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3 SCOPING, CONSULTATIONS, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND KEY ISSUES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents background information on the consultations undertaken by Orsted and the RSK consultant team in EIA scoping, pre-planning consultations, and community engagement throughout design of the Proposed Development.

The purpose of EIA scoping and community engagement is to obtain valuable information about the local community and environment. This information aids in identifying the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the surrounding environment and community. In addition, this information forms part of the key issues to be considered in the design of the Proposed Development.

The Planning Report, which is presented in **Part 1, Section 8** of the planning application documentation, provides further detail on the pre-planning consultations with Clare County Council and An Bord Pleanála.

Throughout the design of the Proposed Development and preparation of the EIAR, RSK's consultant team and Orsted's Project Management team undertook consultations with key stakeholders, either through correspondence via email and provision of the EIAR Scoping Consultation Document or through direct engagement.

The stakeholders which were consulted are listed below¹:

- An Taisce
- Applications Unit (DAU)
- Bat Conservation Ireland
- BirdWatch Ireland
- Clare County Council Archaeology Office
- Clare County Council Environment Section
- Clare County Council Heritage Office
- Clare County Council Planning Authority
- Clare County Council Roads and Transports Department
- Clare National Roads Office
- Commission for Energy Regulation

¹ Note: The list of consultees for the EIAR Scoping Report excludes telecoms operators which were contacted separately as part of the Telecommunications Impact Study prepared by Ai Bridges (refer to **EIAR Chapter 11**).

- Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Environmental Coordination Unit, Climate Change & Bioenergy Policy Division
- Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Forestry Division
- Department of Defence, Property Management Branch
- Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Development
- Dublin Airport
- EirGrid
- Environmental Protection Agency
- ESB Networks
- Fáilte Ireland
- Gas Networks Ireland
- Geological Survey Ireland
- Health and Safety Authority
- Health Service Executive, Environmental Health and Emergency Planning
- Iarnród Éireann
- Inland Fisheries Ireland, Northern and Western Region
- Ireland West Airport Knock
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Irish Raptor Study Group
- Irish Wildlife Trust
- Kerry Airport
- National Monuments Service
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- National Transport Authority, Strategic Planning Section
- Office of Public Works
- Shannon Airport
- Sligo Airport
- Southern Regional Assembly
- Teagasc – Agriculture and Food Development Authority
- The Arts Council
- The Heritage Council
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Land Use Planning Unit
- Uisce Eireann

3.2 EIAR scoping

RSK Ireland prepared an EIA Scoping Consultation Document providing an overview of the Proposed Development, the project scope, a description of the baseline environment, the proposed assessment methodology and potential significant effects. The EIA Scoping Consultation Document defined which environmental factors would be assessed in further detail in the EIAR.

The EIA Scoping Consultation Document identified key sensitive receptors, the potential pathways for effects, and the direct and indirect potential significant effects that may arise during construction and operation of the Proposed Development on each of the environmental factors listed in Article 3 of the EU EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) - reproduced below.

Article 3

1. The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe, and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on the following factors:

(a) population and human health;

(b) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC;

(c) land, soil, water, air and climate;

(d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape;

(e) the interaction between the factors referred to in points (a) to (d).

2. The effects referred to in paragraph 1 on the factors set out therein shall include the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters that are relevant to the project concerned.

The scoping exercise was undertaken to provide agencies and organisations with details on the Proposed Development, and to request any feedback and information they might possess that would assist in preparing the EIAR.

The agencies consulted in the scoping exercise were selected from among the statutory consultees listed in article 28 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2000 (as amended), as considered appropriate to the Proposed Development, its location, and potential impacts and effects, as well as environmental non-governmental bodies with specified interest in the matters pertaining to the Proposed Development (i.e., bats and birds).

