



APPENDIX 6-9

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE

**OUTLINE RISK MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

Introduction

White-tailed Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla* is an Annex I and Red-listed raptor species. It was reintroduced into Ireland in 2007 with releases of chicks from Norway in the area of Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry, along with several other locations nationwide. Between 2007 and 2011. The second phase of the reintroduction programme commenced in 2020 with the release of additional young eagles. There is an estimated national breeding population of 12 pairs (O'Donoghue *et al.* 2020).

White-tailed Eagle is known to be vulnerable to collision with turbines. Studies in Norway have shown that the species does not show any clear avoidance flight responses to the wind turbines (Dahl *et al.* 2013). From 2007 to 2019, 6 birds were recovered in Ireland that are believed to have collided with turbines, with three of these fatalities occurring in Co. Kerry (*loc cit.*). For context, a further 12 White-tailed Eagles were recovered nationally that were victim to poisoning or shooting. The species takes several years to reach breeding maturity and during this time the juvenile eagles tend to roam widely across the country. They are a large and highly mobile species that are often observed circling and soaring and riding thermals.

During ornithological surveys for the Proposed Development, White-tailed Eagles were observed at a roost near the entrance to Grousemount Wind Farm and there were occasional observations of birds in the hinterland area during the summer months. The breeding season Vantage Point (VP) surveys only recorded a total of 4 flightlines with none of these birds within the EIAR Site Boundary. In total individual White-tailed Eagles were observed for a total of almost 10 minutes (off-site) over the course of three breeding seasons.

In winter there were more frequent observations of the species, sometimes of up to three individuals at once. The number of flightlines recorded in the winter seasons (2018/2019, 2019/2020 & 2021/2022) was 7, 3 and 11 respectively. Birds were under observation for a cumulative total of 2 hours 55 minutes and 44 seconds (c. 2.7% of the total observation period) during the winter seasons. A total of 8 of the flightlines recorded were of White-tailed Eagles flying at Rotor Swept Height (RSH) within the EIAR Site Boundary, for a cumulative total of 1 hour 21 minutes and 53 seconds (1.3% of the total observation period). The observations of White-tailed Eagle on-site were exclusively of birds in flight and while some may have been opportunistically foraging, no incidence of prey capture or scavenging was observed within the EIAR Site Boundary. While the fatality surveys did not record any evidence of raptor mortality at the site and the species was not recorded within the EIAR Site Boundary during the breeding season period, it was concluded that there is some potential for collisions to occur with White-tailed Eagle at the Proposed Development.

The potential for collision mortalities and a risk management strategy was previously developed for the nearby Grousemount Wind Farm. The Grousemount Wind Farm development differed from the Proposed Development being assessed within this EIAR as it involved the development of a new wind farm with 38 turbines. The Proposed Development includes for the Repowering of the Existing Kilgarvan Wind Farm and will result in the net reduction of turbines which exist onsite presently. However, during the construction phase of the Proposed Development and in advance of the operational phase of the proposed turbines, a detailed White-tailed Eagle mitigation strategy will be implemented in accordance with that agreed with Kerry County Council as part of the Grousemount Planning Application, for the purpose of minimising the risk to White-tailed Eagles. The requirement

to adhere to this strategy to prevent Eagle mortality is also referenced in Chapter 12 of the Kerry County Development Plan (Section 12.5.4.1.4).

Outline Management Strategy

We present herein an outline plan to minimise risk to White-tailed Eagle. A suitably qualified ornithologist will be appointed to develop and oversee the implementation of the plan which will include the following key measures.

Pre & During Construction

- Engage with the key stakeholders including the White-tailed Eagle Reintroduction group, and NPWS.
- Implement an annual monitoring and reporting approach in accordance with the agreed programme for Grousemount Wind Farm.
- Instigate regular checks, to ensure that no carrion is present within the Proposed Development site that could possibly serve as an attractant for feeding White-tailed Eagles. Because dead sheep are likely to be the main source of carrion, effort will be concentrated during times when such death is most likely, i.e. seasonally and climatically. The final approach will be informed by the experience of the Grousemount wind farm strategy.
 - Any carrion recorded will be collected and disposed of at a suitably licensed facility.
- The White-tailed Eagles most likely to access the Proposed Development site are young birds that have dispersed from the release, or nest sites. Funds for 10 GSM/GPS 'satellite' tags, including download costs (assuming each tag will last four years), will be transferred to the Reintroduction Programme prior to commencement of the commissioning of the Proposed Development in accordance with the agreed approach implemented for Grousemount Wind Farm. Responsibility for the tagging of birds will be handed to the Reintroduction Programme as was the case for Grousemount Wind Farm.
- The GPS 'satellite' tags will provide accurate data on numerous locations per day, providing rapid detection of any regular use of the Proposed Development site by White-tailed Eagle(s) and enable the Site Manager to focus visual observational efforts (and to investigate any possible cause of regular use e.g. presence of a carcass) before any activity builds to a level where collision risk becomes unacceptable. The Site Manager will be responsible for managing and implementing a potential turbine shut-down system, which will be informed by the following:
 - Any sightings and information from third parties, notably the Reintroduction Programme and information on tagged individuals
 - Based on these information sources, thresholds and a protocol for instigating a shut-down (turbine numbers, locations and stop duration) will be agreed with National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and/or the White-tailed Eagle Reintroduction Programme in accordance with the measures agreed at Grousemount Wind Farm prior to the operation of the proposed turbines.
- A fatality monitoring programme for birds and bats (using dog-based searches) will be implemented during the construction phase when the existing turbines are being removed and the proposed turbines and associated infrastructure installed. Monthly searches of turbine bases (where a turbine is present) and around the met mast will be carried out throughout the construction phase with associated searcher efficiency and scavenger removal

trials will also be included in the programme. A report will be prepared at the end of the construction phase and circulated for the information of the Planning Authority, Kerry County Council and NPWS.

Operational Phase

During the early years of operation of the Proposed Development there will be a continuation of the carrion removal and fatality monitoring programme as instigated in the pre-construction and construction phases.

- Vantage Point surveys (breeding and winter) will be carried out at the wind farm (should it receive a grant of planning permission) once it becomes operational in years 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 and 15 in accordance with guidance (e.g. SNH, 2009). Reports will be prepared and submitted for the information of the Planning Authority, Kerry County Council and NPWS.
- The fatality monitoring programme for birds and bats (using dog-based searches) instigated in the construction phase will be continued for the first three years of operation. Monthly searches of turbine bases and met mast will be carried out along with associated searcher efficiency and scavenger removal trials. An annual report will be prepared detailing the results of the fatality monitoring and circulated for the information of the Planning Authority, Kerry County Council and NPWS.
- A review will be conducted after five years, including consultation with stakeholders, to consider if these, or other additional measures should continue to be applied for the remainder of the lifetime of the wind farm. A review report with recommendations will be prepared by a suitably qualified ornithologist with actionable recommendations fully implemented.

References:

O'Donoghue, B.G., Casey, M.J., Malone, E., Carey, J.G.J, Clarke, D. & Conroy, K. (2020). Recording and Addressing Persecution and Threats to Our Raptors (RAPTOR): a review of incidents 2007–2019. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 126. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland.