

SSE Tarbert Next Generation Power Station

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
Volume I
Chapter 02 Planning Policy

SSE Generation Ireland Limited

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Table of Contents

2.	Planning Policy	2-1
2.1	Introduction	2-1
2.2	European Energy Policy	2-1
2.3	National Policy	2-3
2.4	Regional Planning Policy	2-10
2.5	Local Planning Policy	2-11
2.6	References	2-14

2. Planning Policy

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) provides an overview of EU, national, regional and local planning policy that is relevant to the Proposed Development. Before addressing the relevant planning policy, it provides, by way of context, an overview of relevant European and national energy policy, guidance and legislation. For a detailed consideration and assessment of the Proposed Development against applicable planning policy, please refer to the Planning Statement (PS, 2023) produced by Gravis Planning which accompanies the Planning application.

2.2 European Energy Policy

2.2.1 Energy Roadmap 2050

The Energy Roadmap 2050 was published by the European Commission in 2011 and explores the transition of Europe's energy systems so that they are compatible with the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets set out in the Renewable Energy Directive (2009/28/EC) [Which has since been replaced by Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources (Referred to as 'recast' or 'REDII') – refer to Section 2.2.4 below – and, more recently, by 'REDIII', a series of further amendments to the Directive, adopted by the EU Council on 9th October 2023 but yet to be transposed into Irish law], while also increasing competitiveness and security of supply.

The Energy Roadmap 2050 has informed national energy policy in the years since its publication, including Ireland's Climate Action Plans, by providing a detailed analysis of the issues involved in transitioning to more sustainable, decarbonised energy systems and carrying out modelling of different approaches. This generated a series of policy options/ scenarios which assist political decision making by showing different decarbonisation pathways as well as their main economic, social, and environmental impacts.

2.2.2 European Parliament Resolution of 14 March 2013 on the Energy Roadmap 2050, a future with energy (2012/2103(INI)) (2016/C 036/11)

The European Parliament made the 'Resolution on the Energy Roadmap 2050' in March 2013, and it made a number of important points regarding the positive impact that the Energy Roadmap 2050 could have.

The main points of the Resolution as they relate to the Proposed Development include that:

- The Resolution endorses the Energy Roadmap 2050 as a basis for proposing legislative and other initiatives on energy policy, including milestones and targets on greenhouse gas emissions and renewable energy.
- It acknowledges that electricity from low carbon sources is indispensable for decarbonisation.

- The transition to a low-carbon and energy efficient economy is an opportunity not only for sustainability but also for security of supply.
- It stresses that for many renewable energy resources, it is impossible to guarantee a stable energy supply under current technological conditions, which requires that conventional energy sources need to be maintained on stand-by.
- It states that the Commission should support the move to third generation biofuels based on food crop waste products.
- It sets out the belief that all types of low-carbon technology will be needed to achieve the ambitious goal of decarbonising the EU's energy system in general and the electricity sector in particular.

2.2.3 2030 Climate and Energy Framework

The EU's '2030 Climate and Energy Framework'¹ sets a legally binding target for EU member states of achieving at least 32% of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030.

The Framework includes EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period from 2021 to 2030. Some of the key targets for 2030 under the Framework include:

- At least 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels)²;
- At least 32% share for renewable energy; and
- At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.

2.2.4 Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable resources ('recast')

Directive 2018/2001 entered into force in 2018 and has been legally binding since 2021. It sets an overall European renewable energy target and includes rules to ensure the uptake of renewables in the transport sector and in heating and cooling.

The Directive sets common principles and rules for renewable energy support schemes, sustainability criteria for biomass and the right to produce and consume renewable energy. The Directive (also referred to as 'RED II') provides specific sustainability criteria and detail on the carbon intensity of individual biofuels, including HVO. This includes assessment of the feedstocks used and the emissions from its production, processing, and supply.

The target for renewable energy in the EU has been increased with the adoption of Renewable Energy Directive III ('REDIII') in October 2023, with an overall EU renewable energy target of 42.5% in order to accelerate the phase-out of the Union's dependence on Russian fossil fuels by increasing the availability of affordable, secure and sustainable energy in the Union. Beyond that mandatory level, Member States should endeavour to collectively achieve an overall Union renewable energy target of 45 % in line with the REPowerEU Plan (details below).

