

## Planning Report

Borrisbeg Renewable  
Energy Development,  
Co. Tipperary







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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Preamble

This Planning Report has been prepared by MKO on behalf of Buirios Limited, to accompany a planning application to An Bord Pleanála (the Board) for planning permission for works associated with the proposed Borrisbeg Renewable Energy Development, located at Borrisbeg and adjacent townlands near Templemore town, Co. Tipperary. For ease, as set out in Chapter 1 of the EIAR,

- The **‘Proposed Wind Farm’** refers to the 9 no. turbines and supporting infrastructure which is the subject of this Section 37E application.
- The **‘Proposed Grid Connection’** refers to the 110kV substation and supporting infrastructure which will be the subject of a separate Section 182A application.
- The **‘Proposed Project’** comprises the Proposed Wind Farm and the Proposed Grid Connection, all of which are located within the EIAR Study Boundary (the **‘Site’**) and assessed together within this EIAR.

The purpose of this Planning Report is to outline the background to the development, the key elements of the proposal and to demonstrate that the Proposed Project complies with all relevant development plan provisions and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the Proposed Project’s consistency with the relevant planning policy documents at national, regional and local levels.

This planning application for the Proposed Wind Farm is being submitted directly to the Board as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) in accordance with Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended. The Proposed Wind Farm has an estimated total generating capacity of 63MW and therefore it meets the threshold for wind energy set out in the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (being *‘An installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts’*). This approach has been confirmed following consultations with the Board under the provisions of Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended (Case Reference ABP-315851-23).

A separate planning application for the Proposed Grid Connection works will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála in accordance with Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended as it is considered that both the components and function of the Proposed Grid Connection fall within the scope of Section 182A (1) of the Act, based upon the definition of electricity transmission as set out in Subsection 9 of Section 182A. (Case Reference ABP-317089-23)

## 1.2 Structure of the Report

- Section 1** Outlines the preamble and the report structure.
- Section 2** Outlines the background of the project, planning history and pre-planning consultations;
- Section 3** Provides a description of the Proposed Wind Farm
- Section 4** Provides an overview of the relevant national, regional and local planning policy;
- Section 5** Provides a planning assessment of the Proposed Wind Farm in the context of the overall Proposed Project.
- Section 6** Provides a concluding statement on the Proposed Wind Farm’s contribution to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Site Location and Context

The Site is located within a rural setting in north Tipperary, approximately 11km south of Roscrea Town and approximately 2.5km northeast of Templemore town centre. The N62 National Road runs north-south along a segment of its western boundary. The Site measures approximately 650 hectares and land use currently comprises a mix of pastoral agriculture and small-scale private forestry and local roads. The surrounding land use predominantly comprises pastoral agriculture, local roads and commercial and residential use within Templemore town. Existing access is via farm entrances off the N62 to the west, the L-3248 to the north and the L-7039/1 in the southeast.

As part of the Proposed Wind Farm design, a temporary entrance will be constructed on the L-3248, adjacent to the N62 in the northwest of the Site. This entrance will facilitate the delivery of abnormally sized loads to the Site and will be manned for the duration of these deliveries. This entrance will be reinstated once it is no longer required. Should abnormal load deliveries be required during the operational phase, this temporary entrance will be reopened as and when required.

A new main construction entrance will be constructed off the L-3248, approximately 70m northeast of the N62. This entrance will be used as the main entrance for construction traffic and staff vehicles, and will continue to provide operational phase access to the Proposed Project and permanent agricultural use.

A secondary Site access will be established to the southeast of the Site with the upgrade of the L-70391 local road which is within the Site and upgrade of the junction between the L-70391 and the L-7039. This secondary Site entrance will also facilitate the construction of the Proposed Grid Connection, with the proposed substation located immediately adjacent to the L70391 and will provide operational access for maintenance of the Proposed Project and existing public access to lands involved in the Proposed Project.

The Site is located entirely within an area designated in the Tipperary County Development Plan, 2022-2028 as an 'Area Open for Consideration' for wind energy development.

