

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Context to the background of the proposed development and the Applicant, Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd., is provided in Chapter 1 (Introduction) of this EIAR. Figure 1-1, within Chapter 1, presents the Site Location Plan.

2.1 Site History

2.1.1 Historical Peat Extraction at the Proposed Wind Farm Site

The proposed wind farm site (i.e. Derryaroge, Derryadd and Lough Bannow Bogs) is owned by Bord na Móna Energy Ltd. and comprises predominantly cutaway bog, with areas of bog woodland and smaller areas of cutover bog and remnant bog existing around the margins.

Since its establishment, Bord na Móna has acquired and developed approximately 80,000 hectares of bogland nationally which, in turn, supported a range of communities across the midlands and the west of Ireland. Approximately 11,778 hectares of Bord na Móna owned bogland forms the Mountdillon Bog Group, of which the proposed wind farm site comprises approximately 1,900 hectares. These bogs were historically used for the extraction of sod, and later milled peat to supply the nearby ESB Lanesborough and later Lough Ree power stations.

2.1.1.1 Decommissioning Process

The entirety of the Mountdillon Bog Group, which includes the proposed wind farm site, is licensed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under an Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) Licence (Reg. No. P0504-01), under Part IV of the EPA Act 1992. Peat extraction activities ceased in 2019 and since then an ongoing programme of decommissioning works have been carried out in compliance with Condition 10 of the P0504-01 IPC Licence. Condition 10 of the IPC licence instructs Bord na Móna to produce draft peatland rehabilitation plans for each bog of the Mountdillon Bog Group, within which the proposed wind farm site is located, upon cessation of peat extraction. These draft plans will be agreed by the EPA prior to implementation. Please see Appendix 7-2a – 7-2c for the draft Cutaway Bog Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plans for Derryaroge, Derryadd and Lough Bannow Bogs.

The proposed wind farm site still operates under the requirements of IPC Licence P0504-01, and any decommissioning works undertaken with respect to peat extraction activities and all ancillary works are in accordance with Condition 10 of the IPC Licence, which states that that:

“10.1: Following termination of use or involvement of all or part of the site in the licensed activity, the licensee shall:

10.1.1: Decommission, render safe or remove for disposal/recovery, any soil, subsoils, buildings, plant or equipment, or any waste, materials or substances or other matter contained therein or thereon, that may result in environmental pollution.”

2.1.1.2 Substitute Consent Application

TOBIN was appointed by Bord na Móna to engage with the Board to regularise the planning status of the peat extraction works (and all associated site development and ancillary works.) that have been carried out at Derryaroge, Derryadd and Lough Bannow Bogs (referred to as ‘the proposed wind farm site’), which forms part of the Mountdillon Bog Group (Reg. No. P0504-01),



located in south County Longford close to Lanesborough as shown on the Site Location Map, Figure 1-1 within Chapter 1 (Introduction).

A remedial rEIAR was prepared to support an application for leave to apply for Substitute Consent which was made under Section 177C (2)(b) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*, as amended (the Planning Act). The named documents were submitted to the Board to permit the regularisation of the development by permitting an application for Substitute Consent provided that exceptional circumstances exist.

The substitute consent application provides a description on the history of the peat extraction activities on the subject lands, along with additional information and documentation, as required under Section 177E of the Planning Act, in order to demonstrate to the Board that exceptional circumstances exist in this case.

Bord na Móna has submitted an application to An Bord Pleanála for Substitute Consent in respect of the historical peat extraction on the proposed wind farm site, which ceased in 2019, and this application was submitted in Q2 2025.

2.2 Bord na Móna's Strategy for Peatlands

2.2.1 Strategic Framework for The Future Use of Peatlands

In 2011, Bord na Móna published a '*Strategic Framework for The Future Use of Peatlands*' available as Appendix 1-3. The strategy establishes a framework for the on-going assessment of the company's approximately 80,000 hectares total land bank and provides for the formulation of appropriate strategies, policies and actions. The development of wind energy as an after use for cutaway peatlands is clearly indicated in this strategy as per section 5 'Land use framework'.