¹ European commission Information Page: [2030 climate & energy framework \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/en/press-articles/2023/10/14/Pages/2030-climate-and-energy-framework-(europa.eu).aspx)

² As part of the European Green Deal the Commission has aims to increase this to at least 55% compared to 1990 levels, with legislative proposals for same adopted in 2021.

2.2.5 REPowerEU Plan (2022)

The EU Commission published the REPowerEU Plan in May 2022 to introduce measures that would rapidly reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels well before 2030 by accelerating the clean energy transition.

The REPowerEU Plan is based on three pillars:

- Saving energy.
- Producing clean energy; and
- Diversifying the EU's energy supplies

The Commission has proposed to increase the target for renewable energy sources in the Directive to 45% by 2030. In March 2023, the European Council and Parliament provisionally agreed to raise the binding renewable energy target to at least 42.5% by 2030. This means almost doubling the existing share of renewable energy in the EU.

The Proposed Development complies with European Policy objectives. It will contribute to greenhouse gas reduction targets, facilitate the integration of more renewable generation into the electricity network, and help to maintain security of supply while supporting Ireland in its transition to a low carbon economy.

2.3 National Policy

2.3.1 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

The *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* (GOI, 2015) (the 2015 Act) established the national goal to move to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. The National Mitigation Plan and the National Adaptation Framework were first established under the 2015 Act. A more ambitious target has now been committed to in law through the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* (the 2021 Act). The 2021 Act amends the 2015 Act in order to strengthen the governance framework on climate action by the State through the introduction of a legally binding interim target of 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 relative to a baseline of 2018. The 2021 Act establishes a target to achieve a carbon neutral economy by no later than the end of the year 2050 and introduces a system of successive five-year carbon budgets starting in 2021.

2.3.2 Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) was published in December 2022. CAP 2023 sets out a 'roadmap' to achieve a carbon neutral energy system by 2050. It commits Ireland to aim for up to 80% of its electricity supply to be generated from renewables by 2030, with no generation from peat or coal.

To achieve Ireland's targets under the Plan, a detailed sectoral roadmap setting out a range of measures and actions for each sector of the economy is included. For the electricity sector, the need for additional flexible dispatchable generation capacity is clear. CAP23 states that '*rapid delivery of flexible gas*

generation is needed at scale and in a timeframe to replace emissions from coal and oil generation before the second budget period' (i.e., 2026-2030)³.

Key measures identified for the energy sector under CAP23 include the need to “*deliver and accelerate a flexible system to support renewables*” and, in particular, that “*The CRU and EirGrid will ensure an adequate level of conventional dispatchable generation capacity*”⁴.

2.3.3 White Paper - Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030

The Government's Energy White Paper entitled ‘*Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030*’, set out the framework to guide Ireland's energy policy development over the period 2015-2030. The framework takes account of European and International climate change objectives.

The ‘*Energy Vision 2050*’ established in the White Paper describes a ‘radical transformation’ of Ireland's energy system, which is hoped will result in GHG emissions from the energy sector reducing by between 80% and 95%, compared to 1990 levels. This means that energy supply during the national transition to a renewable energy system will need to move away from carbon-intensive fuels such as peat and coal in favour of lower carbon fuels.

The White Paper notes that:

*“No single renewable energy technology - existing or emerging - will alone enable Ireland to overcome the low carbon challenge. Rather, a diverse range of technologies will be required along the supply chains for electricity, heat and transport”*⁵.

*“Onshore wind continues to be the main contributor (18.2% of total generation and 81% of RES-E in 2014). It is a proven technology and Ireland's abundant wind resource means that a wind generator in Ireland generates more electricity than similar installations in other countries. This results in a lower cost of support”*⁶.

“Several forms of RES-E, such as wind, solar and ocean energy are reliant on weather conditions and have an inherent variability. They cannot be dispatched in the same way as traditional generators, and this presents challenges for the electricity system”⁷ (emphasis added).

