



Cush Wind Farm

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Annex 1.5: Offaly County Council Meeting Minutes

Cush Wind Limited

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Cush Wind Farm
Meeting with Offaly County Council
Meeting Minutes

Project	Cush Wind Farm		
Client	Cush Wind Limited		
Meeting No.	1		
Location	Microsoft Teams		
Date	13 March 2023	Time	11:00am – 12:00pm
Attendees	James Carville (JC)	Cush Wind Limited	
	Declan Owens (DO)	GES	
	Una McCafferkey (UMC)	Offaly County Council	
	Danny Mangan (DM)	Offaly County Council	
	Andrew Murray (AM)	Offaly County Council	
	John Mitchell (JM)	Offaly County Council	
	Niall Hogan (NH)	Offaly County Council	
Prepared by	Declan Owens		
Agenda Item	Minutes		
1.0	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UMC introduced herself and her colleagues from Offaly County Council (OCC) • DO introduced himself and JC. 		
2.0	<p>Project introduction & Site Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JC introduced Cush Wind Limited, company history, and previous Irish experience of development team. • DO introduced the project, set out its general location and the characteristics of the site, including land cover. 		
3.0	<p>Site Selection Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO outlined the rationale for the selection of the site for development including local planning policy ('Open for Consideration') and the general absence of fundamental environmental constraints. • Generally achievable visual-amenity setback (<i>Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019</i>) of 4-times tip for 'non-involved' dwellings. • The availability of generous setbacks reduces likelihood of significant noise/shadow/visual amenity effects. • General ease of access. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to connect to Electricity grid. • Sufficient wind speeds.
4.0	<p>Current Project Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 x wind turbines, including ancillary infrastructure; access tracks, entrances, underground cabling, met mast, spoil deposition areas, hardstands, drainage, and felling. • Project designed on basis of turbines with a tip height of 200m and an output of 7.2MW (total output of overall project is 79.2MW). • Grid connection - single grid connection being considered/assessed in EIAR, but will not make up part of the initial planning application. Outline Scoping Report, previously furnished to OCC, had a series of 5 no. grid options identified, that has now been reduced to the 1 option. • Turbine components to be delivered via Galway Port, N6, M6, N52, and N62.
5.0	<p>Environmental Scoping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with Government Departments, relevant bodies, authorities, and service providers. • Environmental Constraints Analysis by specialist environmental consultants (biodiversity, land and soils, water, landscape, cultural heritage, noise, vibration and shadow flicker, and material assets). • Biodiversity – European sites (SACs/SPAs) within 20km (including Qualifying Interests) discussed, as well as Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas. Hydrological link (direct) to 7 European sites – within the same catchment area (Lower Shannon). Survey work including birds, mammals, habitats, and aquatic ongoing. • Land, Soils and Water – Stage III Flood Risk Assessment carried out resulting in modelled flood plain. Site infrastructure largely avoiding flood plain. Geology of the site cut over raised bog with some basic shallow well drained mineral soils to the east. Underlying bedrock has been identified as broadly coniferous limestones. • Cultural Heritage – 6 Recorded Monuments located within 1km of the project. 4 Bog Features (roundwood, brushwood, and isolated post) to the north and a mass rock & holy well to the south. Site not within archaeological zone of potential. One zone located within 5km – Birr. DO advanced that Birr will be taken into consideration in context of CH and Landscape assessment within EIAR. Clonmacnoise, which is located on the outer periphery of the study area, also to be considered and assessed.
6.0	<p>Emerging Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One pre application consultation meeting has been carried out with the Board. Applicant has written to the Board to ask for closure on the PAC process. It is anticipated that the Board will confirm that the project is indeed SID. • Scoping process continues, but largely concluded at this juncture in preparation for full EIAR and planning application submission.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wind Farm design has largely remained similar throughout the scoping stage, with small scale alterations to access tracks, compounds and grid connection options, having taken place. • All parts of the project to be included in the EIAR, including Wind Farm, grid connection, haul route, and felling, however not all will make up part of the initial planning application. • Next steps include; further consultation and updates, consultation with OCC (basis of current meeting, closure of PAC process with the Board, and preparation/submission of planning application, including EIAR and NIS. • Anticipated submission date: Q2 2023. • DO thanked UMC and the other officers from OCC for organising/attending the pre planning consultation meeting and identified that, from experience, this type of pre planning meeting can be a really useful exercise in terms of opening up lines of communication on the proposed project and gaining useful feedback form the Local Authority.
7.0	<p>Open Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM queried how the proposed development 1) had considered the planning status and rehabilitation plans on the existing Bord Na Mona boglands (north of the application site) and 2) had considered the inclusion of pathways for walking and cycling which could be utilised as part of a wider network connecting Lough Boora to Birr. • DO identified that the planning status and what that meant for the planning application was something that was being considered and would be considered further moving forward. DO confirmed that, to his knowledge, no planning/substitute consent application had been made relative to these lands. Rehab plans to be considered in the requisite assessment within the EIAR. • JC spoke about the difficulties in embedding a publicly accessible footpath or cycleway into a scheme of this nature, which includes a series of private landowners as well as potentially having to negotiate a crossing of the N62. JC did however welcome any suggestions or plans that OCC may have on the subject and it was agreed by all that these would be forwarded for further consideration in the emerging design of the project. JC also highlighted that it was easier for the likes of Bord Na Mona to incorporate this type of facility into their projects, as they were the sole landowner. • DL advised that a Road Safety Audit (RSA) should be carried out on the site, that a robust set of control measures should be put in place to ensure that no damage is done to the road network through the construction phase of development, and that a Construction Management Plan including Traffic Management Plan should be included with the application. DL also asked about the status of the site entrances and specifically the level of traffic anticipated at the south western local road access point.

