluded that the proposed development will not have the potential to result in likely

significant effects to European Sites occurring within the wider zone of influence of the development. A copy of that Screening Report is provided at Appendix G of The EIAR. As such, an Appropriate Assessment was not required for the development.

Rare & Protected Fauna

The spans the eight tetrads (i.e. 2km x 2km grid squares) W15A, W15B, W05W, W05R, W05S, W05L, W05G, W05B. A review of protected and rare species records for each of these tetrads held by Biodiversity Ireland (www.biodiversityireland.ie accessed on the 15th October 2021) was undertaken.

The protected, rare and/or sensitive species recorded within the eight tetrads surrounding the proposed grid connection route and wind farm are outlined in *Table 5.2 of the EIAR*. As virtually all birds are protected in Ireland, only records for wetland or raptor species are detailed in *Table 5.2*. A comment on the likelihood of each of these species occurring along the grid connection route and at or in the vicinity of the wind farm is provided in *Table 5.2*. This commentary is based upon the habitat occurring within the vicinity of the development and its suitability for supporting the species listed in *Table 5.2*.

Habitats Along The Grid Connection Route

The Grid Connection traverses a number of habitats along its route which are produced in Chapter 5 of the EIAR. These include:

- Eroding Upland Watercourses (FW1)
- Drainage Ditches (FW4)
- Wet Willow Woodland (WN6)
- Coniferous Plantation (WD4)
- Recently Felled Woodland (WS5)
- Improved agricultural grassland (GA1)
- Amenity Grassland (GA2)
- Humid Acid Grassland (GS3)
- Wet Grassland (GS4)
- Wet Heath (HH1)
- Dry Heath (HH3)
- Dense Bracken (HD1)
- Buildings & Artificial Surface (BL3)

7.2.1 Fauna along the Grid Connection Route

Non-volant Mammals

There are records of otters occurring along the Mealagh River to the east of the route corridor near Ballylicky and also in the vicinity of Ards Beg. This species forages widely throughout the Mealagh and Owvane river catchments.

Bats

The lesser horseshoe bat, an Annex II species has been recorded in the vicinity of the route corridor. Records for four other bat species (all Annex IV species) have also been identified. All bat records are associated with the lands at the eastern end of the route corridor.

Annex 1 /Sensitive Bird Species.

Birds

Surveys for the presence of hen harrier were completed in 2015 for the national Hen Harrier census survey, within the 10km square hectad W15 in which the wind farm site and the eastern section of the route corridor occurs. There are no recent records of curlew or golden plover breeding in the two hectads W05 and W15. Winter records of curlew are restricted to the coastal areas in the vicinity of Ballylicky. There are no winter records for golden plover within the two hectads W05 and W15.

There are no records noted in the 2007 – 2011 Bird Atlas of whooper swan, Greenland white-fronted geese, brent geese, greylag geese or other large wild fowl for the two hectads W05 and W15 through which the route passes.

Overall, the lands occurring within the route corridor range from local (low value) to national ecological value. Habitats of national ecological value include the Mealagh River. Habitats of County Importance include the wet heath habitat, particularly the examples at Laharanshermeen, Cappanaboul and Ards Beg, the dry heath along the ridge line of Derreenacrinnig West and the wet willow woodland. The humid acid grassland is considered to be of local (higher) value while other habitats such as gorse scrub, conifer plantation, recently felled woodland improved agricultural grassland, amenity grassland and built land are of local (lower) value.

Impact of The Removal of The Existing Overhead Line & Pole Sets

The Biodiversity Chapter concluded that there will be no impacts to any designated conservation areas as a result of the removal of the overhead line and polesets. No such sites occur within close proximity to the existing cable line and polesets and due to the distance of the line and pole locations from these sites it is highly unlikely that the removal operations will have the potential to result in likely significant effects to these areas.