The Scoping Consultation Document along with a template of the covering letter which was sent out to consultees on 13th September 2023 are presented in **Appendix 3.1** of the EIAR. A table of responses received from the EIA scoping exercise up to 13th October 2023 and any other relevant pre-planning engagements with consultees is provided in **Appendix 3.2**. A summary of the aforementioned responses, as well as description of where they are addressed in the EIAR, as relevant, is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Summary of EIAR scoping and pre-planning consultation responses

Consultee	Date of Response / Communication	Response Received / Key Issues Raised	Where the Key Issues are Addressed
Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, Forestry Division	3 rd October 2023	Comments were received in a letter attached to an email from the Environmental Co-ordination Unit from the Felling Division concerning Felling Licenses, Felling and Reforestation and Felling and EIAR.	<p>Chapter 7 Biodiversity presents detail on the habitat loss which will result from the Proposed Development. Refer to Appendix 7.1 Species and Habitat Management Plan for details on habitat reinstatement and additional biodiversity enhancements.</p> <p>Chapter 5 Project Description addresses that the Proposed Development will adhere to the licensing requirements of the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in securing a Felling Licence.</p>
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Development Applications Unit (DAU)	Our Ref: G Pre00223/2023 13 th October 2023	Comments received in a letter attached to an email from the Development Application Unit (DAU) from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage concerning heritage related recommendations.	Chapter 15 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
Dublin Airport	10 th October 2023	<i>“As the proposed wind farm at Oatfield, Co. Clare is beyond 30 nautical miles of both Dublin and Cork Airports, DAA have no comment to make in respect of the EIAR Scoping report shared previously, other than to recommend consultation with the IAA and AirNav Ireland.”</i>	Chapter 11 Material Assets.

Consultee	Date of Response / Communication	Response Received / Key Issues Raised	Where the Key Issues are Addressed
Fáilte Ireland	20 th September 2023	<p>“Please see <i>attached a copy of Fáilte Ireland’s (updated) Guidelines for the Treatment of Tourism in an EIA, which you may find informative for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed project. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance for those conducting Environmental Impact Assessment and compiling an Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR), or those assessing EIARs, where the project involves tourism or may have an impact upon tourism. These guidelines are non-statutory and act as supplementary advice to the EPA EIAR Guidelines outlined in section 2.</i>”</p>	<p>Fáilte Ireland’s (updated) guidelines refer to national legislation and statutory guidance related to the preparation of EIAR (such as EPA EIAR guidelines). These documents have been considered in the preparation of the entire EIAR.</p>
Gas Networks Ireland	14 th September 2023	<p><i>An email response which indicated that Gas Networks Ireland has no recorded gas network within the area of interest. The email emphasised that a current gas network map (or maps) must always be kept on site while work is under way.</i></p>	<p>Chapter 11 Material Assets.</p>
Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)	9 th October 2023	<p>An email attachment was received. on the 9th of October 2023, which provides useful information and GIS resources held by GSI on the geological and hydrogeological resource of the locality with particular focus on geoheritage, groundwater, geological mapping, geotechnical database resources, geohazards, and natural resources (minerals/aggregates).</p>	<p>Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Chapter 10 Land, Soils and Geology,</p>
Office of Public Works (OPW)	13 th October 2023	<p>The OPW response made reference to the use of <i>“The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DoEHLG and OPW, November 2009”</i>.</p> <p><i>Further OPW noted:</i></p> <p><i>“Where a development proposals include the construction of bridges, culverts or similar structures the applicant should have</i></p>	<p>Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology, the CEMP in Chapter 5 Project Description (Appendix 5.2 EIAR Vol III) and Part 5 of the planning application (Flood Risk Assessment).</p>

Consultee	Date of Response / Communication	Response Received / Key Issues Raised	Where the Key Issues are Addressed
		<i>regard to the requirement of Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945”.</i>	
Shannon Airport + AirNav	18 th September 2023	<p><i>Comments received from AirNav and Shannon Airport with 3 attached documents on studies previously conducted on the project area.</i></p> <p><i>The comments received from AirNav suggested that the proposed turbines may impact the conduct of flight surveillance radars on Woodcock Hill, which is approximately 6km from the proposed wind farm.</i></p>	Chapter 11 Material Assets.
Shannon Airport	25 th September 2023	<p><i>Comments received from Shannon Airport together with AirNav suggested that:</i></p> <p><i>The siting of wind turbines at this location may have implications for the operations of the communication, navigation and surveillance systems used by Air Traffic Control for the separation and safety of aircraft at Shannon Airport. The geographical siting of these turbines may also have implications for the flight paths of aircraft.</i></p> <p><i>Shannon Airport Authority fully supports the position as stated by our colleagues in the Airspace & Navigation section of Air NAV Ireland whereby some of the specific concerns were already raised with you.</i></p>	Chapter 11 Material Assets.
Sligo Airport	13 th September 2023	<p><i>“Considering the location of this project it will have no bearing or affect to Sligo Airport operations.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, we have no comments or observations to make”.</i></p>	N/A