*“Due to the variability of wind conditions, wind generation poses challenges to the operation of electricity grids. In Ireland, these challenges are being addressed by the electricity system operators under their DS3 programme”*⁸.

The DS3 programme's stated aim is to “*meet the challenges of operating the electricity system in a secure manner while achieving the 2020 renewable electricity targets*”⁹. The Proposed Development

³ CAP23, Page 132

⁴ CAP23, Page 139

⁵ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DECC). (2015). *The White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030*. (Para 103, Page 48)

⁶ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DECC). (2015). *The White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030*. (Para 128, Page 53)

⁷ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DECC). (2015). *The White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030*. (Page 54)

⁸ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DECC). (2015). *The White Paper: Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030*. (Para 128, Page 53)

⁹ <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/DS3-Programme-Brochure.pdf> (Page 2)

will provide quick response capabilities to EirGrid in keeping with the DS3 Programme ('Delivering a Secure, Sustainable Electricity System'). It will help to ensure that the grid network can continue to operate efficiently with the integration of variable renewable energy sources.

2.3.4 National Planning Framework 2018-2040 - Project Ireland 2040

'Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF)' is a 20-year planning framework designed to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for Irish citizens, and to protect and enhance Ireland's built and natural environment.

The NPF notes that the population of Ireland is projected to increase by approximately 1 million people by 2040, which results in a population of roughly 5.7 million. This growth will place increased demands on both the built and natural environment as well as the social and economic fabric of the country, not least in terms of energy supply. In order to strengthen and facilitate more environmentally focused planning at the local level, the NPF states that future planning and development will need to:

*"Tackle Ireland's higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country's prodigious renewable energy potential"*¹⁰.

The NPF notes that Ireland's National Energy Policy is focused on three pillars:

- Sustainability.
- Security of Supply; and
- Competitiveness.

In line with these pillars, the NPF requires a secure and reliable electricity supply to be achieved, which is necessary for the realisation of almost all of its National Strategic Outcomes. National Strategic Outcome 8 (Transition to Sustainable Energy) notes that, in creating Ireland's future energy landscape, new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary to enable more distributed energy generation which connects established and emerging energy sources to the major sources of demand. To facilitate this, the NPF acknowledges the need to:

*"Reinforce the distribution and transmission network to facilitate planned growth and distribution of a more renewables focused source of energy across the major demand centres."*¹¹

Some other key National Policy Objectives aimed at achieving the transition to sustainable energy include:

- **National Policy Objective 52:** *The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.*

¹⁰ Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework, DHPLG, February 2018

¹¹ Government of Ireland, (2018). National Planning Framework. Project Ireland 2040 (Page 147).

- **National Policy Objective 54:** *Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction; and*
- **National Policy Objective 55:** *Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.*

The Proposed Development complements the national policy objectives around the creation of a lower carbon and more distributed energy generation system.

2.3.5 National Development Plan 2021 - 2030

The *National Development Plan 2021-2023* (NDP) was introduced alongside the NPF and sets out the investment priorities that will underpin its implementation. It provides additional context for the assessment of projects such as the Proposed Development. The NDP emphasises the need for investment in renewable energy sources, ongoing capacity renewal, and future technology that affords Ireland the opportunity to comprehensively decarbonise our energy generation.

The NDP was updated in October 2021 – ‘The National Development Plan 2021-2030’. The updated NDP’s focus for investment in the energy network is to:

- *‘Ensure that it meets the challenge of integrating world-leading levels of renewable wind and solar electricity whilst ensuring security of supply; and*
- *ensure that it is fit for purpose in the medium- to longer-term in order to meet projected demand levels’¹².*

It emphasises that *‘ensuring continued security of energy supply is considered a priority at national level and within the overarching EU policy framework’*¹³.

The NDP recognises that the target of delivering up to 80% of Ireland’s electricity from renewable sources by 2030 will require investment in renewable electricity generation and storage **as well as** conventional electricity generation capacity to support the operation of variable renewable technologies and provide security of supply.

Strategic Investment Priority no. 4 aims to *‘deliver circa 2GW of new conventional (mainly gas-fired) electricity generation capacity to support the operation of a predominantly wind/solar electricity system and provide security of supply for when variable electricity generation (wind/solar) is not sufficient to meet demand’*¹⁴.

