

4 PLANNING AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter sets out the planning policy context relevant to the Development by providing an overview of the main international, national, and regional legislation and policy of relevance, as well as a detailed review of the planning policy framework within which the application will be assessed. This section also provides a brief overview of the most up-to-date statistics on Irish renewable energy production, climate emissions, and the benefits the Development can bring to supporting Ireland's 2030 and 2050 renewable energy targets.

The planning policy assessment shows that the Development aligns with European, National and Local Plan Policies. In particular, the Development will help to meet the objectives of the Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP2025) and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (the "Climate Act"). Moanmore Lower Wind Farm will make an important contribution to Ireland's renewable energy targets. The Development will have a generating capacity of 12-15MW and will be of economic and social importance to both the region and the state.

The urgency to combat climate change and meet energy demands is evident in reviewed policies, emphasizing the vital role of renewable energy in transitioning to a low carbon economy. By investing in renewable energy, Ireland can promote sustainable economic development using its own, secure and clean energy.

In summary the Development would:

- Contribute to the 45% overall renewable energy target for the EU introduced by the REPowerEU Plan in light of the war in Ukraine.
- Contribute to assisting Ireland to increase from 42% electricity produced by renewable sources in 2020 to 80% by 2030 to meet the national target.
- Contribute towards the National Development Plan 2021-2030's National Strategic Outcome number 13 to diversify away from fossil fuels to green energy which includes wind.
- Contributes towards climate change mitigation as specified in the National Planning Framework's National Policy Objective 69.
- Contribute toward renewable energy use and generation as specified in the National Planning Framework's National Policy Objective 70.

- Contribute 12-15MW of renewable wind energy to the national CAP2025 target of 9GW by 2030 helping to reduce the current 4GW shortfall.
- Comply with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern region's goal of producing renewable energy to tackle climate change, meet predicted growth in demand and provide energy security.
- Support the local Clare County Development Plan policy on promoting appropriate renewable energy development as the Development is located in an area "Open to Consideration" for wind energy development within the CDP.
- Assist Co. Clare in achieving its goal of being the national leader in renewable energy generation to facilitate a low carbon future.
- Contribute 12-15MW of renewable wind energy to the Clare County Development Plan target of 550MW by 2030, helping to reduce the current 397MW shortfall.
- Contribute to rural economic development in line with the Clare County Development Plans and of the RSES.

4.2 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

This chapter has been prepared by Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited, in particular Breena Coyle, Sarah Jones and David Kiely.

Breena Coyle, Senior Town Planner in Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited (JOD), has a Masters in Environment Planning from Queens University and has over 13 years' experience in Environmental Planning throughout Ireland and the UK. She has a clear understanding of the legislative framework and has experience in the development of windfarms from the pre-planning process through to construction.

Sarah Jones is an Environmental Scientist and Planner and holds a first-class Masters in Environmental Sustainability from University College Dublin and a Bachelor (Hons.) Degree in Geography from Manchester Metropolitan University. Sarah is currently working towards a Higher Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law from Kings Inn, Dublin. Sarah's key capabilities include Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screenings, Appropriate Assessment (AA) screenings, Planning and Environmental reports and Applications, Environmental Impact Assessments, Feasibility Studies, Construction Environmental Management Plans, Stakeholder Engagement, Project Management.

David Kiely has a Bachelor of Engineering Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's of Science degree in Environmental Protection, in addition to 40 years' experience in the civil engineering/ environmental sector. David has led/managed EISs/EIARs and overseen the

development of over 50 wind farms in Ireland. This includes whole life cycle from feasibility, planning and environmental assessment through to construction, including the preparation of alternative consideration chapters for other wind farms. David Kiely has undertaken EISs/ EIARs for wind farms throughout Ireland.

For detailed information on all contributors, including their qualifications and experience, please refer to **Appendix 1.1: Author Qualifications**.

4.3 IRISH PLANNING LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

Table 4.1: Irish Planning Legislation and Policy Context

Legislation / Policy	Context
Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Planning and Development Act)	The Planning and Development Act sets out the statutory basis for the carrying out of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
Planning and Development Regulations 2001 – 2025 (the Planning and Development Regulations)	The Planning and Development Regulations implement the Planning and Development Act by prescribing the details of the planning code.
Habitats and Birds Directives	The Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC set out the requirements for the protection of habitats and species and in the case of the latter, bird species, of European and national importance. For the purposes of planning, these directives have been transposed into Irish legislation under the Planning and Development Act, the Planning and Development Regulations and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended

Legislation / Policy	Context
Wildlife Act 1976, as amended	The requirements for the designation and protection of habitats and species in a natural heritage area (NHA) are set out in the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended.
EIA Directive	The relevant sections of the EIA Directive are transposed in Ireland through the Planning and Development Act (Part X) and the Planning and Development Regulations (in particular, Part 10, Schedule 5 and Schedule 6).
National Energy Security Framework	Ireland has one of the highest rates of importing fuel in Europe with imported dependency increasing to 81% in 2022 according to the SEAI ¹ . The high rate of imported fossil fuel dependency and the increasing demand for electricity make it vital to introduce more domestic renewable energy generation like the proposed wind farm development in County Clare. The National Energy Security Framework (DECC, 2022) sets out how Ireland is seeking to phase out dependency on gas, oil and coal imports in order to address the urgent need to secure a long-term, resilient energy supply.
Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 (as amended)	The Climate Act provides for the establishment of a national framework with the aim of achieving a low-carbon, climate-resilient, and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 (referred to in the Climate Act as the “national transition objective”). The Climate Action Act 2015 was commenced in the days before the historic COP21 agreement in Paris where consensus was reached by 200 countries on the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Act supports Ireland's transition to Net Zero and a target of achieving a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. It has established a legally binding framework containing clear targets and commitments which are set in law to embed the necessary structures and processes on a

¹ SEAI. (2023). ENERGY IN IRELAND. <https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2023.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

Legislation / Policy	Context
	statutory basis to achieve our national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.
Climate Action Plan 2024	The plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Irelands emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. It also outlines the intention of the government to meet up to 80% of electricity demand from renewable power by 2030.
The National Planning Framework	The National Planning Framework (NPF) (provided for in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018, as amended) is intended to guide development and investment through a shared set of national objectives and principles. It is then left to the three regional planning bodies and the 31 city and county councils to take a lead in refining these into more detailed plans. On 8th April 2025, the Government approved the Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) which is subject to the approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.
The National Development Plan 2021-2030	The National Development Plan (NDP) sets out the investment priorities that will underpin the implementation of the National Planning Framework, through a total investment of approximately €116 billion. This represents a very substantial commitment of resources and is expected to move Ireland close to the top of the international league table for per capita public investment.
Regional Planning	The Local Government Reform Act 2014, as amended provided for three new regional assemblies: the Northern and Western, Eastern and Midland and Southern Regions. Members of the Regional Assemblies consist of the local authorities within that region.