**Figure 2-1** below presents the extent of the Proposed Wind Farm area.



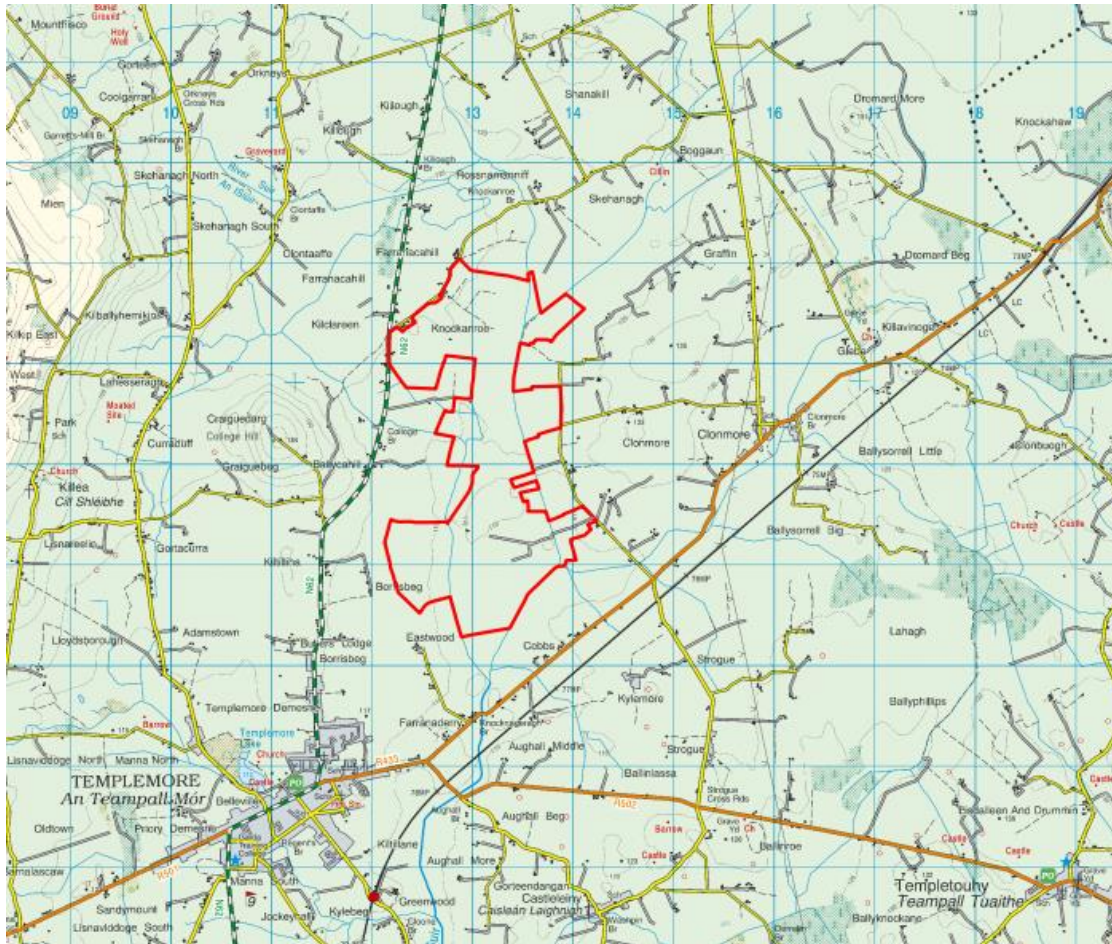


Figure 2-1 Borrisbeg Wind Farm Planning Application Boundary

## 2.2 Planning History

A planning history search of all planning applications within the planning application redline boundary, was undertaken. A planning search was carried out online through Tipperary County Council’s and the Board’s planning portals, however no applications within the planning application redline boundary were identified. All applications outside the planning application redline boundary but within the EIAR Site Boundary are set out in **Appendix 2-1** of the EIAR.

## 2.3 Pre-Application Engagement

### 2.3.1 Scoping

Information on the scoping carried out for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is detailed in Section 2.6 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR. In summary, a scoping report, providing details of the application site and the Proposed Project, was prepared by MKO and circulated in October 2022, with an updated scoping document forwarded in December 2022 and April 2023. MKO requested the comments of the relevant personnel/bodies in their respective capacities as consultees with regards to the scope and preparation of the EIAR. **Appendix 2-2** of the EIAR contains all scoping responses received. The comments of the consultees will be considered in the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Project in the event of a grant of planning permission. The recommendations of the consultees have informed the scope of the assessments undertaken and the contents of the EIAR.

## 2.3.2 Pre-Application Meetings

### 2.3.2.1 An Bord Pleanála

The Prospective applicant engaged with the Board under the provisions of Section 37B and Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (the Act), to determine whether the Wind Farm and Grid Connection elements of the Proposed Project would meet the thresholds of the Seventh Schedule set out in the Act. MKO requested on behalf of the applicant to enter into pre-application consultation with the Board to formally determine whether the Wind Farm and Grid Connection as set out above falls within the scope of Section 37E and 182A of the Act.

The first SID meeting under Section 37B was held with the Board on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023, where the Proposed Wind Farm development design was discussed in detail with the Board.

The applicant closed consultation with the Board under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, the Board wrote to the applicant and confirmed that consultation was closed and that the Proposed Wind Farm was considered to be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of Section 37A and such any application for approval of the Proposed Wind Farm should be made directly to the Board.

A SID meeting under the provisions of Section 182E was held with the Board on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023, where the Proposed Grid Connection design was discussed in detail with the Board.

Please refer to Section 2.7.2 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for more details.

### 2.3.2.2 Tipperary County Council

A Pre-Planning Consultation meeting took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2023 via MS Teams with representatives from Tipperary County Council; Marion Carey, Tomas Duffy and Enda Walsh, representatives from Buirios Limited and MKO. The project team gave a PowerPoint presentation as a high-level overview of the Proposed Project.

A 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was held between members of the project team and the applicant with representatives from TCC Roads Department via MS Teams on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023. The project team gave a further overview of the Proposed Project, with particular focus on the Grid Connection, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.

A meeting was held onsite with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) James Crowley and Council Engineer Enda Walsh on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to discuss the proposed Project access locations and proposed underground grid connection cable route.

The CLO sought to meet with TII regarding the Proposed Project design, however an email response was received on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 stating that TII do not consult with third parties and recommended consultation with the local planning authority instead.

Please refer to Section 2.7.1.1 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for more details.

## 2.3.2.3 Other Pre-Planning Meetings

### 2.3.2.3.1 National Parks and Wildlife Service

Upon recommendation by the Board, a meeting was requested and subsequently held with the National Parks and Wildlife Service on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 over MS Teams. The project team gave a PowerPoint

presentation as a high-level overview of the Proposed Project and the Site as well as setting out survey efforts and findings to date as well as the main ecological considerations.

Please refer to Section 2.7.3.1.1 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for more details.

#### 2.3.2.3.2 **Inland Fisheries Ireland**

Upon recommendation by the Board, a meeting was requested and subsequently held with the Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) on the 9th of August 2023 over MS Teams. The project team gave a PowerPoint presentation as a high-level overview of the Proposed Project and the Site as well as setting out survey efforts and findings to date, particularly the Aquatic Survey findings. A river Restoration Proposal designed by MKO ecologists and the Applicant was also presented and discussed at the meeting.

Please refer to Section 2.7.3.1.2 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for more details.

### 2.3.3 **Community Consultation**

The applicant has undertaken extensive consultation with the local community. The project was first introduced to the local community in June 2021, with the delivery of a letter outlining the Applicant's intention to explore the identified area for a wind energy development. The letter was accompanied with a brochure detailing information about the applicant including contact detail and general information on wind energy. Since the initial consultation in June 2021, the appointed Community Liaison Officer for the project has continued to be available to keep the public informed about the Proposed Project.