7.3 CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACTS OF THE GRID CONNECTION OVERHEAD LINE

7.3.1 Designated Conservation Areas

There will be no impacts to any designated conservation areas as a result of the construction of the overhead line and the installation of the poles. No such sites occur within close proximity to the cable route and the pole locations and due to the distance of the route and pole locations from these sites it is highly unlikely that the construction operations associated with the pole installation and stringing of the electrical cable will have the potential to result in likely significant effects to these areas.

7.3.2 Habitats

The erection of poles will be required along the proposed overhead line. The footprint of the poles will result in a permanent land take along the route corridor. The working area required at the base of each pole will also result in temporary disturbance to habitats.

7.3.3 Watercourses

All watercourses will be oversailed by the overhead line and no poles will be placed within 25m of any watercourse transected by the route. This approach will minimise the potential for negative impacts to watercourses and with its implementation no significant effects to watercourses are predicted.

7.4 CONSTRUCTION PHASE IMPACT OF THE GRID CONNECTION UNDERGROUND LINE

There will be no impacts to any designated conservation areas as a result of the construction of the underground line and the installation of the electrical cables. No conservation areas occur within close proximity to the underground cable route locations and due to the distance of the route from these sites it is highly unlikely that the construction operations associated with the pole installation and stringing of the electrical cable will have the potential to result in likely significant effects to these areas.

Six sections of underground line, amounting to approximately 3.4km are required for the grid connection route. The underground route will result in temporary disturbance to improved agricultural grassland and road verges. In addition, discrete sections of six hedgerows will be temporarily disturbed during the excavation of trenches to accommodate the underground trench.

The underground line will result in the temporary disturbance to discrete areas of six hedgerows during the construction phase. The overall extent of hedgerow habitat loss will be negligible and is

not predicted to have the potential to result in significant effects to the status of the local breeding bird population.

7.5 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF THE GRID CONNECTION ROUTE AND THE WIND FARM SITE

The removal of the existing polesets represents a small scale land use activity that will not have the potential to combine with the works associated with the proposed grid connection route and the wind farm to result in significant adverse impacts to habitats and fauna occurring along the proposed grid connection route.

The grid connection route and the Wind Farm will not have the potential to combine to result in adverse effects to designated conservation areas. No such areas are located in close proximity to or downstream of both elements of the project and due to the distance between the development and these areas and the absence of potential impact pathways there will be no potential for both elements to combine to result in likely significant effects to these areas.

The wind farm and the pole locations of the overhead grid line will result in a cumulative loss of peatland habitats in the form of wet heath in the entire study area. However, the additional loss of this habitat arising from the grid connection route will be negligible, amounting to approximately 66m² of temporary disturbance and 9.9m² of permanent loss. This additional disturbance and loss of habitat will have an imperceptible cumulative effect on the effect the consent wind farm will have on wet heath habitat occurring at the wind farm site.

The construction phase of the wind farm and the grid connection route will not overlap and will not have the potential to combine to result in likely significant effects to the status of watercourse occurring downstream of both elements of the project.

The operation phase of the grid connection and the wind farm will not have the potential to combine to result in likely significant cumulative effects to mammals or other fauna species occurring at or in the vicinity of both elements of the development.

While the results of the review of baseline data and field surveys indicates that the Mealagh River valley at the crossing point of the proposed overhead line is not likely to function as an established commuting route by swans and other vulnerable bird species, it is possible that this river valley will be occasionally used by such species. Haas et al (2005) described general principles for protecting birds from collision with overhead lines, including routing of overhead lines as low as possible, for example behind buildings or rows of trees and attaching clearly visible markers on the overhead lines posing a high collision risk. The overhead line does not represent a high collision risk to birds and has been designed

to following existing hedgerow boundaries as it crosses the Meelagh Valley. As an additional precautionary measure the section of the overhead line crossing the valley between polesets 101 and 109 will be fitted with clearly visible markers. This will further reduce the low collision risk posed by the overhead line to birds.