Legislation / Policy	Context
	The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES) for the Southern Regional Assembly area provides a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework, to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework, for the future physical, economic and social development for the Southern Region.
The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	Under Section 9 of the Planning and Development Act, each planning authority is obliged to make a Development Plan for the whole of its functional area. The Development Plan is a statutory land-use plan generally consisting of a written statement and associated maps. The Development Plan is the statutory land use plan which sets out a strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development for the area. The County Clare Development Plan 2023-2029 was adopted in April 2023. The County Clare Wind Energy Strategy is included as Volume 6 of the CDP 2023-2029.
The Wind Energy Development Guidelines, DoHLG 2006	The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DoHLG, 2006) offer advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. The guidelines are also intended to provide a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments.
Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2019)	The Developer will comply with aspects of the Draft Wind Energy Guidelines 2019 (DWEDGs 2019) (meaning also compliance with the 2006 WEDGs) in relation to shadow flicker, community engagement and visual amenity setback distances (4x tip height). However, as the current version WEDGs 2006 remain valid until the revised final version of the DWEDGs 2019 are published by the government, the

Legislation / Policy	Context
	WEDGs 2006 have been complied with in some areas of assessment, such as in Chapter 9: Noise. The DWEDGs 2019 set out how wind energy is to be delivered in accordance with best practice and in particular, in partnership with people living in areas local to proposed developments. The Draft guidelines, provide a roadmap as to how Ireland's 2030 climate commitments can be met and ultimately move the country towards a position of net zero emissions by 2050. The key aspects for the new draft proposed wind energy guidelines include the following: • A visual amenity setback of 4 times the turbine height between a wind turbine and the nearest residential property, subject to a mandatory minimum distance of 500 metres • the elimination of shadow flicker • The application of a more stringent noise limit, consistent with World Health Organisation standards • The introduction of new obligations in relation to community engagement with local communities along with the provision of community benefit measures.
The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025	Ireland signed and ratified the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention (ELC) which came into effect on 1 March 2004. The Convention has been ratified by thirty-eight countries. It obliges Ireland to implement policy changes and objectives concerning the management, protection and planning of the landscape. The National Landscape Strategy will be used to ensure compliance with the ELC and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing it while positively managing its change. It is a high-level policy framework to achieve balance between the protection, management and planning of the landscape by way of supporting actions.

Legislation / Policy	Context
Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Water quality and quantity in our rivers, lakes, groundwaters, estuaries and coastal waters is assessed under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Water Framework Directive was signed into law in October 2000. It requires EU member States to achieve water quality of at least <i>Good Status</i> in rivers, lakes, groundwater, estuaries and coastal waters, by 2027 at the latest. Water quality has to be protected – no declines should be allowed occur – and restored where necessary to reach these environmental objectives.
National Biodiversity Plan 2023 - 2030	Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) sets the national biodiversity agenda for the period 2023-2030 and aims to deliver the transformative changes required to the ways in which we value and protect nature. The 4th NBAP strives for a “whole of government, whole of society” approach to the governance and conservation of biodiversity. The aim is to ensure that every citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance, and of the implications of its loss, while also understanding how they can act to address the biodiversity emergency as part of a renewed national effort to “act for nature”. This National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 builds upon the achievements of the previous Plan. It will continue to implement actions within the framework of five strategic objectives, while addressing new and emerging issues: • Objective 1 - Adopt a Whole of Government, Whole of Society Approach to Biodiversity • Objective 2 - Meet Urgent Conservation and Restoration Needs

Legislation / Policy	Context
	- Objective 3 - Secure Nature's Contribution to People - Objective 4 - Enhance the Evidence Base for Action on Biodiversity - Objective 5 - Strengthen Ireland's Contribution to International Biodiversity Initiatives

4.4 INTERNATIONAL POLICY

This section of the EIAR documents the international policy perspectives with regards to climate change and renewable energy. Ireland is party to both the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, which together provide an international legal framework for addressing climate change.

4.4.1 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)² implemented by the United Nations in May 1992, determined a long-term objective to lessen greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, with the purpose of preventing anthropogenic interference with the climatic system. Subsequently, the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997. National governments who signed up to the Kyoto Protocol are committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. The UNFCCC recognises that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The convention enjoys near universal membership, with 197 countries listed as being Parties of the Convention³.

The Paris Agreement (2016)

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016. It seeks to accelerate and intensify the actions and investment needed for a sustainable low carbon future. Its central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The Agreement also aims to

² The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992). Available online at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

³ http://unfccc.int/essential_background/items/6031.php [Accessed 01/12/2024]

strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement commits the EU as a whole to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. This figure was revised upwards under Article 4 of Regulation 2021/1119 ('European Climate Law') to a 55% reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions (emissions after the deduction of removals) by 2030 compared to 1990 levels.

The United Nation's (UN) 26th global climate summit was held in 2021 in Glasgow, where nations committed to a range of decisions in a collective effort to limit global temperatures to 1.5 degrees. The conference focussed on driving action across:

- Mitigation - reducing emissions
- Adaptation - helping those already impacted by climate change
- Finance - enabling countries to deliver on their climate goals
- Collaboration - working together to deliver even greater action

The 27th Global climate summit; The COP27 UN Climate Change Conference, was held in 2022 in Egypt. Agreement was reached on financing loss and damage from the impacts of climate change – an agreement which was negotiated in part by Ireland's Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamon Ryan.

At COP28 in Dubai (Nov. 2023), although the wording of the agreement didn't signify an imminent "transitioning away from fossil fuels", the agreement signals the "beginning of the end" of the fossil fuel era by laying the ground for a swift, just and equitable transition. This agreement highlights the importance of alternative, renewable energy generation projects to facilitate this transition.

COP 29 in Baku (Nov. 2024) focused on enhancing ambition and enabling action in the fight against climate change, with a key focus on climate finance. The conference concluded with an agreement to triple finance to developing countries, from USD 100 billion to USD 300 billion annually by 2035.

Out of 189 Parties that have ratified the Paris Agreement, 90% mentioned renewables and roughly 70% included quantifiable energy targets in their initial Nationally Determined Contributions. Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs, are national climate action plans by each country under the Paris Agreement. A country's NDC outlines how it plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to help meet the global goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5C and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement requires that

NDCs are updated every five years with increasingly higher ambition, taking into consideration each country's capacity.

However, a 2021 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA)⁴ cautions that renewables growth will still need to double to reach the Paris Agreement goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), an intergovernmental organisation focusing on sustainable energy, published a report⁵ on the Nationally Determined Contributions relating to renewable energy, which also note that even with the renewable energy pledges in the 2021 Paris agreement, the 1.5°C goal will still be exceeded before the end of the century.

Europe's planned emission reductions in line with the Paris Agreement are set out in part under the Effort Sharing Regulation (2023/857). Under this regulation, Ireland is obliged to reduce GHG emissions by 42% in relation to 2005 levels.