Please Refer to Section 2.7.4 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR for more details in relation to Community Consultation.

3.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

As outlined in the introduction, the Proposed Project comprises the Proposed Wind Farm and the Proposed Grid Connection. The Proposed Wind Farm is the subject of the current Section 37E planning application. A description of the Proposed Wind Farm as set out in the public planning notices, is as follows:

*The proposed development will consist of the provision of the following:*

- i. 9 no. wind turbines with an overall turbine tip height of 185 metres; a rotor blade diameter of 163 metres; and hub height of 103.5 metres, and associated foundations and hard-standing areas;*
- ii. A thirty-year operational life of the wind farm from the date of full commissioning of the wind farm and subsequent decommissioning;*
- iii. Underground electrical cabling (33kV) and communications cabling;*
- iv. A temporary construction compound;*
- v. A temporary security cabin;*
- vi. A meteorological mast with a height of 30 metres and associated foundation and hard-standing area;*
- vii. A new gated site entrance on the L3248;*
- viii. Junction accommodation works and a new temporary access road off the L3248, to facilitate turbine delivery to the site;*
- ix. Upgrade of existing site tracks/ roads and provision of new site access roads, junctions and hardstand areas.*
- x. Upgrade of the existing L7039/L70391 junction for secondary site access off the L70391;*
- xi. A borrow pit;*
- xii. Spoil Management;*
- xiii. Tree felling;*
- xiv. Site Drainage;*
- xv. Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (including restoration of a segment of the Eastwood River, and planting of natural woodland and hedgerow);*
- xvi. Operational Stage site signage; and*
- xvii. All ancillary works and apparatus.*

*A ten-year planning permission is sought.*

The overall layout of the Proposed Wind Farm is shown on **Figure 3-1**. This figure shows the Proposed Wind Farm infrastructure as outlined above.

Following a successful outcome of the Section 37E application for the Proposed Wind Farm, an application under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, will be submitted to the Board for the Proposed Grid Connection. Please refer to Chapter 4 of the EIAR for a detailed description of the Proposed Grid Connection.

The layout of the Proposed Project (i.e., the Proposed Wind Farm and the Proposed Grid Connection combined) has been designed taking account of the various constraints presented by the Site and its hinterland. The internal road design makes use of the existing onsite access roads and tracks where possible to minimise ground disturbance. The footprint of the Proposed Project measures approximately 8.47 hectares, which represents approximately 1.3% of the Site.

As stated in section 1.1 above, this application is for the Proposed Wind Farm; the Proposed Grid Connection will be applied for separately under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. However, the potential significant effects of all elements of the Proposed Project

(Proposed Wind Farm and Proposed Grid Connection) have been assessed as part of the EIAR and NIS which accompany this planning application.

### 3.1 Main Development Components

The components of the Proposed Wind Farm for the purposes of the accompanying Section 37E application are outlined in **Table 3-1** below.

*Table 3-1 Proposed Wind Farm Development Details*

Wind Turbine, foundations and associated hard-standing areas.	The proposed wind turbines to be installed have an overall turbine tip height of 185 metres, a hub height of 103.5 metres and a blade rotor diameter of 163 metres. The associated hardstanding areas will facilitate access and provide a safe, level working area for vehicles and machinery used in the assembly and erection of the turbine.
Underground Electrical and Communications Cabling	The proposed turbines will be connected to each other via underground electrical cabling (33kV) and communications cabling. This cabling will also connect to the proposed onsite 110kV substation which will be subject to a separate 182A application to the Board.
Temporary Construction Compound	A temporary construction compound measuring approximately 4,250 square metres in area will be located at the northern section of the Site. The construction compound will include a bunded refuelling and containment area for the storage of lubricants, oils and site generators etc, and full retention oil interceptor, waste storage area, temporary site offices, staff facilities and car-parking areas for staff and visitors.
Security Cabin	A temporary security cabin will be located on a layby along the new proposed access road off the L3248. This entrance will be gated (Dwg No. 220310 – 29)), and the cabin will serve as the check in and check out point for staff and visitors during the construction phase. The security cabin will be a prefabricated structure measuring approximately 7.2 metres by 2.5 metres and 2.85 metres in height.
Meteorological Mast	A 30-metre meteorological mast of the free-standing lattice type equipped with wind monitoring equipment will be constructed onsite. This will be constructed on a concrete foundation within a hard-standing area that will also accommodate the equipment required to erect the mast.
Site Entrances and onsite tracks/roads	<p>To facilitate the access, delivery and construction of the project, a number of existing roads and tracks require upgrade works. Existing site access tracks are required to be upgraded and new access tracks proposed.</p> <p>A new temporary abnormal load entrance will be inserted on the L-3248, adjacent to N62 northwest of the site, to facilitate the delivery of the turbine components. The main Site entrance for the use of general construction traffic and staff vehicles is to be inserted off the L-3248, approximately 70m northeast of the N62. This will be retained for the operational phase and permanent agricultural access.</p> <p>The L7039 and L70391 pass through the Site. Resurfacing of approx. 1.1km of the L70391 will be required as part of the Proposed Wind Farm application.</p>

	New entrances will be inserted off the L70391 for the operational phase of the proposed wind farm.
Borrow Pit	The proposed onsite borrow pit will be located 350m west of Turbine 1 and accessed using an internal road. The borrow pit is used to obtain stone material for use during the construction phase of the Proposed Project.
Spoil Management Areas	Spoil management areas are proposed to manage excess overburden generated during construction at the Site. The placement of spoil in the management areas were selected based on where the spoil is generated and areas that are identified as suitable for the management of spoil. Further information detailing spoil management areas is outlined in section 4.3.1.12, Chapter 4 of the EIAR.
Tree Felling and Replanting	<p>Felling of approximately 4.22 hectares of forestry will be required within and around the Proposed Wind Farm footprint to allow for the construction of the turbine bases, access roads, underground cabling, and the other ancillary infrastructure. Further details on tree felling required within and around development footprint is detailed in Chapter 6 of this EIAR.</p> <p>In addition to the forestry felling, segments of hedgerows will require removal to facilitate the construction of wind farms roads and ancillary infrastructure. Please see Chapter 6 for details.</p>
Biodiversity Enhancement Plan	Along with other enhancement measures, this plan includes improvement of a portion of the Eastwood River within the Site will involve the restoration of a previously deepened and straightened channel to appropriate dimensions, pattern and profile and the establishment of a native woodlands buffer. Please see Appendix 6-4 Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan for full details.