Consultee	Date of Response / Communication	Response Received / Key Issues Raised	Where the Key Issues are Addressed
<p>Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Land Use Planning Unit</p>	<p>29th September 2023</p>	<p><i>“Response received in an email correspondence of 13 September 2023, which stated Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s (TII’s) position in relation to the Scoping Report.</i></p> <p><i>With respect to EIAR scoping issues, TII provided recommendations on general guidance for the preparation of an EIAR, which may affect the national road network.</i></p>	<p>Chapter 5 Project Description; Chapter 16 Traffic and Transport; Chapter 14 Landscape and Visual Assessment; Chapter 13 Noise & Vibration; and, Chapter 20 Cumulative Effects.</p> <p>See also Volume III Appendix 5.1 CEMP and Volume III, Appendix 5.2 CTMP.</p>
<p>Uisce Eireann</p>	<p>14th September 2023</p>	<p>A written correspondence was received acknowledging the Environmental <i>Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping request relating to Orsted Ltd.’s forthcoming planning application for a windfarm in Co Clare.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, an email attachment providing Uisce Éireann’s scoping opinion in relation to Water Services was provided. aspects of Water Services should be considered in the scope of an hydrogeological pathways between the applicant’s site and</i></p>	<p>Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology and CEMP in Volume III, Appendix 5.2</p>

3.3 Pre-planning consultations

3.3.1 An Bord Pleanála

A meeting was held with An Bord Pleanála on 23rd February 2023, as part of the SID pre-application process to determine if the Proposed Development would be considered Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). On the 10th of October 2023, the Applicant was notified by the Board that the Proposed Development constitutes an SID in accordance with the seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The planning application for the Development will therefore be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

3.3.2 Clare County Council

A pre-planning meeting was held with Clare County Council on 5th October 2023. The meeting was attended by Senior Executive Planner (Gareth Ruane) of Clare County Council Planning Authority. Members of the Orsted and RSK project and specialist team attended the meeting.

The prospective applicant and consultant team shared a presentation which included a brief overview of the Proposed Development and information on the progress of baseline studies and surveys; the constraints and opportunities posed by the site location and characteristics in relation to project design; the community engagement programme; planning policy and technical standards applicable to the proposed development.

The Planning Authority representative addressed the principle of development at this location, where ten of the proposed eleven turbines are in a designated Strategic Area for wind development and one within an area where wind energy is Accepted in Principle, as per the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. The Planning Authority representative also provided feedback² on aspects to be addressed in the EIAR and planning application related to water quality, noise, archaeology, landscape, biodiversity, and residential amenity.

3.4 Community engagement

The aim of the community engagement programme organised by Orsted, which will continue beyond submission of the planning application for the Proposed Development, is to ensure that the views, concerns, and feedback received from the local community are considered as part of the design and EIA process.

The community engagement programme for the Proposed Development has taken the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines (December 2019) into consideration, which provides guidance for enhanced

² Please note all pre-planning comments are an expression of informal officer opinion only made without prejudice to the determination of any formal planning application by the Planning Authority. As per Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) all pre-planning consultation and information provided shall not prejudice the performance of the Planning Authority of any other of its functions under the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended) or any regulations made under this Act and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in legal proceedings.

community engagement for wind energy development proposals. Under the Draft Guidelines, a developer is required to undertake community engagement and prepare and submit a community report with the planning application. Appendix 2 of the Draft Guidelines provides a road map to assist with identification of the appropriate geographical area, the stakeholders, and the methods of communication for the community engagement programme throughout the design and development, construction, and operation of the Proposed Development.