The NDP clarifies that much of the 2GW of new conventional generation capacity needed over the next 10 years will need to be delivered within the next five years to meet demand.

2.3.6 Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply (2021)

The *Government’s Policy Statement on Security of Electricity Supply, (November 2021)* sets out a number of updates to national energy policy in the context of the Programme for Government

¹² Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, (2021). *National Development Plan 2021-2030 (Page 126)*

¹³ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, (2021). *National Development Plan 2021-2030 (Page 125)*

¹⁴ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, (2021). *National Development Plan 2021-2030 (Page 125)*

commitments relevant to the electricity sector, planning authorities and developers. It seeks to ensure that continued security of electricity supply is considered a priority at national level.

The policy statement includes explicit Government approval that:

The development of new conventional generation (including gas-fired and gas oil/ distillate-fired generation) is a national priority and should be permitted and supported in order to ensure security of electricity supply and support the growth of renewable electricity generation.

2.3.7 National Energy Security Framework (2022)

The National Energy Security Framework, published by the Government in April 2022, provides a further policy response to the challenges of ensuring long-term and ongoing security of energy supply. It sets out a ‘whole of Government’ response to the challenges posed to the state’s energy security and energy affordability in the context of recent events including the war in Ukraine.

It recognises that the level of dispatchable electricity generation capacity needs to increase significantly over the coming years in order to reliably meet the expected demand for electricity, and notes that the CRU is managing a programme of actions to meet this challenge under its DS3 Programme. The CRU’s latest update of its Electricity Security of Supply programme of work¹⁵ notes continued challenges in the delivery of new generation capacity, leading to the retention of a number of existing older generation units until the delivery of new, lower carbon generation units to replace them.

2.3.8 EirGrid/SONI – Shaping our Electricity Future – A Roadmap to Achieve Renewable Ambition.

EirGrid’s ‘Shaping our Electricity Future’ document, first published in November 2021 (and updated in 2023), “*identifies the transmission network reinforcements needed to manage renewable generation and demand growth*”. It provides an outline of the key developments needed to support a secure transition to at least 80% renewables on the electricity grid by 2030. Inherent to this is continuing to operate, develop and maintain a safe, secure, reliable, economical, and efficient electricity transmission system with a view to ensuring that all reasonable demands for electricity are met. The document is informed by extensive stakeholder and public engagement alongside comprehensive modelling and analysis of network reinforcements. It advises that *the development of new...clean dispatchable capacity...is critical in mitigating the risks related to potential supply shortfalls*¹⁶.

2.3.9 The EirGrid/SONI Ireland Capacity Outlook 2022-2031

The latest all-Ireland Capacity Statement emphasises that the “*current outlook, based on the best information available, is serious. It is likely that in the coming years we will experience system alerts and will need to work proactively to mitigate the risk of more serious impacts*”¹⁷.

It predicts capacity deficits during the 10 years to 2031 and states that “*further new electricity generation will be required to secure the transition to high levels of renewable electricity over the coming decades*”. It is clear that this must include new clean dispatchable generation capacity such as gas or HVO-fuelled

15 CRU Information Note, Electricity Security of Supply Programme of Work Update October 2023, [Security of Electricity Supply – Programme of Actions | CRU.ie](https://www.cru.ie/en/2023/10/23/security-of-electricity-supply-programme-of-actions/)

16 Eirgrid/SONI (2023), Shaping our Electricity Future Roadmap version 1.1 (Page 66)

17 Eirgrid/SONI (2022), Ireland Capacity Outlook 2022 – 2031 (Page 4)

turbines: “A balanced portfolio of new capacity is required, and this includes the need for new cleaner gas fired generation plant”¹⁸.

It recognises that this balanced portfolio of new capacity is essential in order for Ireland to achieve its carbon budgets for the electricity sector up to 2030: ‘This balanced portfolio is also crucial to ensuring that Ireland meets its carbon budgets between now and 2030 for the electricity sector, which positions the electricity sector to achieve the zero net carbon target by 2050’¹⁹.