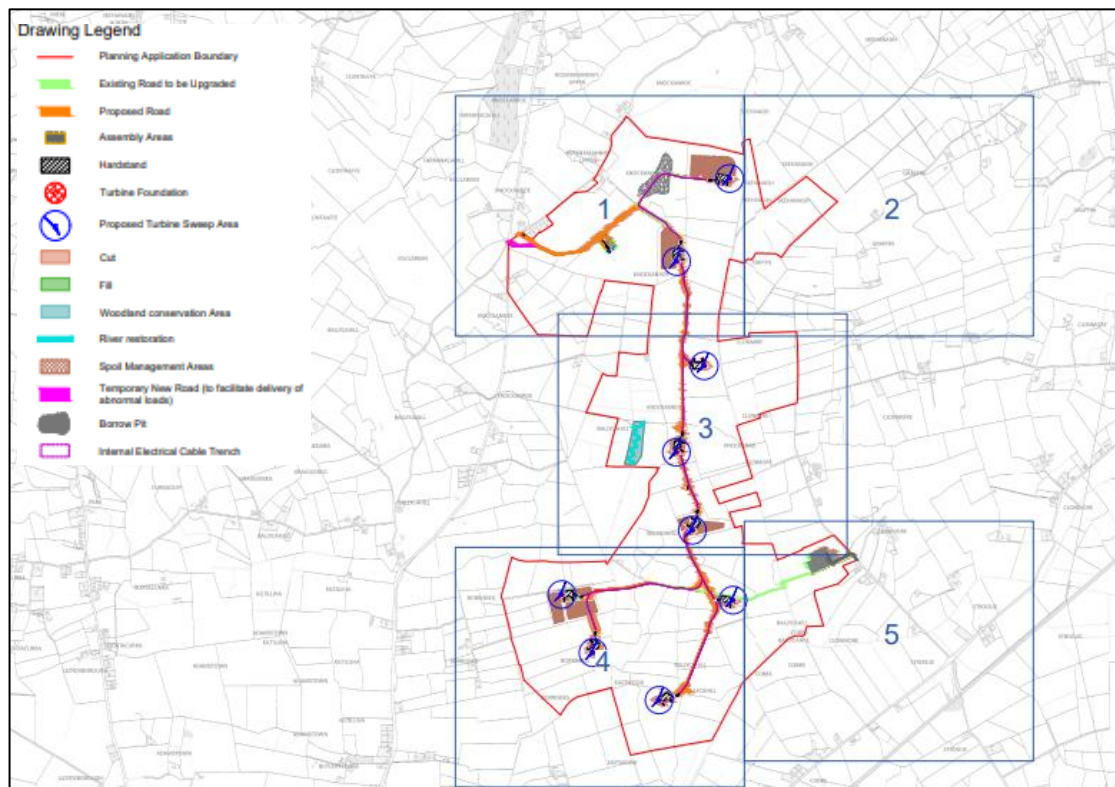


Figure 3-1 Site Layout of Proposed Wind Farm

## 4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This section of the document provides an overview of the relevant policies associated with the Proposed Project. Policy is a key consideration given the ever-changing status of policy at both local and national level. Full planning policy detail has been set out in the accompanying EIAR within Chapter 2: Background, a summary of which is set out below.

### 4.1 European Planning Policy

Climate change policy at the European level has been a long-standing and evolving effort. It began in the 1990s with the European Union adopting various directives and agreements to address climate change. The key milestones include the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, where the EU committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In 2009, the EU set ambitious targets under the 2020 Climate and Energy Package, including a 20% reduction in emissions and a 20% share of renewable energy by 2020. This was further reinforced by the 2015 Paris Agreement, where the EU pledged to contribute to limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius. Building on these commitments, the EU introduced the European Green Deal in 2019, aiming to reach a carbon-neutral economy by 2050 and increase the EU's greenhouse gas reduction target to at least 55% by 2030.

The recent REPower EU Plan, presented in 2022, was specifically developed as a response to the energy market disruption caused by the War in Ukraine and sought to accelerate the transition to renewable energy and enhance energy security in the European Union. The Plan outlines short, medium and long-term measures which will be completed before 2027. With full implementation of the measures in REPowerEU plan, at least 155 bcm of fossil gas use could be removed, which is equivalent to the volume imported from Russia in 2021. Nearly two thirds of that reduction can be achieved within a year. A part of this plan includes *'Speeding up renewables permitting to minimise the time for roll-out of renewable projects and grid infrastructure improvements'*. This will make the sector more efficient and reach the set goals faster.

In September 2023, the European Parliament agreed to update the Renewable Energy Directive. The updates including raising the share of renewables in the EU's final energy consumption to 42.5% by 2030 with Member States encouraged to achieve 45% and a more efficient approval procedure for deploying renewables in Europe. In addition, as a part of the REPowerEU plan, the European Commission has proposed a series of additional targeted amendments to the renewable energy directive to reflect the ongoing changes in the energy landscape and the continued invasion of Ukraine.