3.4.1 Community Report

Details of the activities, events and follow up actions undertaken during the community engagement programme for the Proposed Development to date, as well as future planned activities are provided in the Community Report (**Appendix 1 of the Planning Report in Part 1, Section 8** of the planning application).

3.4.2 Community Liaison Officers

Orsted is committed to transparent and valuable consultation to support sustainable development. This enables active consultation and engagement with an informed community. In line with best practice, Orsted has appointed two Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) that have led community engagement for the proposed project in East Clare, supported by the project managers.

3.4.3 Timeline of community engagement activities

Table 3.2 provides a timeline and description of Orsted's public engagement activities for the Proposed Development, both in person and in digital/online format.

Table 3.2. Timeline and description of community engagement activities

Date	Style Description of Activity
13 th July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Development website launched. The project is outlined on the website including a map for the study area and contact details for the CLOs.
9 th August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter 1 was shared with households within 2km of the proposed development. It formally introduced the project to the local community, provided information on the environmental studies and surveys that were underway as well as giving information on the Community Benefit Fund. A map was included showing the first iteration of the turbine layout. While dropping the newsletters, the CLOs and project managers conducted door knocks and engaged many people within the 2km and answered any questions that arose. The newsletter included the CLOs contact details for those who weren't home as well as providing details of the project website where more information was available. An invitation to a Public Exhibition was included in the newsletter
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the summer the CLOs engage people with questions on the project via phone, email and in person
18 th August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertisement on the Public Exhibition published in Clare Champion newspaper.
23 rd August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Consultation and Exhibition Event in Dagger's Bar, Ardnacrusha – approx. 52 people attended from the surrounding area. The exhibition displayed a number of maps showing the turbine layout. Posters were on display giving detail on the EIA process, what surveys were being undertaken as well as useful information on the community benefit fund. There were a number of photomontages on display. The CLOs and project managers were in attendance. The posters, maps and photomontages allowed for meaningful conversations with those that attended.
25 th August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project website updated with visual displays from the Public Exhibition.
Summer 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on from the public consultation and exhibition event, the CLOs met with those who requested further consultation. All queries that arose post event were responded to and in person meetings were had with individuals.
Winter 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter 2 issued to households within 2km. Newsletter also uploaded to project website. Final turbine layout shown. Information provided on what informed the layout. Details given on the planning process and where the planning application and associated documents can be viewed.

3.4.4 Project website

A project website (<https://orsted.ie/renewable-energy-solutions/oatfield>) has been created and is regularly updated to share information with the local community. Information presented on the project website provides information on the following:

- The applicant;
- Main findings and progress of the EIAR;
- Project details and maps;
- Relevant publications;
- Information from the Community Consultation Event; and
- Contact information for Orsted CLOs.

All queries received via the contact details provided on the website are responded to by the CLOs in a timely manner.

3.4.5 Community Consultation Event

Orsted hosted a Community Consultation Event on the Proposed Development in Dagger's Bar, Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare on 23rd August 2023. The purpose of this event was to discuss the Proposed Development to residents and the general public. This provided an opportunity for interested parties and those local to the proposed development to engage with Orsted to raise any queries or concerns about the Proposed Development.

An advertisement for this event was published in the local paper, Clare Champion, on 18th August 2023. On the day of the event, 52 attendees were welcomed and guided through the visual displays organised by Orsted. Members of the Orsted project management team, including CLOs, were in attendance to answer questions and explain the information on display. Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback and raise any queries.

3.4.6 Queries and concerns raised

A summary of the queries and concerns raised during the community engagement event, the feedback provided by Orsted and the manner in which each query is incorporated into the design and development of the Proposed Development is presented in **Table 3.3**. Although a brief summary of the discussions is provided, in depth discussions took place throughout the event.