7.6 SOILS AND GEOLOGY

Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Ltd. ("JOD"), have assessed the potential impacts of the proposed EIA Development on the soil and geological environment of the Proposed Development Site. Chapter 6 of the EIAR sets out the potential impacts of the proposed EIA Development on the soil and geological environment of the Proposed Development Site.

The vegetation and land use of the grid connection route is almost as varied as the topography but is predominantly agricultural land and public roadway. Principle habitats in the area consist of a mosaic of wet heath/blanket bog, wet grassland and conifer plantations. Land use in the surrounding area is a mix of agriculture (mainly sheep and cattle grazing) and conifer plantation forestry.

The published bedrock geology mapping for the area is illustrated in Figure 6.1 – Mapped Bedrock Geology. The majority of the wind farm area including the start of the grid connection (overhead line) is underlain by the Gun Point Formation of the Old Red Sandstone Magnafacies. This formation is dominated by green-grey sandstones and purple siltstones. During the site visit, this formation was observed to be well folded and generally steeply dipping across the site. The bedrock troughs created by differential erosion in the Gun Point Formation sandstone at Derreenacrinnig West function as basins for the accumulation of peat. As the overhead line continues northwards, it crosses Toe Head Formation which is dominated by cross-bedded sandstones and purple siltstones with some mudstones.

It then crosses Old Head Sandstone Formation comprising Flaser-bedded sandstone and minor mudstone.

The overhead line crosses into Ardaturrish Member which is black mudstone and silt-lensed mudstone. It changes to underground cable and then proceeds into Toe Head Formation and transitions back to overhead line before crossing into Castlehaven Formation which is dominated by purple mudstone and siltstone.

A short section of underground cable will be constructed within Toe Head Formation just north of the Castlehaven Formation. The overhead line will then continue north-westwards across the Toe Head Formation, then into Old Head Sandstone Formation and then into Ardaturrish Member where it will change direction to go south-westwards through the Ardaturrish Member and crosses Old

Head Formation before coming back into Ardaturrish Member. It then crosses Reenagough Member which has massive and flaser-bedded sandstone before entering Reenydongan Formation which is characterised by calcareous mudstone and thin limestone. While crossing this formation, the grid connection will go from overhead line to underground cable. It then crosses into Ardnamanagh Member (dark grey laminated limestone) before turning north-westwards back into Reenydongan Formation where it will transition back to overhead line. It will then cross into Ardnamanagh Member initially as overhead line, then underground cable, then overhead line and then underground cable to Ballylickey Sub-station.

7.6.1 Potential Impacts of the Development

The removal of peat or mineral subsoil or rock is a direct, permanent impact on the soils and geology aspect of the environment. The removal of bedrock for trench/joint bay construction or for poling is a direct, permanent and potentially significant negative impact for this development. Table 6.6 of the EIAR presents a summary of the soil impacts in terms of volumes of excavation.

The quantities are based on the typical trench details shown on Drawing 4636-P-GCR-200-1 with a trench width of 325mm and a depth of 925mm. However, to account for local areas of over excavation, a depth of 950mm is assumed.

For joint bays, the required plan area is 2.5m x 1.63m and an average depth of 1.6m is assumed to include the floor. However, for working space, a width of 1.815 is assumed.

For pole construction, it is assumed that a hole c.2.2m deep, 2m long and 0.6m wide is excavated. This is a worst case scenario as it may be possible to push some poles into the ground after 1m of excavation. However, much of the excavated material is backfilled into the hole. Assuming an average diameter per pole of 0.21m and that each pole is 2.3m into the ground, then the volume of displaced soil or rock will be 0.08m³ per pole.

Some 26.6, say 30m³ of peat will be excavated all of which will be re-used for reinstatement of pole holes on trenching.

Some 241.4, say 250m³ of topsoil will be excavated all of which will be re-used for reinstatement of pole holes or trenching.

Approximately 1,049, say 1,100m³ of soil/subsoil will be excavated – however much of it can be reused for reinstatement/backfilling of pole holes or trenching with c.487m³ to be disposed of to a licenced facility. However, some material could be used should there be shortfall in nearby filling holes where the existing grid connection is to be removed.