COP 28, or the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was also held from 30 November until 12 December 2023. This was a pivotal global agreement that aimed to transition away from fossil fuels and promote renewable energy sources. It recognized the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and emphasized the importance of mitigating climate change. The agreement provided a significant boost to renewable energy industries and set the stage for countries to prioritize clean and sustainable energy generation. By committing to this transition, the international community took a crucial step towards addressing climate change and creating a more sustainable future.

The Proposed Project shall in its deployment contribute to achieving the objectives of European-level climate change policy including REPower EU Plan, those being the transition to clean renewable energy and energy security for the European Union.

## 4.2

## National Planning Policy

At a National level, the National Energy Security Framework (DECC, April 2022) highlights clearly the impacts the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting war has had on Europe's energy system. It takes account of the need to decarbonize society and economy, to reduce Ireland's emissions by 51% over the decade to 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, which was signed into law on the 23rd July 2021, legally binds Ireland to achieve 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. The Climate Action Plan 2023 ('the CAP') launched in December 2022, sets out a roadmap to delivery on Ireland's climate ambition. It aligns with the legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings that were agreed by Government in July 2022 following the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. A key part of the Plan is to increase the proportion of renewable electricity to up to 80% by 2030 and a target of 9GW from onshore wind. At the time of writing, Climate Action Plan 2024 was not published. It is expected to be published before the end of the 2023.

The National Planning Framework published in February of 2018, forms the top tier of the national planning policy structure which establishes the policy context for the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) and local level development plans. A key focus throughout the NPF is the fostering of a transition toward a low carbon, climate-resilient society. In this regard, one of the stated key elements of the NPF is an Ireland which has a secure and sustainable renewable energy supply and facilitates the ability to diversify and adapt to new energy technologies.

The NPF acknowledges that greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector must be reduced by at least 80% by 2050 when compared to 1990 levels while ensuring a secure supply of energy exists. A Key Objective of the NPF includes National Planning Objective 55 which seeks to *"Promote renewable energy use and generation at the appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy 2050."*

The Proposed Project represents a significant opportunity to be a nationally important wind energy generator, contributing to the 51% reduction in emissions being sought, which is as outlined above a legally binding requirement. The Proposed Project is therefore considered compliant with the relevant policies and objectives set out at National tiers of governance in this regard.

## 4.3

## Regional Planning Policy

At Regional level, The Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) was established in 2015, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region (Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford) came into effect on 31st January 2020. The RSES provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region. The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework. provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region. The RSES seeks to achieve balanced regional development and full implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework. To achieve national and EU targets in the context of the electricity sector, the RSES notes that further investment is required to develop alternative renewable energies with greater interconnection to energy resources. This key enabling action is captured under Strategic Aim 8 which sets out the need to

*"safeguard and enhance the environment through sustainable development, prioritising action on climate change across the region, driving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society."*



The RSES is ultimately supportive of the future growth of renewable energy technology in the region and sets a clear precedent to identify and capitalise on those opportunities associated with the transition to renewable energy generation. Accordingly, the Proposed Project will contribute substantially to the fulfilment of objectives set out in the RSES.

## 4.4 Local Planning Policy

### Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 (TCDP) came into effect on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2022. The TCDP incorporates the aims, objectives, policies and guidelines to provide for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Tipperary. The TCDP outlines the ambition for the development of the county's renewable energy supply. The Council acknowledges the importance of renewable energy in reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and the contribution of renewable energy in achieving national and EU target net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This target is underpinned by the core ambitions of the TDCP. The TDCP states:

*“Renewable energy and the bioeconomy are important aspects of our diverse and vibrant rural economy, with synergies between and across other areas such as climate action, job creation and amenity development. It is understood that by supporting a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable and climate-neutral economy we can make optimum use of our available renewable energy resources. The Council, with the support of the Tipperary Energy Agency and through the Core Strategy of this Plan, has strongly committed to the support of renewable energy as part of sustainable economic growth in line with the National Renewable Energy Action Plan of the Government”*

Chapter 10 of the TCDP, Renewable Energy and Bioeconomy, provides renewable energy targets out as far as 2028. The TCDP has set a target of 600MW of wind energy to be constructed and operational by 2028. The county currently has 475MW of wind energy installed. The Proposed Project will contribute substantially to meeting this target.

### Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (RES)

The Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) was published in 2016 and is incorporated into the TCDP as appendix 2 of volume 3. The RES has been developed as a planning framework to support the implementation of renewable energy in the county.

The RES includes a Wind Energy Strategy (WES), which is informed by a Landscape character assessment. The WES identifies areas where wind energy development is 'open for consideration' and where wind energy developments are considered 'unsuitable'.

The Proposed Project is located in an area deemed 'Open for Consideration'. This designation is defined as follows :

*‘Areas ‘Open for Consideration’ – wind energy development in these areas may or may not be appropriate, depending on the character of the landscape and the potential impact of the proposed development. Any impact on the environment must be low and subject to proper planning and sustainable development, and the guidelines set out in this policy document’.*

As set out in detail in Section 2.4.4.2 of the EIAR, a detailed environmental constraints assessment was conducted which led to the siting of turbines within the 'Open for Consideration' areas. The final Proposed Project design takes account of all Site constraints and the distances to be maintained between turbines and other infrastructure from houses, roads, etc. The development of the final Proposed Project

design has resulted following feedback from the various studies and assessments carried out as well as ongoing stakeholder engagement, including negotiations and discussions with landowners.

The findings and conclusions of the EIAR clearly point to the Proposed Project not only being suitable as proposed but also being in line with the requirements of proper planning and sustainable development in that the Site can clearly accommodate a development as proposed without significant adverse impact on the environment.

Having regard to the above, it is submitted that the Proposed Project is consistent with the RES and that the Proposed Project is in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

#### 4.4.2 **Summary Of Compliance with Planning Policy**

In summary, the provision of renewable energy developments such as the Proposed Project is strongly supported by International, National, Regional and Local policies and guidelines aimed at achieving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy, increasing renewable energy generation, and enhancing energy security. Specifically, the Proposed Project will contribute to achieving the target of generating 9GW of electricity from onshore wind and reducing GHG emissions by 80% by 2030 as set out in the CAP23.