2.3.10 EirGrid Group – Strategy 2020-50: Transform the Power System for Future Generations

EirGrid Group’s statement of purpose is to ‘Transform the power system for future generations’. The ‘Strategy 2020-50’ document sets out EirGrid’s strategy for achieving this and the challenges that they are facing. “The electricity system will carry more power than ever before and most of that power will be from renewable sources”²⁰. The necessary changes will be significant and will need to be managed in a co-ordinated and cost-effective way.

Strategy 2020 - 50 recognises that, in order to increase the amount of renewable power on the grid, the system must be operated in a more dynamic and responsive way. “This will require improvements by the infrastructure to make the grid stronger and more flexible”²¹. This will be achieved “by using innovative solutions as well as proven technologies”, but EirGrid will seek to ensure that the changes will not impact the reliability of the electricity system.

2.3.11 EirGrid Group – Delivering a Secure Sustainable Electricity System (‘DS3 Programme’)

In response to binding national and European targets, the EirGrid Group began a multi-year programme, “Delivering a Secure, Sustainable Electricity System” (DS3), in 2011. The aim of the DS3 Programme was to meet Ireland’s 2020 electricity targets by increasing the amount of renewable energy on the Irish power system in a safe and secure manner.

The DS3 Programme is designed to ensure that Ireland can securely operate the power system with increasing amounts of variable non-synchronous renewable generation over the coming years. The DS3 Programme remains ongoing, with new targets set for 2030, but is to be replaced by the operational roadmap set out in the ‘Shaping Our Electricity Future’ programme.

2.3.12 National Hydrogen Strategy

The National Hydrogen Strategy was published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in July 2023 and sets out a strategic vision for the role that hydrogen will play in Ireland’s energy system in the future, looking to its long-term role as a key component of a zero-carbon economy, and short-term actions that need to be delivered over the coming years to enable the development of the Sector.

The three key policy drivers of the Strategy are as follows:

¹⁸ Eirgrid/SONI (2022), Ireland Capacity Outlook 2022 – 2031 (Page 5)

¹⁹ Eirgrid/SONI (2022), Ireland Capacity Outlook 2022 – 2031 (Page 5)

²⁰ Eirgrid Group -Strategy 2020-50: Transform the Power System for Future Generations (Page 4)

²¹ Eirgrid Group -Strategy 2020-50: Transform the Power System for Future Generations (Page 10)

- Decarbonising our economy: providing a solution for hard to decarbonise sectors where electrification is not feasible, or cost-effective.
- Enhancing our energy security, through the development of an indigenous zero carbon renewable fuel which can act as an alternative to the 77% of our energy system which today relies on fossil fuel imports; and
- Developing industrial opportunities, through the potential development of export markets for renewable hydrogen and other areas such as Sustainable Aviation Fuels.

It identifies flexible power generation as one of the first sectors that will develop as a significant end-user of renewable hydrogen but recognises that the transition to hydrogen will take time and it will not be until mid to late 2030s that a national hydrogen network emerges.

2.3.13 Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2023 Consultation Report

The 'Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios 2023 Consultation Report' was published by EirGrid and SONI in November 2023. It sets out long term energy scenarios for Ireland and Northern Ireland and considers how electricity demand and generation may evolve from 2035 to 2050.

The four distinct scenarios that are being consulted upon are:

- 'Self-Sustaining': Follows a fast-paced transition away from fossil fuels to electrification of all sectors, culminating in a new power system from 2040.
- 'Offshore Opportunity': Follows a fast-paced transition to a decarbonised power system through faster and larger development of offshore wind and results in the power system becoming a significant net electricity exporter. This scenario also leads to a net zero power system by 2040.
- 'Gas Evolution': Follows a steadier pace, reaching a net zero power system by 2045 through the creation of significant renewable generation capacity to produce both electricity and power electrolysis plant to produce green hydrogen.
- 'Constrained Growth': This is the slowest of the four scenarios with a net zero power system being achieved by 2050. This involves slower development of decarbonised generation capacity and greater reliance on electricity imports when domestic supply is unable to meet demand.