4.4.2 Project Compliance with International Climate Policy

Ireland is one of the 186 countries signed up to the Paris agreement, and subsequent agreements. Under the terms, Ireland is required to reduce GHG emissions by at least 40% by 2030 when compared with levels in 1990. The Development will contribute to Ireland meeting these targets by displacing reliance on fossil fuels by producing renewable wind energy.

4.4.3 EU Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by EU Directive 2014/52/EU)

European Union Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the 'EIA Directive'), was transposed into Irish planning legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The objective of the Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU), as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, through the establishment of minimum requirements for EIA, prior to development consent being given, of public and private developments that are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

⁴ International Energy Agency (2021). Renewables 2021 Analysis and forecast to 2026. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/5ae32253-7409-4f9a-a91d-1493ffb9777a/Renewables2021-Analysisandforecastto2026.pdf

⁵ International Renewable Energy Agency (2023). NDCs and renewable energy targets in 2023: Tripling renewable power by 2030. <https://www.irena.org/Publications/2023/Dec/NDCs-and-renewable-energy-targets-in-2023-Tripling-renewable-power-by-2030>

Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála have lengthy experience in assessing the effects of proposed developments on the environment as this is an integral part of considering whether the proposal is in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 transpose the requirements of the 2011 EIA Directive (as amended) into existing planning consent procedures.

The EIA Directive defined the EIA process as a process consisting of:

- (a) the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) by the Developer
- (b) the carrying out of consultations
- (c) the examination by the competent authority of the EIAR, any supplementary information provided, where necessary, by the developer and relevant information received through consultations with the public, prescribed bodies and any affected Member States
- (d) the reasoned conclusion of the competent authority on the significant impacts of the project on the environment and
- (e) the integration of the competent authority's reasoned conclusion into any development consent decision.

4.5 EUROPEAN LEGISLATION & POLICY CONTEXT

The European Union's (EU) energy policies are set out and powered by three main objectives:

- To ensure energy providers operate in a competitive environment, ensuring affordable prices for homes and businesses.
- To secure energy supplies and to ensure reliable energy delivery whenever and wherever it is needed; and
- To have sustainable energy consumption, through lowering dependence on fossil fuels and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution.

The EU will be climate neutral by 2050. To do this, it will carry out a series of initiatives that will protect the environment and boost the green economy⁶.

⁶European Commission. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en [Accessed 01/12/2024]

4.5.1 Clean Industrial Deal 2025

The deal is an umbrella strategy setting out concrete actions to turn decarbonisation into a driver of growth for European industries. This includes lowering energy prices, creating quality jobs and the right conditions for companies to thrive.

The Deal presents measures to boost every stage of production, with a focus on:

- energy-intensive industries such as steel, metals, and chemicals, that urgently need support to decarbonise, switch to clean energy, and tackle high costs, unfair global competition, and complex regulations
- the clean-tech sector which is at the heart of future competitiveness and necessary for industrial transformation, circularity, and decarbonisation.

The main elements of the deal are:

- Affordable energy
- Boosting demand for clean products
- Financing the clean transition
- Circularity and access to material
- Acting on global scale
- Skills and quality jobs

4.5.2 Renewable Energy Directive

The EU passed the Renewable Energy Directive (REDI) 2009/28/EC, revised in 2018 and 2023, to make the EU a global leader in renewable energy and ensure that the target of the final energy consumption for the current RED III is achieved.

In 2023, the European Union (EU) adopted an amendment of the Renewable Energy Directive, which is referred to as "RED III". RED III obliges Member States to collectively ensure the share of renewable energy in the European Union's gross final energy consumption is at least 42.5% by 2030, with an additional 2.5% indicative top-up to allow the target of 45% to be achieved.

RED III also places the presumption of overriding public interest for renewable energy projects (IROPI) on a permanent footing. Article 16f states that Member States must ensure that in the permit-granting procedure, the planning, construction and operation of renewable energy plants, their connection to the grid, the grid itself and storage assets are assumed to be IROPI.

Furthermore, Article 16b(1) provides that the permit-granting procedure for onshore renewable energy projects outside renewables acceleration areas must not exceed two years.

The transposition deadline for these provisions was 1 July 2024. An infringement notice has been served on Ireland in respect of its failure to meet this deadline.

4.5.3 The European Green Deal 2019

The European Green Deal introduced in 2019 reset the European Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges. It focuses on three key principles for the clean energy transition, which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the quality of life of our citizens:

- (1) Ensuring a secure and affordable EU energy supply.
- (2) Developing a fully integrated, interconnected and digitalised EU energy market.
- (3) Prioritising energy efficiency, improving the energy performance of our buildings and developing a power sector based largely on renewable sources.

The European Green Deal is a plan to make the EU's economy sustainable. The EU aims to be climate neutral in 2050. Reaching this target will require action in all sector economy, including:

- Investing in environmentally friendly technologies
- Supporting industry to innovate
- Rolling out cleaner, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport
- Decarbonising the energy sector
- Ensuring buildings are more energy efficient
- Working with international partners to improve global environmental standards
- Sustainable finance – all of which are strongly interlinked.

4.5.4 REPowerEU

In May 2022, The European Commission presented the REPowerEU Plan⁷, in response to the global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It puts forwards a set of actions to:

- Save energy;
- Diversify supplies;
- Quickly substitute fossil fuels by accelerating Europe's clean energy transition;

⁷ European Commission. (2022). REPowerEU Plan https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:fc930f14-d7ae-11ec-a95f-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF [Accessed 01/12/2024]

- Smartly combine investments and reforms.

It states:

“Lengthy administrative procedures are one of the key barriers for investments in renewables and their related infrastructure. These barriers include the complexity of the applicable rules for site selection and administrative authorisations for projects, the complexity and duration of the assessment of the environmental impacts of the projects, grid connection issues, constraints on adapting technology specifications during the permit-granting procedure or staffing issues of the permit-granting authorities or grid operators. In order to accelerate the pace of deployment of renewable energy projects it is necessary to adopt rules which would simplify and shorten permit-granting processes.”

In 2021, the EU reached a 22.8%⁸ share of its gross final energy consumption from renewable sources – up from 22.1% in 2020. This leaves a long way to go to reach this increased target. In accordance with the REPowerEU Communication, in May 2022, the Commission published a recommendation⁹ on speeding up permit-granting procedures for renewable energy projects, accompanied by guidance to help the Member States speed up permitting for renewable energy plants.

The recommendation was created in order to help Member States exploit all possibilities for acceleration that exist within the legislative framework. It proposed measures to streamline procedures at national level, address ambiguities in the application of EU legislation and set out good practices in Member States. It recommended participatory approaches that involve local and regional authorities and providing authorities with the necessary resources so as to facilitate the timely realisation of locally adapted investments.