The project aligns with National Strategic Outcomes and Objectives outlined in the NPF, particularly Objective 55, which seeks to 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.

It is re-iterated that the Proposed Project is consistent with the the TCDP, which acknowledges the importance of renewable energy in reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and the contribution of renewable energy in achieving national and EU target net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Proposed Project will progress the Development Plan's target of increasing the county's wind energy capacity to 600MW, enabling the county to reach its ambition to become a '*climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally-sustainable and climate-neutral economy*'.

Furthermore, the landmark agreements at COP 28 has emphasized the global recognition for transitioning away from fossil fuels and increasing the penetration of renewable energy sources into the electricity market. The agreement will play a crucial role in raising awareness and encouraging countries to prioritize the development and adoption of renewable energy technologies.

In Summary, the Proposed Project provides the opportunity to capture an additional part of County Tipperary's valuable renewable energy resource. If the Proposed Project were not to proceed the opportunity to capture this additional part of Tipperary's valuable renewable energy resource would be lost, as would the opportunity to contribute to meeting Government and EU targets for the production and consumption of electricity from renewable resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The opportunity to generate local employment and investment associated with the Proposed Project (and consequently, the Proposed Grid Connection) would also be lost.

## 5. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

The Proposed Project has been subject to a rigorous design process informed by a comprehensive planning and environmental assessments and surveys, which have collectively concluded that the proposal is in line with proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The Proposed Project has been designed in compliance with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, 2006 (2006 WEDGs) and it has been demonstrated that the requirements of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019 Draft WEDGs) can also be achieved. Specifically, there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project during the construction, operational or decommissioning phases of the development nor will it have any significant effects on any European Sites. Any potential environmental impacts will be minor and can be addressed through standard mitigation measures. The following section provides a planning assessment of the Proposed Project under the following key material considerations.

### 5.1 Principle of Development

The principle of development is considered to be established in so far as the Proposed Project is located in an area deemed ‘Open for Consideration’ as set out in the Wind Energy Strategy (WES) of the Tipperary Renewable Energy Strategy (RES), subject to proper planning and sustainable development, and the guidelines set out in the RES. Furthermore, it is pertinent to emphasize that the overarching thrust of policy in the TCDP is one of support for the deployment of renewable energy. Policy 10-1 within the TCDP directly supports new development *“that will produce energy from local renewable sources”*. Policy 10-A also calls for support of the Climate Action Plan as it relates to renewable energy production, *“having consideration to the strategic importance and potential benefits of renewable energy investment to rural communities”*. This sentiment also exists in the Regional Strategy for the Southern Region, which states in RPO 99 that *“it is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.”*

At a National Level, the CAP calls for *“a major acceleration and increase in onshore wind turbines across the country.”* To accelerate renewable electricity generation a target of 9GW by 2030 of onshore wind is set, framed in the context of ensuring that renewable energy generation projects and associated infrastructure are considered to be *“in the overriding public interest.”* This follows the adoption of EU Regulation 2022/2577 Laying Down a Framework to Accelerate the Deployment of Renewable Energy by the EU Commission to give effect to the Repower EU Plan. The Regulation provides that the planning, construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources shall be presumed as being in the *“overriding public interest and serving public health and safety”* for the purpose of the Habitats Directive (Directive 94/43/EEC), the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) and the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC).

The Proposed Project provides the opportunity to realise the valuable renewable energy resource. If the Proposed Project were not to proceed the opportunity to capture this additional part of Tipperary’s valuable renewable energy resource would be lost, as would the opportunity to contribute to meeting Government and EU targets for the production and consumption of electricity from renewable resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

### 5.2 Residential Amenity

When considering the amenity of residents in the context of a Proposed Project, there are three main potential impacts of relevance: 1) Shadow Flicker, 2) Noise, and 3) Visual Amenity. Shadow flicker and noise are quantifiable aspects of residential amenity while visual amenity is more subjective.

In relation to Noise and Shadow Flicker, it is noted that the recommended limits of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, 2006 (2006 WEDGs) have been achieved and this is discussed further in Chapter 12 and Chapter 5 of the EIAR, respectively.

Specifically in relation to Noise, the assessment carried out as part of the EIAR has confirmed that the residual turbine noise levels associated with the Proposed Wind Farm (including consideration of existing wind farm development and other proposed wind energy development) will be within the best practice noise limits recommended in the 2006 WEDGs. Likewise, the residual effect for the operation of the proposed onsite 110kV substation is assessed as not significant. Therefore, it is considered that there are no significant noise effects associated with the Proposed Project.

In relation to Shadow Flicker, where exceedances are predicted, suitable mitigation measures are outlined in Chapter 5 of the EIAR which will be employed at the potentially affected properties to ensure that the limits set out in the 2006 WEDGs are not exceeded at any dwelling within the Shadow Flicker Study Area. It is also noted that the Proposed Project can be brought in line with the requirements of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019 Draft WEDGs) should they be adopted while this application is in the planning system, through an alteration of the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined.

The third aspect of Residential Amenity is visual amenity. A comprehensive assessment of the Landscape and Visuals effects of the Proposed Project is provided in Chapter 14 of the EIAR. Overall, visibility of the Proposed Project throughout the LVIA Study Area is deemed to have no significant effects. Furthermore, the proposed turbine locations adhere to the recommended 500m set back distance in the 2006 WEDGs and also the 4 times tip height set-back distance (for non-involved Sensitive Properties) set out in the 2019 draft WEDGs specifically for the purpose of protecting visual amenity.

Overall, it has been demonstrated in the accompanying EIAR that an appropriate balance has been achieved in delivering a suitably designed wind farm that protects the Residential Amenity of the sensitive properties surrounding the Site.