Approximately 58.5m³ of road surfacing will be excavated. This will be handled separately and disposed of separately to licenced facility.

Some 77.5m³ of rock will be excavated, of the 25.7m³ excavated within the wind farm site, some 24.8m³ can be re-used in trench backfilling/reinstatement with the balance (c10m³) used in the construction of wind farm roads/hardstands. Surplus rock excavated elsewhere (estimated at 2m³) can be disposed of to a licenced facility.

7.6.2 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects from the EIA Development and other developments in the area will only occur during the construction and decommissioning phases of the Development as grid connections wind farms do not have an effect on soils and geology during operation.

While much of the earthworks for site roads and some hardstands have been carried out for the windfarm, there remains the excavation for foundations as well as the completion of hardstands. Site trenching and cabling is required as well as the excavation of the foundations for the sub-station building. These works are likely to be undertaken concurrent or in advance of the construction of the grid connection.

Provided the mitigation measures in the EIAR for the wind farm are implemented by the wind farm developer, no significant impacts on land, soils and geology are anticipated during the construction or operation phases of the grid connection.

7.7 WATER

Chapter 7 of the EIAR out the potential impacts of the proposed EIA Development on hydrological environment of the Proposed Development Site. A walkover survey was undertaken by staff from JOD staff in August 2021. The survey involved drainage mapping of the route and the surrounding area whereby water flow directions and drainage patterns were recorded.

The sensitivity of the water environment receptors was assessed on completion of the desk study and walkover survey. Levels of sensitivity which are defined in Table 7.1 of The EIAR were used to provide a sensitivity rating for the receptors in close proximity or hydrologically linked to the site.

The proposed grid route passes through three separate water catchments, the Ilen River Catchment to the south-east of the alignment; the Mealagh River Catchment along the majority of the alignment and the Owvane River Catchment to the west of the alignment. These are illustrated in Figure 7.2 of the EIAR. Eroding upland watercourses intersect the route corridor at various locations along the route. The route crosses the Mealagh River at one location in the townland of Ards Beg towards the

east of the route corridor. Aside from this, only minor watercourses are crossed by the route corridor. As is evident from Figure 7.2, the majority of crossings are via overhead line while there is one crossing of a tributary of the Mealah River within a bridge structure.

Numerous drainage ditches occur within the route corridor study area. The ditches occurring within the site are either bare, having been cut to bedrock level below the overlying peat deposit or have become colonised by a range of grasses and rushes.

The CEMP and CMS prepared as part of the EIAR sets out a number of construction drainage design measures to control of the release of suspended solids and sediments during excavation. There will be no significant negative impacts on ground or surface waters arising from the construction of the wood poles associated with the grid connection. The grid connection would have no known impacts on water. There would not be any known significant cumulative effect on water with the windfarm development itself and the proposed grid connection.

7.8 AIR AND CLIMATE

Chapter 8 of the EIAR assess the potential impacts on air and climate from the proposed development.

Air quality issues associated with wind farms generally relate to dust and vehicle exhaust emissions during construction and decommissioning. A wind farm has little potential for impact on air quality when operational, the main potential effect is generally dust emissions from access tracks being the main factor. The potential for impacts therefore comes during the construction and decommissioning phases and the significance of the impact is influenced by its proximity to any sensitive receivers.

In terms of climate, the main potential effects are positive, in terms of reduced CO₂ emissions during the operational phase.

The potential impacts arising from the Grid Connection works arise from the construction phase of the project. There is potential for the generation of dust from excavations and from construction of access tracks and hardstands and the trench for the cable ducting for the grid connection. The construction phase is likely to lead to small, localised increases in these emission levels which is likely to lead to a temporary imperceptible effect.

The proposed development of the wind farm and grid connection has the potential to cause negative effects in combination with other plans and projects during the construction phase should they be constructed at the same time. Increased amounts of dust could become friable and increased traffic

could lead to increased emissions in the local area. However, given the short-term nature of the proposals any effects would be minor in nature.