Table 3.3. Summary of key topics raised in the community engagement programme

Topic	Response / action
Cumulative effects	<p>A query was raised about the proximity of the Proposed Development to another development currently in the pre-planning public domain, which is planned in the same general area as the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Orsted confirmed that they are aware of the proposed Knockshanvo wind farm. Both Proposed Developments will be submitted independently and adjudicated upon by the relevant planning authorities. The planning process prevents a situation from arising whereby both projects would be consented without full consideration of the cumulative impacts.</p>
Landscape and Visual / Noise	<p>A query was raised about the location of any proposed construction site compounds.</p> <p>Orsted noted that once confirmed, the location(s) of the site compound will be shown on the planning drawings which will be publicly available once submitted to An Bord Pleanála.</p>
Landscape and Visual	<p>A query was raised on whether it would be possible to reduce the height of, or potentially exclude entirely, any turbine if concern was raised by any resident.</p> <p>Orsted noted that this will be looked into - the EIA process would assess the visual amenity to reduce impacts where possible.</p>
Noise	<p>A query was raised about the noise set back distance to houses.</p> <p>Orsted noted a minimum set back distance of 4x the tip height of the turbine model has been applied, meaning the turbines will be at least 720m from dwellings, apart from those financially involved. Noise regulations will be complied with at all receptors.</p>
Landscape and Visual	<p>A query was raised about the height of another wind farm development (Fahy Beg) in comparison to the Proposed Development.</p> <p>Orsted noted that Fahy Beg proposed turbine tip heights were between 169m and 176.5m. The Proposed Development has a proposed tip height of 180m, which is not uncommon for wind farms.</p>

Topic	Response / action
Ecology	<p>Concerns were raised over birds of prey spotted nesting in the area recently. Concerns were also raised about bats and owls roosting/nesting near houses.</p> <p>Orsted noted that extensive ornithological and ecological surveys have been carried out in the area. The design of the Proposed Development is informed by the results of these surveys.</p>
Public Disturbance	<p>A query was raised about how long the roadworks / construction works would last.</p> <p>Orsted noted that the entire construction period would be approximately 18 – 24 months.</p>

3.4.7 Planned future engagements

3.4.7.1 *Planning application*

Orsted will continue its programme of community engagement up to the time of submission of the planning application. A second newsletter is planned for release to the public in November 2023 with updates on environmental studies, surveys and the final turbine layout design. Any enquiries or submissions in relation to the Proposed Development received by the CLOs during the statutory consultation period will be directed to An Bord Pleanála. Periodic updates on the progress of the planning application will be provided on the project website.

3.4.7.2 *Construction phase*

Orsted will engage further with the community as it prepares for construction of the project. Prior to the commencement of the construction activities, the CLOs will notify the residents in the proximity of the Proposed Development and inform them of the scheduled dates for the construction works. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) included in **Appendix 5.1** of EIAR **Chapter 5 Project Description**, addresses measures to minimise noise, dust and air pollution arising from construction activities on the Zone of Influence (ZOI). The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) included in **Appendix 5.2** addresses traffic control measures for the delivery of turbine components, management of traffic diversions required for works on the grid connection route and accommodating works for the turbine delivery route. The CEMP and the CTMP provide the basis for a final CEMP and CTMP which will be prepared by the appointed contractor in advance of commencement of development.

These documents, which will be submitted to the planning authority for review and approval, will be the key reference documents for engagement during the construction stage. The CLO's particular emphasis during the construction stage will be in communicating with the public and the relevant authorities in advance of construction activities to ensure the impact of works on local road users and residents is minimised.

The CLOs will ensure that advance notice is given to all households for any likely disruption to traffic during the construction phase, through direct communication and via periodic updates to the project website. The CLOs will be available to the community to address and deal with all enquiries and concerns.

3.4.7.3 *Operation Phase*

Throughout the Proposed Development's estimated 35-year operation, it will be the appointed CLO's responsibility to directly address and investigate issues that are raised.

In the 12 months preceding the commencement of decommissioning the wind farm, the wind farm operator and the appointed CLOs will engage with all residents within 2km of the project site to outline the decommissioning plan and address any issues raised. As with other phases, the project website will be updated to provide relevant information to the local community.