- DO outlined that a RSA had already been carried out on the site, that the consultant had made some suggested changes to design, and that said changes have been implemented and included in the latest design iteration. DO agreed that a robust set of measures will be included within the EIAR in order to ensure that there are no significant effects on the road network, as a result of the proposed development.
- JC outlined that the central site entrances included two construction phase accesses onto the N62, one to access the west of the site and the other to access the east. JC confirmed that vehicle numbers using the other two (local road) operational phase accesses would be minimal, that there would be weeks with no traffic at all and in the event of turbine maintenance 3/4 vehicle movements a day.
- DL referred to the haul route and outlined that any permanent physical alterations to the haul route would need to be fully assessed within the various chapters across the EIAR.
- DO advised that the haul route will involve some small scale, minor, and temporary works and that no significant, permanent physical works were proposed.
- NH was keen to echo the sentiment of DM and set out a series of prevention and control measures which he felt should be incorporated into the proposed project in order to ensure that there is no significant impact on the surrounding road network. NH also reference site visibility splay on the N62, owing to its undulating nature, and the need to adequately assess same. NH welcomed that a RSA had been carried out.
- DO asked that UMC/NH might put the list of control measures together within a response on the meeting and UMC agreed that she would put together a general feedback document, which included the points raised in the meeting.
- UMC welcomed that alterations had been made to the location of the site compound area (s) during the scoping process and that OCC would have had concerns with the site compound located so close to the local road at the south west of the site area.
- UMC advised that strong consideration be given to incorporating a community pathway into the proposed development.
- UMC highlighted that the source of materials, to be brought to site, should be considered and assessed in the project EIAR and that specific details of the community benefit fund should be included also.
- UMC referred to Chapter 13 (Development Management Standards) in the Offaly County Development Plan and specifically DMS 104. Landscape and visual impact, including cumulative impact(s), should be given strong consideration within the EIAR.
- UMC asked that mature vegetation across the site should be preserved and retained where possible and that the reinstatement proposals for the construction phase site entrances should be considered within the Biodiversity Section of the EIAR.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DO noted the comments and recommendations made by UMC and assured that each subject would be given due consideration within the EIAR and, where applicable, the NIS.
8.0	<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UMC confirmed that they she no further matters to raise and pointed to the position of the Planning Authority towards wind energy development at this location ('open for consideration'), identifying that the site was just within the zoning. • JC and DO once again thanked UMC, AM, DM, JM, and NH for facilitating the meeting and the meeting was brought to a close.