Recommendations include:

*“Member States should ensure that the planning, construction and operation of plants for the production of energy from renewable sources, their connection to the electricity, gas and heat grid and the related grid itself and storage assets **qualify for the most favourable procedure available in their planning and permit-granting procedures** and are presumed as being in the overriding public interest and in the interest of public safety, in view of the legislative proposal amending and strengthening the provisions of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 related to administrative procedures and without prejudice to the Union law.”*

⁸ European Commission. (2023). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Renewable_energy_statistics#Share_of_renewable_energy_more_than_doubled_between_2004_and_2020 [Accessed 01/12/2024]

⁹EU. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=PI_COM:C\(2022\)3219&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=PI_COM:C(2022)3219&from=EN) [Accessed 01/12/2024]

“Member States should establish clearly defined, accelerated and as short as possible deadlines for all the steps required for the granting of permits to build and operate renewable energy projects, specifying the instances where such deadlines may be extended and under which circumstances. Member States should establish binding maximum deadlines for all relevant stages of the environmental impact assessment procedure.”

4.5.5 Renewable Deployment Acceleration

On 22nd December 2022, Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 set out a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy which was adopted by the Council of the European Union¹⁰. This regulation, which has immediate effect in Member States, applies to *“all permit-granting processes that have a starting date within the period of its application”*. The initial period of application of the Regulation was 18 months from the 30 December 2022. This has since been extended by Regulation (EU) 2024/223 as outlined below in this section.

It confirms the EU policy position that renewable energy plants, including wind energy, are crucial to fight climate change and pollution, reduce energy prices, decrease the Union's dependence on fossil fuels and ensure the Union's security of supply. The aim of the regulation is to eliminate bottlenecks in new permitting procedures and will allow new projects to benefit from a simplified assessment for specific derogations foreseen in the relevant Union environmental legislation with immediate effect.

Central to the regulation is the rebuttable presumption that renewable energy developments are in the overriding public interest when addressing competing interests under the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and the Water Framework Directive and that renewable energy projects should be given priority when balancing legal interests in a given case – Article 3, Regulation 2022/2577 as amended:

- 1) *The planning, construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources, and their connection to the grid, the related grid itself and storage assets shall be presumed as being in the overriding public interest and serving public health and safety when balancing legal interests in the individual case, for the purposes of Article 6(4) and Article 16(1)(c) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 4(7) of Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of*

¹⁰ Council of the European Union Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 of the 22 December 2022, laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022R2577> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

the Council and Article 9(1)(a) of Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council....

- 2) *Member States shall ensure, at least for projects which are recognised as being of overriding public interest, that in the planning and permit-granting process, the construction and operation of plants and installations for the production of energy from renewable sources and the related grid infrastructure development are given priority when balancing legal interests in the individual case.*

The Regulation was introduced as a temporary, emergency measure and included provision for the EU Commission to review the application of, and continued need for, the measures included in the Regulation. By Regulation 2024/223 of the 22 December 2023 the Council of the European Union, Regulation 2022/2577 was extended and amended, with Article 3 applying to all permit-granting processes commenced up to the 30 June 2025. It therefore applies to the present application.

The importance, continued need and effectiveness of Article 3(2) of Regulation 2022/2577 as amended in aiding the accelerated deployment of renewable energy is explained in Recital 14 of Regulation 2024/223:

'Article 3(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 requires priority to be given to projects that are recognised as being of overriding public interest whenever the balancing of legal interests is required in individual cases and where those projects introduce additional compensation requirements for species protection... The first sentence of Article 3(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 has the potential, in the current urgent and still unstable energy situation on the energy market which the Union is facing, to further accelerate renewable energy projects since it requires Member States to promote those renewable energy projects by giving them priority when dealing with different conflicting interests beyond environmental matters in the context of Member States' planning and the permit-granting' process. The Commission's report demonstrated the value of the first sentence of Article 3(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 which recognises the relative importance of renewable energy deployment in the current difficult energy context beyond the specific objectives of the derogations foreseen in the Directives referred to in Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577. Given the particularly severe situation in the supply of energy which the Union is currently facing, it is appropriate to prolong the application of Article 3(2) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 in order to appropriately recognise the crucial role played by renewable energy plants to fight climate change and pollution, reduce energy prices, decrease the Union's dependence on fossil fuels and to ensure the Union's security of supply in the context of the balancing of legal interests carried out by permit-granting authorities or national courts. At the same

time, it is also appropriate to keep the environmental safeguard that, for projects recognised as being of overriding public interest, appropriate species conservation measures, underpinned by sufficient financial resources, are adopted.'

4.5.6 Project Compliance with European Climate Legislation

The Development is compliant with EU policy and legislation as it contributes towards the goal of decarbonising the energy sector in the EU and increasing the supply of renewable energy sources. The Development will have an installed capacity of 12-15MW of renewable energy which would contribute towards the RED III targets for 2030 and help to prevent further requirements to acquire statistical transfers from other Member States.

4.6 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY

This section sets out the key planning and other related policies from a national, regional and local perspective. **Figure 4.1** provides an overview of National Planning Policy Context in Ireland.



Figure 4.1: Hierarchy of National Planning Policy Context.

The National Planning Framework is assessed in section 4.6.1.1 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is assessed in section 4.6.2.1. The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 is assessed in section 4.6.3.1. The Development is not located in a Local Area plan.

4.6.1 National Policy

4.6.1.1 National Planning Framework - Project 2040

Ireland has developed a strategic outlook for the future development of the country under the 'Project Ireland 2040.' Project 2040 comprises two plans, The National Planning Framework (NPF) and the National Development Plan (NDP) which will guide strategic development and infrastructure investment at the national level. The NDP 2021-2030 provides for unprecedented investment in climate action, earmarking specific investment for low-carbon, resilient electricity systems; energy infrastructure and energy efficient housing. The NDP Review commits to increasing the share of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030, with the collective spend by State-owned enterprises expected to be in excess of €16 billion in energy related projects between 2021 and 2030.

Section 1.5 of the NPF sets out that *"sustainability is at the heart of long-term planning and the National Planning Framework seeks to ensure that the decisions we make today, meet our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."* The NPF with the NDP sets the context for each of Ireland's three regional assemblies to develop their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies taking account of and co-ordinating Local Authority County and City Development Plans in a manner that will ensure national, regional and local plans align. The National Planning Framework is based on a set of values that will ensure Ireland's "long term economic, environmental and social progress for all. On the 8th of April 2025, the Government approved the Revised National Planning Framework (NPF) which, subject to the approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas, firmly sets the direction for Ireland's growth and development to 2040. It sets a new spatial policy for the country with a view to addressing critical priorities, in particular housing, infrastructure and climate.

The NPF sets a number of shared goals for Ireland which the Development will contribute to achieving, including:

- Strengthened rural economies and communities
- A strong economy, supported by enterprise, innovation and skills
- Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society

NPF Chapter 9 states that *"The Government has committed to achieving targets underpinned by the adoption of a series of carbon budgets and national Climate Action Plans over the period to 2050, informed by UN and EU policy. These actions are also underpinned by other key national policies including the National Development Plan, National Adaption Framework and by Sectoral Adaptation Plans. In addition to legally binding targets agreed at EU level, it*

is a national objective for Ireland to transition to be a competitive zero carbon, economy no later than 2050.