In terms of climate the overall impacts of the grid connection will be positive as it is part of an overall project to provide renewable energy which will reduce CO₂ emissions in the energy industry. There will be no net carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from operation of the Development. Emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), sulphur dioxide (SO₂) or dust emissions during the operational phase of the Development will be minimal, relating to the use of operation and maintenance vehicles onsite, and therefore there will be no measurable negative cumulative effect with other developments on climate.

7.9 NOISE

Planning permission was originally granted for development for a seven-turbine wind farm at Derreenacrinnig West, Drimoleague, Co. Cork. The 2010 EIS submitted as part of that application assessed the existing background noise levels at some of the dwelling locations closest to the proposed turbines. The potential impact on residential amenity at these Noise Sensitive Locations (NSLs) were assessed by comparing predicted noise levels from the wind turbines at the NSLs with existing background noise levels and extrapolated noise limits as recommended by the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006¹. The background noise levels being the noise level equalled or exceeded for 90% of the monitoring interval.

The low frequency noise and vibration from the proposed wind farm operation is predicted to have a negligible impact on residents and on local properties.

The proposed development works have been assessed using a desktop assessment on the possible noise issues which could arise as a result of the proposed underground cable grid connection works. The proposed grid connection works have the potential to generate noise impacts in the surrounding area during the construction phase. There will be no noise impacts generally during the operational phase due to the nature of the proposed development. There could however be noise impacts if any maintenance is required on the cable and this impact would be of a similar nature to that of construction. Therefore, this assessment will primarily focus on the construction phase.

The low frequency noise and vibration from the proposed wind farm operation is predicted to have a negligible impact on residents and on local properties.

¹. The Department of Environment, Heritage and local Government has recently published 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines'- Guidelines for Planning Authorities June 2006

With implementation of the mitigation measures outlined above (and additional mitigation as needed) it is unlikely that the proposed Grid Connection will have any significant effects in terms of noise and vibration.

7.10 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT

Chapter 10 of the EIAR sets out the potential Landscape and Visuals impact from the Grid Connection and the potential cumulative impact of the proposed development with the already consented wind farm project including all associated infrastructure. As well as this, the in-combination impacts of the project with other projects will also be assessed. The Landscape and Visual Impacts of the consented wind farm was already assessed in the 2010 EIS.

The Landscape and Visual Impacts of the operational wind farm were already assessed in the 2010 EIS. Chapter 11 of the original EIS assessed the Landscape and Visual Impacts of the wind farm and described the landscape context assessed the likely landscape and visual impacts of the wind farm on the receiving environment.

The emphasis in this chapter is on the likely significant effects of the underground connection. It covers the assessment methodology, a description of the subject development and the existing landscape as well as landscape policy and relevant guidance. It includes a description of Cork County Council's landscape policy and the landscape in which the subject development site is located.

The landscape in this area is described in terms of its existing character, which includes a description of landform, landcover, and landscape sensitivity to change. The potential effects on both landscape and visual receptors is then assessed.

As part of this assessment, an initial desk study was undertaken which identified relevant policies and guidelines. This includes policies on landscape character, designated landscapes, and protected views. The site and study area are described in terms of the landscape character assessment and landscape designations contained in the Cork County Development Plan. In addition, a field visit was undertaken to assess the landscape character and elements both on the site itself and in the wider landscape.

Due to the nature of the development, the grid connection will not have a material visual impact on the existing landscape. The grid connection is comprised of elements of both OHL and underground elements of grid connection. Therefore, it is not necessary to use the full suite of traditional LVIA tools such as ZTV maps and photomontages to assess the potential visibility.

The nature and scale of the grid connection works proposed is such that it can be accommodated in a landscape where there are existing overhead electricity lines, housing and forestry. This landscape is a working landscape capable of accommodating change.