'Wind energy is another potential use of national significance that is well-suited to areas of cutaway, with their large land parcels, open topography, suitable wind speeds, relative remoteness from major residential areas and, in many cases, relatively good access to the electricity-grid. Cutaway, even where flooded, has many comparative advantages over other potential wind energy sites, including off-shore areas.'

2.2.2 Cessation of Peat Extraction

Since 2018 Bord na Móna has been actively pursuing a *Brown to Green* strategy, transitioning away from peat extraction and focusing on delivering low carbon energy, security of energy supply and climate solutions.

Peat extraction on the proposed wind farm site ceased in 2019 and the nearby Lough Ree peat fired power station was subsequently decommissioned in 2020. In January 2021 Bord na Móna announced that it had ceased all peat extraction nationally and was wholly focused on climate energy solutions.

The Brown to Green strategy launched by Bord na Móna aligns the company with National and EU Decarbonisation policies. It aims to accelerate the development of renewable energy assets to support national climate and energy policy targets as well as accelerating investment in higher-value recycling and resource recovery business.

Bord na Móna is a commercial semi-state company delivering climate solutions and leading Ireland toward a carbon neutral, sustainable future. Over the past number of years Bord na



Móna has been focused on the Brown to Green strategy effectively transitioning the company from being the largest fossil fuel producer to the largest climate solutions company.

In facing the climate crisis of today, including energy market volatility and security of supply issues, Bord na Móna's Renewable Energy Business is seeking to accelerate its' strategy to deliver renewable energy infrastructure supporting the delivery of the State's decarbonisation targets for 2030 and beyond. The company has made significant progress as an independent power producer and Bord na Móna will play an important role in decarbonising the Irish economy. Bord na Móna is undertaking several highly significant actions in support of climate and energy policy in support of the company strategy as a climate solutions company leading Ireland towards a climate neutral future. Renewable Energy is one of the key drivers of growth in Bord na Móna, providing very significant market opportunities to leverage the company land assets, project development skills and technical experience in operating renewable energy assets.

2.2.3 Forestry

In the latter years of peat extraction on the proposed wind farm site, Bord na Móna actively sought new uses for the peatlands, including forestry. Some areas of Coillte forest plantation on Bord na Móna owned lands are present within the proposed wind farm site. Extensive areas were forested in the 1980s and are currently under long-term lease to Coillte; within Lough Bannow bog there are 39 hectares (ha) of conifer plantation by Coillte, comprising mainly Sitka Spruce and Lodgepole Pine. This is subject to ongoing forestry management. This began the shift away from peat extraction activities with a focus towards developing more sustainable energy methods and uses of peatlands.

2.3 Renewable Energy

2.3.1 Planning History of the Applicant Site

A full description of the proposed development is provided in Chapter 3 (Description of the Proposed Development).

The previous planning application is detailed in Section 2.3.1.1 below.

2.3.1.1 Previous Planning Application

The previously proposed development site was subject to a planning application for a 24 turbine Wind Farm (also known as Derryadd Wind Farm) which was submitted to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in January 2019 (Planning Ref. No. 303592-19).

The previous planning application (Planning Ref. No. 303592-19) included the construction of 24 no. wind turbines and ancillary works. Turbines with a maximum blade tip height of 185 m above the top of the foundation level were proposed. Access to the site was proposed from internal access routes within Bord na Móna landholding.