- an aggregate reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of at least 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050 across the electricity generation, built environment and transport sectors; and
- in parallel, an approach to carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land-use sector, including forestry, which does not compromise capacity for sustainable food production.”

Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

“The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act was enacted in 2021 with a commitment to a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% and increase the share of electricity generated from renewable sources to 80% over the decade (2021 – 2030), and to achieve net zero emissions no later than 2050². This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Climate Action Plan 2024 and the National Adaptation Framework. New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy to the major sources of demand.”

National Policy Objective 69

“Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.”

National Policy Objective 70

“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.”

The proposed Development will generate renewable energy, reducing Ireland’s carbon footprint by displacing fossil fuels and contributing to climate policy mitigation objectives. It is located in an area “Open to Consideration” for wind energy development (see **Figure 4.2**) in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. As discussed in **Chapter 3: Alternatives**, the Site has been assessed against a number of alternatives and has been found to be in an appropriate location given consideration to the main criteria such distances

from dwellings, wind speeds, potential environmental effects and use of existing available grid connection.

The Project complies with the National Policy Objectives in relation to Biodiversity, Aquatic Ecology, Water, Soil, Noise, Traffic, Landscape and Visuals and Cultural Heritage.

4.6.1.2 Climate Act

At a national level, the Climate Act 2021 commits Ireland to reach a legally binding target of net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and a cut of 51% by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels). It establishes a framework with clear, legally binding targets and commitments, and ensures the necessary structures and processes are embedded on a statutory basis to achieve Ireland's national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.

When exercising its decision-making powers under the Planning Act, planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála are obliged under s. 15 of the Climate Act to:

"in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—

- (a) the most recent approved climate action plan,*
- (b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,*
- (c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,*
- (d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and*
- (e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State."*

The Act also includes the following key elements:

- It places on a statutory basis a 'national climate objective', which commits Ireland to pursue and achieve no later than 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy.
- It embeds the process of carbon budgeting into law. Government are required to adopt a series of economy-wide five-year carbon budgets, including sectoral targets for each relevant sector, on a rolling 15-year basis, starting in 2021.
- Actions for each sector will be detailed in the Climate Action Plan, updated annually.
- A National Long Term Climate Action Strategy will be prepared every five years.

A recent report from the EPA Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections¹¹ found that Ireland is not on track to meet the 51 per cent emissions reduction target (by 2030 compared to 2018), indicating that further measures are needed.

4.6.1.3 Climate Emergency

On 29th November 2019 the European Parliament declared a climate emergency ahead of the UN COP 25 in Madrid in December 2019. In May 2019, the Oireachtas declared a "climate emergency" in an amendment to the report 'Climate Action: A cross-party consensus for action' which followed the recommendations of the Citizens Assembly on Climate Action. This was followed by the publication of the Cross-Departmental Climate Action Plan 2019 on 17th June 2019, revised in 2021 and 2023.

4.6.1.4 The Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan 2025¹² (CAP2025) was published in April 2025 and is the latest assessment and measurement of what has been achieved over the past year, building on actions taken in 2024. It sets out what need to be done in 2025 so Ireland is prepared to take on the challenges of our second carbon budget period 2026-2030.

Ireland's Progress to date:

- In 2023 emissions reduced by nearly 7%
- Emissions in the first half of 2024 were down over 17%
- Compared with the same period in 2023, emissions in the first half of 2024 reduced by 3.5%
- Irish wind farms generated nearly 40% of Ireland's total electricity demand in the first half of 2024
- Over the past year, emissions in agriculture have reduced by over 4%
- In the built environment, emissions have decreased by 21% since 2018
- In transport, emissions increased by 0.3% in 2023

CAP25 re-affirms the previous commitment to increasing the share of renewable electricity to 50% by 2025 and 80% by 2030. Overall, the share of renewable electricity generation in Ireland increased from 38.6% to 40.7% from 2022 to 2023. The figure for 2024 will likely be between 40% and the interim, end of year target of 50% set out in CAP25.

The targets are:

¹¹ EPA 2023. <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/ghg/> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

¹² Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. (2025). Climate Action Plan 2025. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-environment-climate-and-communications/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/> [Accessed: 29/04/2025]

- onshore wind, 2GWs by 2025 and 9 GWs by 2030
- offshore wind, at least 8GWs by 2030
- solar, up to 5GW by 2025 and 8GW by 2030

These targets are unchanged for the previous two years. CAP25 states

“A renewables-led system is at the core of Ireland’s plan to radically reduce emissions in the electricity sector, protect our energy security, and ensure our economic competitiveness. This requires the accelerated and increased deployment of new renewable electricity generation capacity and related infrastructure.”

4.6.1.5 National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030

The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP)¹³ is a ten-year integrated document mandated by the European Union to each of its member states in order for the EU to meet its overall greenhouse gases emissions targets.

The plan establishes key measures to address the five dimensions of the EU Energy Union;

- 1) Decarbonisation: GHG emissions and removals and Renewable Energy
- 2) Energy efficiency
- 3) Energy security
- 4) Internal energy market
- 5) Research, innovation and competitiveness

Key, relevant renewable energy objectives include:

- Reduce fossil fuel use from 64% of final consumption in 2021 to 45% by 2025 and further by 2030;
- Accelerate delivery of onshore wind, offshore wind and solar to reach 80% of electricity generated from renewable sources to by 2030 underpinned by the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).
- Support efforts to increase indigenous renewable sources in the energy mix, including wind, solar and bioenergy.
- Facilitate infrastructure projects, including private sector commercial projects, which enhance Ireland's security of supply and are in keeping with Ireland's overall climate and energy objectives.
- Increase onshore wind capacity to 9 GW

¹³ Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. (2024). Ireland's integrated National Energy and Climate Plan. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/irelands-integrated-national-energy-and-climate-plan-2021-2030.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/irelands-integrated-national-energy-and-climate-plan-2021-2030.pdf) [Accessed 16/04/2025]

- Streamline consenting and connection arrangements.
- Phase-out of coal and peat-fired electricity generation

According to a report published by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in June 2023, Ireland will achieve a reduction of only 29% in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, far short of a legally binding target of 51%. Almost all sectors are on a trajectory to exceed their national ceilings – including agriculture, industry, electricity and transport. The EPA report warns that the 2030 targets can only be reached by “implementing policies that deliver emission reductions across all sectors of the economy in the short term”.¹⁴

4.6.1.6 National Energy Security Framework

In April 2022, the Government of Ireland issued the National Energy Security Framework¹⁵ in response to the European Commission’s REPowerEU action statement. It provides a single overarching and initial response to address Ireland’s energy security needs in the context of the war in Ukraine. It sets out how Ireland is seeking to phase out dependency on Russian gas, oil and coal imports as soon as possible, emphasising throughout the urgency of the need to secure Ireland’s energy supply.