The grid route from the wind farm is located for approximately 300m in the Broad Marginal Middleground and Lowland Basin Landscape Character Type (LCT) area, it then travels north for approximately 5.7km in the Ridged and Peaked Upland LCT and then turns east for approximately 7.1km within the Rugged Ridge Peninsulas LCT. Approximately 7km of the western section of the route from Ardrah to Ballylicky is within an area of 'High Value Landscape. The existing Ballylicky Substation is approximately 680m East of the S111 scenic route along the N71 from Glengariff to Ballylicky and on to Bantry Bay. The nature and scale of the grid connection works proposed is such that it can be accommodated in a landscape where there are existing overhead electricity lines, housing and forestry. This landscape is a working landscape capable of accommodating change.

The vegetation and land use of the study area is almost as varied as the topography but is predominantly agricultural and public roadway along the Grid Connection route. These areas tend to consist of a combination of plantation forestry, marginal farmland and peatland. There is a small section of overhead line located within the townland of Shundrum is in an Area of High Landscape Value.

Part of the Grid Connection route is located within a Type 4 landscape designation 'Rugged Ridge Peninsulas' located within the carriageway of the existing road network thus having an imperceptible impact on the landscape. The wind farm site itself is located within an area which is considered to be acceptable in principle in the County Wind Energy Strategy.

The cumulative effect assessment includes the subject development in addition to the Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm and its associated infrastructure. Aside from the likelihood that there will be some very minor in-combination effects during the construction stages of both projects due to there being a cross-over of construction time periods, there are no other material cumulative effects. Notwithstanding the landscape and visual impacts of the wind farm, which were assessed in the 2010 LVIA the operational stage landscape and visual effects of the cable route are negligible. Thus, the cumulative effect is also considered to be Negligible.

7.11 MATERIAL ASSETS INCLUDING TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Chapter 11 of the EIAR describes the potential impacts the proposed Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm and Grid Connection could have on physical material assets, including the following:

- Agriculture
- Natural Resources of Economic Value

- Road Network
- ESB Network
- Borrow Pit
- Forestry
- Telecommunications
- Air Traffic

For each topic a description of the existing environment is provided along with an analysis of what impact, if any, could be predicted and the mitigation measures that can be implemented to reduce or remove the impact.

The proposed Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm will be connected to a 38kV substation. There is a substantial distribution network in the area. The Derreenacrinnig West substation will be linked to this distribution network, to an existing 38kV substation at Ballylicky Substation located approximately 13.920 km to the north west of the consented Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm.

As set out in **Section 2- Project Description**, the grid connection route will be designed by ESB to ESB specifications. Within the site, all on site cabling will be underground so no impact is predicted within the landholding boundary.

There is a substantial distribution network in the area, and it is likely that the Derreenacrinnig West substation will be connected to this. Thus, it is considered that this proposed development will not create an unacceptable additional impact.

The project will indirectly, and in the long term, improve the standard of living in the region by virtue of providing a power supply platform on which to develop industrial sectors.

With regard to the grid connection, the ground will be reinstated to its original form and there will be no significant impacts on material assets arising from the functioning of the grid connection. There will be no significant cumulative effects on material assets with the windfarm development and the grid connection.

No significant negative affects are predicted in terms of agriculture, natural resources, forestry infrastructure or air traffic. In general, these elements of the environment will be unaffected or will experience minor negative or positive affects.

7.12 ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Chapter 12 of the EIAR assess the potential impacts of the proposed EIA Development on the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage environment of the study area.

While there are 44 recorded archaeological sites (mainly comprising hut sites, standing stones and enclosures) within 1.5km of the boundaries of the wind farm holding, there are no recorded archaeological sites within the land-holding or development boundary. The nearest recorded monument to the wind farm is that of a hut site which is located within Derreenacrinnig West townland, c.70m to the west of the land-holding boundary.

As there are no recorded archaeological monuments within the boundaries of the wind farm site, and as no archaeological remains were revealed during the monitoring of the first phase of construction works, development works to date at the Derreenacrinnig Wind Farm site have had no impact on the archaeological resource of the area. Furthermore, it can be considered that there is low potential for the uncovering of archaeological remains during future phases of work at the development site.