### 5.3

## Biodiversity

MKO were appointed to provide ecological assessment of the Proposed Project. The final design takes account of all Site environmental constraints (e.g., ecology, archaeology, hydrology, peat depths etc.) and design constraints (e.g., third party lands, underground electrical cables). The final design also takes account of the findings from the site investigations and baseline assessments that have been carried out during the EIAR process. The Proposed Project is supported by a Natura Impact Statement and Chapter 6: Biodiversity of the EIAR.

The Site is outside of any designated Natural Heritage Area, proposed Natural Heritage Area, Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area.

Multidisciplinary walkover surveys were undertaken on the 11th August 2022, 25th August 2022, 18th October 2022, 13th April 2023, 27th April 2023, 11th May 2023 and the 21st September 2023. Surveys were conducted throughout a range of seasons including optimum periods for vegetation surveys and habitat mapping, i.e April to September (Smith et al., 2011). Bat surveys were also carried out throughout 2023. A comprehensive walkover of the entire site was completed also.

A Biodiversity Enhancement Plan is also proposed as part of the Proposed Project which is intended to restore the pattern, profile and dimensions of a segment of the Eastwood River. Surrounding the Eastwood River, it is proposed to plant approx. 1.8ha of the forestry in the form of natural woodland. In addition to this, it is proposed to plant 5.17km of linear vegetation across the Site. Please see Appendix 6-4 Biodiversity Management and Enhancement Plan of the EIAR for further details.

Provided that the Proposed Project is constructed and operated in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation that is described within this application, significant impacts on Biodiversity are not anticipated.

### 5.3.1 **Appropriate Assessment and NIS**

Screening for Appropriate Assessment was carried out for the Proposed Project, which found that it could not be concluded beyond reasonable doubt, in the view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of relevant European sites, that the subject development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on the following European Site:

- Lower River Suir SAC [002137]

As a result, an Appropriate Assessment is required, and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect of the Proposed Project.

The resulting NIS which accompanies this application, provides an assessment of all potential direct or indirect adverse effects on European Sites whether considered individually or in combination with other plans and projects. Where the potential for any adverse effect on any European Site has been identified, the pathway by which any such effect may occur has been robustly blocked through the use of avoidance, appropriate design and mitigation measures as set out within this report and its appendices. The measures ensure that the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Project will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites. Therefore, it can be objectively concluded that the Proposed Project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site.

## 5.4 **Lands, Soil and Geology**

Chapter 8 of the EIAR contains a full assessment of the potential likely and significant effects of the Proposed Project on Land, Soils and Geology aspects of the receiving environment.

It is noted in Section 8.3.5 of Chapter 8 of the EIAR that Soil probing was undertaken to investigate the extent of the depth of peat mapped on the site. Of the 143 no. soil probe locations carried out within the Site, Peat soils were recorded at only 36 of these locations. With the greatest peat depth identified being 0.8m deep was found along the proposed access road to turbine T9 and at the turbine location itself where 0.7m of peat was encountered. Shallow peat of in the order of 0.2m to 0.3m was measured at all other areas where peat was recorded.

Overall, due to the localised and very shallow nature of the peat, along with flat topography, the risk of peat instability or slide was identified very low. It is also noted that The GSI Landslide database does not record any historic landslides in the vicinity of the Site or in the surrounding lands and classifies the probability of a landslide occurring at the Site is mapped as being Low.

## 5.5 **Hydrology and Hydrogeology**

An assessment of the potential likely and significant effects of the Proposed Project (Proposed Wind Farm and Proposed Grid Connection) on water aspects (hydrology and hydrogeology) of the receiving environment was also carried out.

Due to the nature of the Proposed Project being near surface construction activities, impacts on groundwater are imperceptible and river waterbodies are the main sensitive receptors assessed during impact assessments. The primary risk to groundwater at the site would be from oil spillage and leakages at turbine foundations or during construction plant refueling. These potential contamination sources are

to be carefully managed at the site during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Project and measures are proposed within the EIAR to deal with these potential minor local impacts.

As the Site is known to be susceptible to flooding, a Stage 3 flood risk assessment was carried out for the Site. The detailed flood risk assessment prescribes a suite of design measures to reduce flood risk, which have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Project. The results of the flood risk assessment demonstrates that there will be no potential to increase flood risk elsewhere due to the Proposed Project.

An assessment of the Proposed Project construction, operational and decommissioning stages has been completed, along with a cumulative assessment for each stage. Based on the information set out in Chapter 9 of the EIAR, no significant effects on the surface water and groundwater environments/WFD status will occur

## 5.6 Climate

An assessment of the potential significant direct and indirect effects on climate arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Project has also been completed as part of the EIAR. The objective of the assessment is to assess the potential effects that the Proposed Project may have on Climate and sets out proposed mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset any potential significant effects that are identified.

An assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Project in terms of potential carbon losses and savings was undertaken, taking into account drainage, habitat improvement, forestry felling and site restoration was undertaken. Based on the Scottish Government carbon calculator as presented in Section 11.5.2.1.1, of Chapter 11 of the EIAR, 97,276 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> will be lost to the atmosphere due to changes in the soil and ground conditions and due to the construction and operation of the Proposed Wind Farm. This represents 6% of the total amount of carbon dioxide emissions that will be offset by the Proposed Project. The 97,276 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that will be lost to the atmosphere due to changes in soil and ground conditions and due to the construction and operation of the Proposed Project will be offset by the Proposed Project in approximately 20 months of operation.

In addition to the displacement of carbon dioxide from fossil fuel-based electricity generation, the enhancement of a portion of the Eastwood River within the Site will involve the restoration of a previously deepened and straightened channel to appropriate dimensions, pattern and profile and the establishment of a native woodlands buffer. This will result in a long-term imperceptible positive effect on climate due to improved condition of the Eastwood River.