The key conclusions arising out of the scenario testing include that electricity demand on the island of Ireland will more than double by 2050 and that, in all scenarios, a balanced portfolio of electricity generation will be required, with renewables supported by firm dispatchable capacity, with the acceleration of green fuels being required to offer reliability and flexibility to the power system.

2.3.14 Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 – Energy Security Package

The 'Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 – Energy Security Package' was published by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in November 2023. The Energy Security Package sets out a range of measures to be implemented up to 2030 and subsequently reviewed every five years thereafter, reporting to a new Energy Security Group with responsibility for oversight.

The Energy Security Package sets out a series of actions for the short- and medium-term, prioritising:

- Reduced and Responsive Demand.
- Renewables Led System.
- More Resilient Systems.
- Robust Risk Governance.

Among the key Actions within the Package to create a more resilient energy system are Actions 8 and 12. Action 8, 'To complete implementation of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) Security of Electricity Supply Programme', re-iterates the need for the *"procurement of at least 2GW of new, flexible, enduring, capacity through market mechanisms"*, while Action 12, 'To accelerate delivery of power system flexibility', notes that *"embedding flexibility in the power system can change how Ireland utilises conventional capacity and contribute to a secure transition"*.

The Proposed Development complies with National Policy objectives and long-term sectoral strategy. It will contribute to greenhouse gas reduction targets, facilitate the integration of more renewable generation into the electricity network, and help to maintain security of supply while supporting Ireland in its transition to a low carbon economy.

2.4 Regional Planning Policy

2.4.1 Southern Regional Assembly - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020 - 2032

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern region was adopted in 2020 and provides a high-level development framework for the region that supports the implementation of the NPF. It identifies 11 principles to build a strong, resilient, sustainable region. With regard to climate change, the Strategy notes that a key priority is 'safeguarding and enhancing our environment through sustainable development, prioritising action on climate change across the Region, driving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society'²².

The following 'Regional Policy Objectives' aim to ensure that the development of the electricity network is undertaken in a safe and secure way which meets projected demand levels, Government Policy, and the need to achieve a long-term, sustainable and competitive energy future for Ireland:

- **RPO 87** – The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport, and agriculture.
- **RPO 97** – It is an objective to support the sustainable technology upgrading and conversion of power stations in the Region to increase capacity for use of energy efficient and renewable energy sources.

²² Southern Regional Assembly (2020). Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

- **RPO 109** – Proposals for Bio-energy development and infrastructure will need to be subject to robust site and/or route selection that includes consideration of likely significant effects on European Sites and subject to the outcome of the required appraisal planning and environmental assessment processes.
- **RPO 219** – It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.

The Proposed Development complies with Regional Policy objectives. It will greatly increase the capacity for the use of sustainable fuel in the generation of electricity and contribute to the sustainable upgrading of the historic Tarbert power station site. In doing so it will help to provide security of energy supply and the integration of more renewable generation into the electricity network while supporting Ireland in its transition to a low carbon economy.

2.5 Local Planning Policy

This section describes the local development plan policies of relevance to the Proposed Development. Part II of the Planning and Development Act (2000) (hereafter referred to as 'The Act') requires that, in making any determination under The Act, regard needs to be given to the local development plan.

The local development plan policy for the Proposed Development is contained within the Kerry County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028.

2.5.1 Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Kerry CDP notes that the availability of energy is of critical importance to the continued development and expansion of employment in the county and that it is vital that there is sufficient capacity to meet the current and future needs. Chapter 12 of the CPD outlines that '*Kerry is well placed to encourage and facilitate the sustainable development of power generation facilities in the county*' and '*will continue to support the infrastructural renewal*' and '*sustainable development of electricity and gas networks*'.

The CDP states that it is the policy objective of KCC to '*ensure that the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the county can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs*'. Policy Objectives have been provided within the CDP to support this priority objective:

- **Policy 12-1 – Energy** - *Support and facilitate the sustainable provision of a reliable energy supply in the County, with emphasis on increasing energy supplies derived from renewable resources whilst seeking to protect and maintain biodiversity, archaeological and built heritage,*

the landscape and residential amenity and integration of spatial planning and energy planning in the county.