With the exception of the above potential archaeological impacts, there will be no adverse impacts on any specific site of cultural heritage significance. Therefore, recommendations in relation to specific cultural heritage sites are deemed unnecessary.

Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm Site

The works completed to date at the Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm development site have resulted in no impact on the archaeological resource of the area.

The Removal of The Existing Constructed Overhead Line

It is noted that the "as constructed" sections of the OHL were not monitored by an archaeologist. Generally, however, the footprints and associated ground disturbances of the poles and stay supports are quite small (usually less than 1m² each). Given that the site walkover/desktop assessment considered that such locations, outside the zone of notification (ZON) of recorded monuments, were of low archaeological potential, it is unlikely that any artefacts, features or deposits of an archaeological nature were disturbed during construction works.

Proposed Overhead Line

There will be no direct, negative impacts on any recorded archaeological monument or ZON of any monument in its vicinity, due to the construction of the remaining section of the OHL. However, the lack of any shielding elements, such as hedgerows or trees, between the proposed OHL route and the site of the stone circle – multiple-stone and boulder-burial in Cappanaboul townland, means there

will be a very slight visual impact on the setting of both monuments due to the construction of the OHC in this area.

Proposed Underground Line

There is no predicted direct, negative impact on the known archaeological resource due to the construction of the underground cable portion of the grid connection route. While the route does pass through the ZON of two recorded monuments in Shandrum Beg townland and radial stone cairn the nature of the topography in the area, combined with the construction of the road that will carry the cable, substantially reduces the archaeological potential of this section of the route.

Cumulative Impacts

Section 12.8 of The EIAR sets the conclusions on cumulative impacts of both the wind farm and grid connection. The assessment of the combined wind farm development and grid route connection has identified number of slight visual impacts on archaeological monuments while no direct impacts have been identified.

7.13 INTERACTIONS OF THE FOREGOING

Because no significant negative impacts have been predicted in the above studies no negative impact caused by the interaction of any or all of these topics are likely to occur. The proposed Grid Connection works are unlikely to have significant environmental effects for those topics outlined above. Additionally, it is unlikely to significant cumulative or in-combination effects when assessed together with other plans and projects in the vicinity, especially the already consented Derreenacreenig West Wind Farm project. Furthermore, it is considered that, given the assessed effects, the conclusions reached in the Derreenacrinnig West Wind Farm EIS [November 2010] would not change as a result of the proposed Grid Connection works detailed in this EIA Report.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The proposed project aims to generate approximately 18,243MWh of electricity per year operating at 35% efficiency. This would be enough to supply up to 3,868 households. This is the equivalent energy production from 38,184 barrels of oil each year.

By displacing fossil fuel generation, Dereenacrinnig West Wind Farm would avoid the following annual discharges to the atmosphere:

- 16,065 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂)
- 292 tonnes of Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂)
- 33 tonnes of Nitrous Oxide (NO_x)
- 1,041 tonnes of ash

The global warming potential of 1 tonne of NO_x is equivalent to 310 tonnes of CO₂. As such this proposed wind farm will achieve the removal of approximately 26,295 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

9 CONCLUSION

This project will supply electricity to the south west region in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. In general, the development will have no major negative effect on the human, built or natural environment.

No significant negative impacts on the environment are predicted.

A positive impact is predicted for air quality and climate as well as employment.

It is therefore considered that there are no environmental issues that should stop this project from proceeding.

The development accords with both National and Local Plan Policy. In particular, the project if completed will help meet the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2019, where there is a pressing need to meet renewable energy targets.

The Application accords with the provisions of The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 where Ireland is now on a legally binding path to net-Zero emissions no later than 2050, and to a 51% reduction in emissions by the end of this decade. The Act provides the framework for Ireland to meet its international and EU climate commitments and to become a leader in addressing climate change.