Potential cumulative effects on air quality and climate between the Proposed Project and other permitted or proposed projects and plans in the area, (wind energy or otherwise), as set out in Section 2.8 in Chapter 2 of the EIAR, were also considered as part of the assessment. While there will be greenhouse gas emissions associated with the construction of the Proposed Project, this will take place under the Electricity sector emissions ceiling and will be offset by the operation of the Proposed Project within its operational life. Thus, there will be no cumulative effects arising on climate from the Proposed Project and other permitted or proposed projects and plans in the area.

Chapter 11 of the EIAR contains a full assessment of the potential significant direct and indirect effects on climate arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Project.

## 5.7 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Impacts on archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage are assessed in terms of the construction, operational and decommissioning phase of the Proposed Project. Potential cumulative impacts with other projects are also assessed. The assessment was based on desktop research, field survey, GIS based mapping, ZTV and was also assisted by photowire and photomontage images from certain

assets/locations. A detailed examination of the available baseline data was undertaken in addition to a comprehensive site inspection. The latter comprised a walk-over survey of the Site and any proposed infrastructure therein and a windscreen survey and walk-over survey of the Proposed Grid Connection. One recorded monument is located within the proposed Site; however, it is a redundant record and considered non-archaeological. It is also located outside the footprint of any Proposed Project infrastructure.

Where potential impacts have been identified, such as to potential sub-surface archaeology, appropriate mitigation measures have been recommended in order to minimise any such impacts. Recommended mitigation includes a 20m buffer zone around a rectangular crop mark, pre-development archaeological testing of the Proposed Project infrastructure (turbine bases, hardstands, compounds, new roads, grid connection in greenfield areas, etc) and archaeological monitoring during the construction stage of the project.

Chapter 13 of the EIAR contains the full assessment of the potential direct and indirect effects of the Proposed Project on the surrounding archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage landscape.

## 5.8 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) considers direct and indirect effects on landscape resources, landscape character and designated landscapes. It examines the nature and extent of effects on existing views and visual amenity, including residential visual amenity. The effects of the Proposed Project are assessed during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Project. The LVIA also consider cumulative effects i.e., the incremental effects of the Proposed Project in combination with other plans and/or projects.

The landscape area where the Proposed Project is located in an extensively flat, agricultural landscape. To the west, prominent topographical features such as Devil's Bit, Kilduff and the Borrisnoe Mountains provide topographical screening of the turbines. ZTV mapping of Chapter 14 of the EIAR indicates full theoretical visibility within 5km of the proposed turbines, with occasional patches of limited visibility due to slight elevations. Visibility decreases notably to the west, beyond the ridgelines of the Devil's Bit, Kilduff and Borrisnoe mountains. Apart from local undulations within the LVIA Study Area and the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains to the north of the Proposed Project, there are large areas within 20km of the proposed turbines which have theoretical visibility indicated. On-site surveys found that most prominent visibility is located within 5km of the proposed turbines, with intermittent views beyond this distance where the turbines appear as background elements, often screened by intervening vegetation.

Overall, the landscape has been deemed to have a low sensitivity to wind energy development, considering its current land use and is capable of accommodating a wind energy development of the scale proposed, given the scale of the landscape and the levels of screening existent within it.

In conclusion, no significant landscape effects have been identified and significant visual effects only have potential to occur at a low number of residential properties located within 1km of the proposed turbines. Overall, visibility of the Proposed Project throughout the LVIA Study Area is deemed to have no significant effects. The Proposed Project is appropriately designed and suitably scaled, and it has been demonstrated that no significant landscape and visual effects will arise as a result of the Proposed Project.

Chapter 14 of the EIAR contains the full landscape and visual assessment carried out for the Proposed Project in accordance with various guidelines for wind energy and visual assessment.

## 5.9 Traffic and Transport

The Site is located adjacent to the N62 National Road, and it has been demonstrated that only minor accommodation works are necessary to deliver materials to the Site, including oversized turbine component loads.

The EIAR includes an assessment of the traffic effects resulting from the Proposed Project during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. The impact of the additional traffic generated by the Proposed Project is assessed on the transport delivery routes, together with a swept path analysis of the proposed turbine delivery route based on the geometric requirements of the abnormally sized vehicles required to deliver the turbine components to the Site.

During the construction phase of the Proposed Project the extent of the impact identified, ranges from a slight to moderate and temporary negative effect. Once the Proposed Project is operational the traffic impact created by maintenance staff will be imperceptible. The residual effect for the decommissioning phase will be less than that outlined for the construction stage and will be slight to imperceptible.

Please refer to Chapter 15 of the EIAR for further details.



## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The provision of wind energy developments such as the one proposed is strongly supported by International, National, Regional and Local policies and guidelines aimed at achieving the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy, increasing renewable energy generation, and enhancing energy security. Specifically, the Proposed Project will contribute to achieving the target of generating 9GW of electricity from onshore wind and reducing GHG emissions by 80% by 2030 as set out in the CAP.

The project aligns with National Strategic Outcomes and Objectives outlined in the National Planning Framework, particularly Objective 55, which seeks to 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.

It is re-iterated for clarity that the Proposed Project is consistent with the TCDP which acknowledges the importance of renewable energy in reducing anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and the contribution of renewable energy in achieving national and EU target net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Furthermore, the Proposed Project is located in an area classified as ‘Open to Consideration’ in the RES which areas may or may not be appropriate, depending on the character of the landscape and the potential impact of the Proposed Project on the environment. In this regard it is reiterated that the Proposed Project has been subject to a rigorous design process informed by comprehensive planning and environmental assessments and surveys, which have collectively concluded that the proposal is in line with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Specifically, there are no significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Project during either the construction, operational or decommissioning phases of the development nor will the Proposed Project have any significant effects on any European Sites (as assessed within the accompanying Natura Impact Statement).

Having regard to the key points set out in this Report, it is respectfully requested that the Board consider the relevant international, national and regional planning context that applies to the Proposed Project, and grants permission for the Proposed Wind Farm which is the subject of this application.