It is focussed on three areas of work:

- Reducing demand for fossil fuels, which would seek to reduce overall demand for oil, natural gas and coal in Ireland.
- Replacing fossil fuels with renewables, which would seek to reduce the use of gas, oil and coal in Ireland by replacing it with renewable energy sources such as wind energy, solar energy or bioenergy.
- Diversifying fossil fuel supplies, which would seek to replace any Russian supplies of gas, oil and coal (direct or indirect) with supplies from other sources.

The framework highlights the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on energy security, consumer price wise in the short term and how and where energy is sourced to ensure long term system resilience. It notes that:

“The war has highlighted key dependencies in our energy system which can no longer be relied on and has led to affordability issues for many consumers and businesses”.

¹⁴ Environmental Protection Agency. (2023) Ireland’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections. https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/EPA-GHG-Projections-2022-2040_Finalv2.pdf [Accessed 01/12/2024]

¹⁵ Government of Ireland. (2022) National Energy Security Framework. <https://assets.gov.ie/221399/86cb99f5-58e3-4821-bc4c-e1bb1fa706fb.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

The framework builds on the idea of energy security as the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price and is a response to the challenges of ensuring the ongoing and long-term security of affordable energy supply.

The new framework underlines the importance of new renewable energy generation projects, in securing Ireland's energy supply in light of the war in Ukraine and resulting energy supply issues.

4.6.1.7 Energy Security in Ireland to 2030

Energy Security in Ireland to 2030 outlines a new strategy to ensure energy security in Ireland for this decade, while ensuring a sustainable transition to a carbon neutral energy system by 2050. This report is being published as part of an Energy Security Package, containing a range of supplementary analyses, consultations, and reviews, which have informed the recommendations and actions related to energy security.

Informed by the Government's energy security policy objectives - to ensure energy is affordable, sustainable, and secure - the review considered the risks to oil, natural gas, and electricity. The report sets out that Ireland's future energy will be secure by moving from an oil and gas-based energy system to an electricity-led system, maximising our renewable energy potential, flexibility and being integrated into Europe's energy systems. Meeting our climate, renewable, and energy efficiency targets through actions and measures set out in the annually updated Climate Action Plan will deliver this secure energy future.

As we transition, the Energy Security Package states that we must ensure energy security is prioritised, monitored, and reviewed regularly, and includes a range of measures to implement this approach in the short and medium term by prioritising:

- Reduced and Responsive Demand
- A Renewables-Led System
- More Resilient Systems
- Robust Risk Governance

Under each of these four areas of actions, the report sets out a range of mitigation measures, including the need for additional capacity of indigenous renewable energy, but also energy imports, energy storage, fuel diversification, demand side response, and

renewable gases. The governance structures supporting the energy system, including oversight and accountability reforms, were also examined.¹⁶

4.6.1.8 Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment: Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)

The Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) provides support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland. With a primary focus on cost effectiveness, the RESS delivers a broader range of policy objectives, including:

- enabling communities to participate in renewable energy projects
- increasing renewable technology diversity
- delivering an ambitious renewable electricity policy to 2030
- increasing energy security, energy sustainability and ensuring the cost effectiveness of energy policy

It has been designed to promote investment in renewable energy generation to support the growth of the green economy, create sustainable work opportunities, and ultimately benefit the consumer as renewables become more cost effective. The Programme for Government commits to hold RESS auctions at frequent intervals throughout the lifetime of the scheme. This will allow Ireland to take advantage of falling technology costs and avoid 'locking in' higher costs for consumers. If consented the proposed Moanmore Lower Wind Farm will also provide a community fund calculated in accordance with the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) Terms and Conditions at €2 per MWh of electricity produced by the project. This is to be made available to the local community for the duration of the RESS (15 years).

The delivery of the fourth onshore RESS auction, RESS 4, was seen as a pivotal component of meeting Ireland's ambitious targets of 80% renewable electricity (RES-E) by 2030.

2,071 GWh of renewable generation was provisionally successful in this year's auction. This is a significant improvement from last year's RESS 3 auction result, which delivered less than half of the minimum 2,000 GWh target.

Overall, provisionally successful projects in the RESS 4 auction are set to increase Ireland's renewable energy capacity by more than 20%.

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5c499-energy-security-in-ireland-to-2030/> Accessed 31/08/2024

A provisional auction timetable has been set out for RESS 5. The proposed modifications in the Community Benefit Funds under RESS, which includes potential changes in the Terms and Conditions for RESS 5 include:

- Near Neighbour Payments for Onshore Wind: fixed amount and distances, eligibility and cap on overall spending,
- Relationship with Local Authorities mandated Funds,
- Role and selection of the Fund Committee,
- Simplified structure for smaller CBFs,
- Administration: limit on cost and requirements for the role
- Transparency

4.6.1.9 Project Compliance with National Climate Policy

The Development will generate renewable energy, reducing Ireland's carbon footprint by displacing fossil fuels and contributing to national climate policy mitigation objectives. The Proposed Development meets the objectives of Project 2040 as it will contribute to the economic, environmental, and social objectives of the NPF, in particular National Policy Objectives 69 & 70.

4.6.2 REGIONAL POLICY

4.6.2.1 The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) came into effect on 31st January 2020. The objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long-term planning and economic framework which shall be consistent with the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the economic policies or objectives of the Government. The RSES sets objectives at a regional level, informs County Development Plan and Local Areas Plans.

The RSES provides a development framework of the region that supports the implementation of the NPF and the relevant economic policies and objectives of the government. It provides a 12-year strategy for the period 2019 – 2031 to achieve the objectives and vision of the regional assembly. Within the RSES, the Regional Policy Objectives (RPO) in relation to renewable energy are set out in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2: Key Planning Policy Objectives from the RSES

Regional Policy Objective (RPO)	Project contribution
<i>RPO 40 Regional Economic Resilience; It is an objective to sustainably develop, deepen and enhance our regional economic resilience by widening our economic sectors, boosting innovation, export diversification, productivity enhancement and access to new markets.</i>	The Development represents a major investment in the region and in renewable energy. It will provide an improved and more resilient renewable electricity supply in the area. This could attract new enterprise to the region, bringing jobs, economic growth and diversification. The increased renewable electricity supply will also help to meet increased demand to facilitate further economic growth.
<i>RPO 46 Digital and Physical Infrastructure in Rural Areas; It is an objective to expedite the completion of infrastructure servicing diverse settlements to support innovation, enterprise start-ups and competitiveness. This includes high quality broadband and mobile communication services to all rural locations, water and wastewater facilities for the growth of settlements, sustainable energy supply, enhanced transport connectivity including rural public transport services and greenway walking and pedestrian corridors between settlements.</i>	The Development, by producing renewable electricity in a rural area, provides a sustainable energy supply. The Development includes a substation and grid connection which will become an asset of the nation grid, upgrading the physical electricity infrastructure in the region. By providing renewable electricity, the Development further boosts the positive environmental effect of an increase in electronic vehicle use, including those in rural public transport services. It also increases the stability of energy supply to meet the growing demand of increased electrification.
<i>RPO 49 Innovation in Rural areas; It is an objective to support innovation, enterprise start-ups and competitiveness of our rural Region.</i>	The Development is located in a rural area, it represents a significant investment into the locality in an innovative and sustainable industry. The community benefit fund