- **Policy 12-7 – Transmission Grid** - *‘Support and facilitate the sustainable development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, additional electricity generation capacity, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County’.*
- **Policy 12-16 – Renewable Energy** - *‘Facilitate and promote sustainable alternative forms of renewable energy including hydro, bio, solar, geothermal and off-shore wind energy.’ To support and liaise with statutory and other energy providers in relation to power generation, in order to ensure adequate power capacity for the existing and future needs of the County.*
- **Policy 12-31 – Bioenergy & District Heating** - *‘Facilitate the sustainable development of bioenergy plants including anaerobic digestors, in compliance with the development management standards on appropriately zoned lands. Bioenergy installations shall not be permitted in areas where such developments may affect residential or visual amenity. They should be developed close to the point of demand and be served by public roads with sufficient capacity to absorb increased traffic flows and adjacent to transport corridors’.*
- **Policy 12-37 – Community Consultation, Community Benefit & Community Projects** - *‘Support the principles of a Just Transition as the community moves towards a climate neutral society and economy’.*
- **Policy 12-38 - Community Consultation, Community Benefit & Community Projects** - *‘Support the transition towards low carbon economy and circular economy through mechanisms such as the Climate Action Competitive Fund and/or Just Transition Funding’.*

Chapter 2 (Climate Change & Achieving A Sustainable Future) of the CDP outlines KCC’s ambitions to *‘provide for the sustainable development of County Kerry in a way which supports people and employment while transitioning to a low carbon society...which safeguards and enhances the environment’.* It sets out the following policy objective for the county’s sustainable future:

- **Policy 2-2 – Climate Change and Achieving a Sustainable Future** – *‘Facilitate and support national climate change objectives contained in the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the actions contained in the KCC Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 and successor strategies, and to consider a variation of this development plan, if necessary, to align with the approach recommended in the guidelines: Development Plans, Guidelines for Planning Authorities’.*

Chapter 9 (Economic Development) of the CDP outlines KCC’s objectives to support the economic development of the County and sets out the *‘spatial planning framework which will deliver the required development patterns and maximise the conditions for sustainable economic development in Kerry’.* The Plan notes that *‘The Strategic Development Location (SDL) at Tarbert/Ballylongford in North Kerry is recognised for its potential as an Energy Hub and for industrial development at a regional and national level’.* It sets out the following policy objective to support the Strategic Development Location.

- Policy 9-26 Shannon Estuary – *‘Safeguard the role and function of the Power Plant Hub at Tarbert, including the NORA Strategic Oil Reserves Plant, as a key driver of economic growth in the Region, encouraging its sustainable growth and diversification, in accordance with Regional and National Energy Objectives’.*

2.5.2 Draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 – 2029

This Draft Action Plan sets out how the Local Authority will address the internal actions that are necessary to meet its own ambitious targets and the external actions that they will take to influence, facilitate and advocate for climate action. Within the context of the Plan, climate action is seen as two integrated responses that society has to take to meet the challenges of climate change. These are mitigation, which seeks to prevent the impacts of climate change and adaptation, which seeks to respond to the impacts of climate change.

With regard to the built environment and the authority’s activities in development management, the Draft Action Plan advances the following ‘Strategic Goal’ and corresponding objective:

- **1. Built Environment and Transport** – *‘The built environment and infrastructure are climate-proofed to ensure emissions and energy efficiency targets are met towards reaching a decarbonised society’.*
 - **Objective 1.6** – *‘Ensure the Planning Authority integrates climate action into Land Use Planning and Development Management’.*

The Proposed Development is very clearly in accordance with Local Policy, notably the objectives to support and facilitate the sustainable provision of a reliable energy supply in the county and to safeguard the role and function of the power plant hub at Tarbert in accordance with Regional and National energy objectives. It is consistent with European, National, Regional and Local policy and will contribute to meeting the urgent requirement for new flexible and clean dispatchable generation capacity. The Proposed Development will facilitate the integration of more renewable generation into the electricity network, helping to maintain security of supply while supporting the transition to a low carbon economy in Ireland.

2.6 References

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