Bord na Móna were granted a 10-year planning permission on the 12th of June 2020 for the following:

- 24 no. wind turbines with an overall blade tip height of up to 185 m and all associated hard- standing areas;
- 5 no. borrow pits;



- 3 no. permanent Anemometry Masts up to a height of 120 m;
- Provision of new internal site access roads (permanent and temporary), passing bays, amenity cycleways, car parking and associated drainage;
- 1 no. 110 kV electrical substation, including battery storage, which will be constructed at one of two proposed locations on site: either Option A in Cloonfore townland or Option B in Derraghan More townland. The electrical substation will have 2 no. control buildings associated electrical plant and equipment, battery storage containers and a wastewater holding tank;
- 5 no. temporary construction compounds, in the townlands of Cloonfore, Cloontabeg, Derraghan More, and Rappareehill (2 no.);
- All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the proposed substation at either Option A in Cloonfore or Option B in Derraghan More;
- All works associated with the connection of the proposed wind farm to the national electricity grid, which will be either to the existing Lanesborough/Richmond 110 kV line via overhead line (Option A) or to the existing Lanesborough/Mullingar 110 kV line via an underground or overhead line (Option B);
- Removal of existing meteorological masts;
- New access junctions, improvements and temporary modifications to existing public road infrastructure to facilitate delivery of abnormal loads and construction access, including locations on the N6, N61, N63, R392, R398, L11554, L1136 roads, access onto the local road in the townland of Cloonkeel, access onto the local road in the townland of Mount Davys and amenity access from the Royal Canal Tow Path (off the L5239);
- All related site works and ancillary development; and,
- A 10-year planning permission and 30-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire wind farm.

Following a judicial review, the decision to grant planning permission by ABP was ultimately quashed. Therefore this planning application is being prepared for a new wind energy development at the site. Further details on the historical planning context are presented in Chapter 5 of this EIAR.

2.3.2 Other Renewable Energy Projects in Proximity to the Proposed Wind Farm site

2.3.2.1 *Sliabh Bawn*

The Sliabh Bawn Wind Farm is located 8 km northwest of the proposed development and consists of 20 turbines (58MW). This wind farm was consented under planning reference (ABP Ref. No. 239743) and has been in operation since 2017.

2.3.2.2 *Skrine*

The Skrine Wind Farm is located approximately 20 km to the south-west of the proposed development. This wind farm was consented under planning reference (ABP Ref. No. 208733).

2.3.2.3 *Ballykenny Solar Farm*

The approved Ballykenny Solar Farm is located approximately 9.9 km north of the proposed development with an export capacity of approximately 9MW. This solar farm was consented under planning reference (ABP Ref. No.305969)



2.3.2.4 Lough Ree Power Station

The Lough Ree Power station is located approximately 5 km west from the centre of the proposed wind farm site. The Lough Ree Power Station is no longer in operation following its closure in December 2020. An application was made in 2022 to Longford County Council for the demolishing of the existing station and construct and operate of an electricity grid services consisting namely of battery storage system (BESS) and a synchronous condenser and associated site works (Planning Authority Case Ref. 2275). This decision was appealed to An Bord Pleanála (Bord Pleanála Case Ref. PL14.315485) and a decision to grant permission subject to conditions was issued in October 2023.

2.3.3 Suitability of the Site

The proposed development is directly in line with Bord na Mona's commitment as identified in there *'Strategic Framework for The Future Use of Peatlands'* which specifically identifies the development of wind energy as an after use for cutaway peatlands.

When considering the need for this wind farm development, and wind energy as an energy source in general, it is important to place its development in an international, national and local policy context from the perspectives of environment, energy and planning. Chapter 5 (Policy, Planning and Development Context) outlines the legislative mechanisms and requirements from a global to local level, which have been formulated to support the generation of energy from renewable sources and reduce the dependency on fossil fuels.

The assessment in Chapter 5 of this EIAR (Policy, Planning and Development Context) demonstrates that the proposed wind farm development is consistent with the current energy and planning policy context, which seeks to increase the share of electricity generation from renewable sources and locate wind energy developments in suitable locations, thereby minimising any environmental impacts. The proposed development falls in a 'preferred location' for potential wind farms as identified in the Longford County Development Plan 2021 – 2027.

The suitability of the site is described further in Chapter 4 (Consideration of Alternatives).