Regional Policy Objective (RPO)	Project contribution
	associated with the Development would amount to an average of € 74,372 per annum. The Development will also create local employment opportunities throughout the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. These opportunities include local contractors being employed, local suppliers being sourced when possible, and the use of hotels and other services. It will provide an additional supply of renewable electricity within the county. This could attract new enterprise to the region, bringing jobs, economic growth and population increases. The introduction of renewable electricity helps to stabilise and reduce electricity costs, making Ireland a more attractive investment location. The increased renewable electricity supply will also help to meet increased demand to facilitate further economic growth.
<i>RPO 50 Diversification; It is an objective to further develop a diverse base of smart economic specialisms across our rural Region, including innovation and diversification in agriculture (agri-Tech, food and beverage), the marine (ports, fisheries and the wider blue economy potential), forestry, peatlands, renewable energy, tourism (leverage the opportunities from the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden</i>	The Development is a renewable energy project. The Site is located in agricultural lands, represents diversification for the farmers involved. The Development also provides the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base through employment, providing stability and

Regional Policy Objective (RPO)	Project contribution
<i>Heartlands brands), social enterprise, circular economy, knowledge economy, global business services, fin-tech, specialised engineering, heritage, arts and culture, design and craft industries as dynamic divers for our rural economy</i>	diversity to the rural economy that can drive further investment.
<i>RPO 56 Low Carbon Economy;</i> <i>a. The RSES recognises the urgency to transition to a low carbon future and it is therefore an objective to accelerate the transition towards low carbon economy and circular economy through mechanisms such as the Climate Action Competitive Fund;</i> <i>b. It is an objective to develop enterprises that create and employ green technologies.</i> <i>c. Local authorities should ensure that the development of green industry and technologies incorporates careful consideration of potential environmental impacts at project level including the capacity of receiving environment and existing infrastructure to serve new industries.</i> <i>d. Local authorities shall include objectives in statutory land use plans to promote energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources in existing buildings, including retro fitting of energy efficiency measures in the existing building stock, energy efficiency in traditional buildings and initiatives to achieve Nearly Zero-Energy Buildings</i>	Renewable energy, wind energy in particular, is identified throughout this review as being required to play a vital role in mitigating climate change by transitioning to a low carbon economy and society. The Development will contribute to the regions electricity network by producing 12-15MW of renewable electricity. The site location has been selected for its excellent wind resource and minimal environmental impacts; these impacts have been assessed throughout this EIAR. By producing renewable energy for use in the region, the Development helps to contribute to lowering the carbon footprint of existing and new buildings. It is estimated that 335,568 tonnes (lower range) or 419,460 tonnes (higher range) of CO₂ will be displaced over the proposed 40-year lifetime of the wind farm.

Regional Policy Objective (RPO)	Project contribution
(NZEB) standards in line with the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). e. It is an objective to support investments in energy efficiency of existing commercial and public building stock with a target of all public buildings and at least one-third of total commercial premises upgraded to BER Rating 'B'. Local authorities shall report annually on energy usage in all public buildings and will achieve a target of 33% improvement in energy efficiency in all buildings in accordance with the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP)	
RPO 96: Integrating Renewable Energy Sources; To support the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure to integrate renewable energy sources and ensure our national and regional energy system remains safe, secure and ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows.	The Development produces renewable wind energy by harnessing the wind resource of the southern region and helping to meet the increased energy demand as the regional economy grows. The Development includes a substation and grid connection which will become assets of the national grid, upgrading the electricity infrastructure in the region.
RPO 99: Renewable Wind Energy; To support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (onshore and offshore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.	The Development is an excellent example of sustainable development (see definition of sustainable development at section 4.8.4) it has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR and has been found to be in a suitable location. The Development is located in an area designated 'Open to Consideration' to

Regional Policy Objective (RPO)	Project contribution
	wind farm development in the Clare County Development Plan. The Development has been designed in accordance with the current Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 and has had regard to the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (see section 4.7.1 and 4.7.2).
<i>RPO 100: Indigenous Renewable Energy Production and Grid Injection; To support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection.</i>	The Development will provide up to 15MW of renewable, indigenously produced wind energy. This additional renewable power generated will contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, improve regional/national energy security and help Ireland achieve our renewable electricity targets.

The RSES recognises and aims to support the many opportunities for wind as a major source of renewable energy. It declares that opportunities for both commercial and community wind energy projects should be harnessed, having regard to the requirements of DoHPLG Guidelines on wind energy. It also states that wind energy technology has an important role in delivering value and clean electricity for Ireland.

4.6.2.2 Project Compliance with Regional Policy

As identified in **Table 4.2** above, the Development is in line with the regional policies as set out in the RSES. By producing renewable energy, in a suitable location, the Development contributes to policies associated with transitioning to a low carbon economy, economic development and rural diversification. This contributes to positioning County Clare as a leader in delivery of renewable electricity for the Southern Regional Assembly region. The construction of the Development will also positively contribute to the regional economy

bringing investment and jobs that will help to support and retain confidence in the key regional industries of construction and renewable energy.

4.6.3 LOCAL POLICY

4.6.3.1 The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Clare County Development Plan (CDP) was formally adopted in April 2023. The CDP sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the functional area of Clare County Council over a 6-year period. The plan builds on the previous plan, seeking to develop County Clare as a place to be part of and proud of and as a dynamic, resilient, connected and internationally competitive location for innovation and investment and as a national leader in climate action. The CDP informs local energy policy.

The plan includes goals relevant to the Development including;

Goal II: *A county that drives local and regional sustainable growth by harnessing the potential of its unique location, quality of life, natural resources and other competitive advantages.*

The plan includes renewable energy targets for County Clare by 2030, including a 550MW target for onshore wind. The current installed capacity of County Clare stands at 153MW¹⁷, leaving a shortfall of 397MW to be achieved in the next 7 years. The proposed Development in Moanmore Lower, by generating 12-15MW, would contribute circa 4% of this shortfall.

The plan notes that County Clare has one of the best wind resources in the world – almost the entire County has either an excellent or very good wind energy resource. The Development helps to harness the wind energy of the county, enabling the exploitation of this natural resource for competitive advantage, facilitating economic development, improving the security of the energy supply and helping to stabilise and reduce energy prices. The Development will create local employment opportunities throughout the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. These opportunities include local contractors being employed, local suppliers being sourced when possible, and the use of hotels and other services.

Goal X: *A county that supports strong economic growth and a high quality of life for all residents through the provision of efficient and robust physical infrastructure whilst having*

¹⁷ Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 <https://clarecdp2023-2029.clarecoco.ie/stage3-amendments/adoption/volume-5-clare-renewable-strategy-clare-county-development-plan-2023-2029-51389.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

regard to environmental responsibilities and complying with European and national legislation.

Chapter 2; Climate Action includes the goal:

*"A county that is resilient to climate change, plans for and adapts to climate change and flood risk, is the **national leader in renewable energy generation**, facilitates a low carbon future, supports energy efficiency and conservation and enables the **decarbonisation** of our lifestyles".*

The proposed Development at Moanmore Lower represents a major investment in the county and in renewable energy. It will provide an improved renewable electricity supply in the county. This could attract new enterprise, bringing jobs and economic growth. The increased renewable electricity supply will also help to meet increased demand to facilitate further economic growth. By displacing fossil fuels, as detailed in **Chapter 12: Air and Climate**, the Development also contributes to improved air quality and helps to mitigate climate change, both of which add to a high quality of life for County Clare residents.

There are five Strategic Principles in the Clare CDP These are summarised in **Table 4.3** along with the Developments contribution.

Table 4.3 Strategic Development Plan Principles from the Clare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 (p15 and 16).

Strategic Development Plan Principles	Contribution of the Development
Quality of Life; Mental and physical health is affected by the environment in which we live.	By producing renewable energy, the Development contributes to the displacement of fossil fuels, which pollute the air, this improves air quality, which is closely linked to good health and well-being. Chapter 12; Air Quality and Climate assessed the likely significant direct and indirect effects of the Project on air and climate. The Project will assist in reducing carbon dioxide (CO ₂) emissions (8,389 tonnes per annum at the lower range or 10,487 tonnes per annum at the higher range) that would otherwise arise if the same energy that the Project will generate were otherwise to be generated by conventional fossil fuel plants. The

Strategic Development Plan Principles	Contribution of the Development
	Project will have a moderate, positive and long-term, impact on the air climate.
Sustainability: “development which meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.	The Proposed Development is an excellent example of sustainable development, enshrined in the National Planning Framework. The Development meets each of the three pillars of sustainable development as outlined in section 4.8.4.
Climate Action: The County Development Plan and with the Clare County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 provide a framework for the transition towards a low carbon and more climate resilient county.	By generating renewable energy and displacing fossil fuels the Development helps to reduce carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change, displacing up to 419,460 tonnes of CO ₂ over the proposed 40-year lifetime of the wind farm. This supports Ireland's transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.
Resilience: Resilience is built into the strategic policies and recommendations of each of the cross-cutting themes: quality of life, sustainability, climate action, and inclusivity.	Increasing the diversity of energy generation with renewables reduces vulnerability to climate change and improves the resilience of the energy system.
Inclusivity: Inclusivity affects the wellbeing of individuals, families, social groups and communities. Creating a more socially inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion,	Concern over energy costs amongst the population of Ireland is high, a survey by the Journal in 2022 ¹⁸ found that 77% of people said that they already or intend to use their home heating less often. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) ¹⁹ report on Energy Poverty published in 2022, has also warned that as many as 43% of households could now be in energy poverty. The

¹⁸ The Journal. (2022). Cost of living crisis: Most households intend to use their home heating less often this winter <https://www.thejournal.ie/poll-energy-use-ireland-heating-5891701-Oct2022/> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

¹⁹ ESRI. (2022). Energy poverty at highest recorded rate <https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

Strategic Development Plan Principles	Contribution of the Development
poverty and deprivation is a major challenge.	Development will produce between 12-15MW of renewable electricity which will improve the security of County Clare's energy supply, helping to stabilise and reduce energy prices.

The Development, by producing renewable energy, would assist County Clare in achieving the goal of becoming a national leader in renewable energy generation. Renewable electricity can play an important role in the decarbonisation of other sectors through electrification, including transport, heating, and industry, helping to facilitate the decarbonisation of the lifestyles of County Clare residents.

The CDP sets out the policies and objectives aimed at mitigating and adapting to climate change in the county. It outlines an overarching objective to reduce the carbon output from developments and activities in the plan area.

Chapter 6 Economic Development and Enterprise, notes that County Clare's ability to continue to attract and retain high levels of foreign direct investment and to provide a supportive environment for industry will depend on its capacity to deliver a competitive and uninterrupted energy supply. It states that there is significant potential for the development of renewable energy in County Clare.

Chapter 8 Rural Development and Natural Resources includes the strategic aim;

"To ensure that key assets of rural areas such as the natural and built environment are protected and enhanced, and that rural areas with resources such as renewable energy, water sources, and aggregates are sustainably developed."

The Development harnesses the renewable wind energy resources of a rural area in a sustainable way, **Section 4.8.4** outlines how the Development meets the three pillars of sustainable development. **EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity** assessed the likely significant direct and indirect effects that the Project may have on Terrestrial Ecology, including habitats, flora, invertebrates, mammals and birds and concluded there would be no significant residual effects on biodiversity from the Development. The Development includes 2no. biodiversity enhancement areas and following the implementation of the Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan there will be a net increase in the area of cutover bog at the Site.

Chapter 11; Physical Infrastructure, Environment and Energy highlights that energy security, i.e. secure and uninterrupted sustainable energy supply at a competitive cost, is critical to County Clare's ability to continue to provide a supportive environment for industry and innovation and to attract and retain high levels of foreign direct investment. A key driving objective of this chapter is to facilitate and attract further renewable energy developments. The proposed Development has been designed on the basis of compliance with and supporting the policy objectives of the Clare County Development Plan.

4.6.3.2 Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) and Clare Wind Energy Strategy

The RES is included in Volume 5 of the CDP plan whilst the Clare Wind Energy Strategy (WES) is included in Volume 6. These outline the renewable energy resources of the county and seek to position County Clare as a national leader in renewable energy generation.

The WES identifies sites of strategic regional and national importance that have the potential to accommodate wind energy development. It designates areas as being either a) strategic, b) acceptable in principle, c) open for consideration or d) not normally permissible, for wind energy development, as shown on **Figure 4.2**. The Development is located in an area designated 'Open to Consideration' to wind farm development.

These are defined as;

"The Areas Open to Consideration will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, subject to viable wind speeds, environmental resources and constraints and cumulative impacts".

The Irish Wind Atlas²⁰ produced by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) shows that wind speeds on the Site (6.4/sec at 30m, 7.9m/sec at 75m, 8.3m/sec at 100m and 9.0m/sec at 150m) are consistent with a wind farm development being viable at this location. A constraints led approach has been undertaken in the design of the wind farm, and no likely significant effects on the environment have been identified during the EIA process. Cumulative impacts have been assessed throughout the EIAR, in-line with the EIA Directive and no likely significant effects on the environment in cumulation with other plans or projects have been identified.

²⁰ <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/adeb20a08bdd477082a3975b3483cce6>

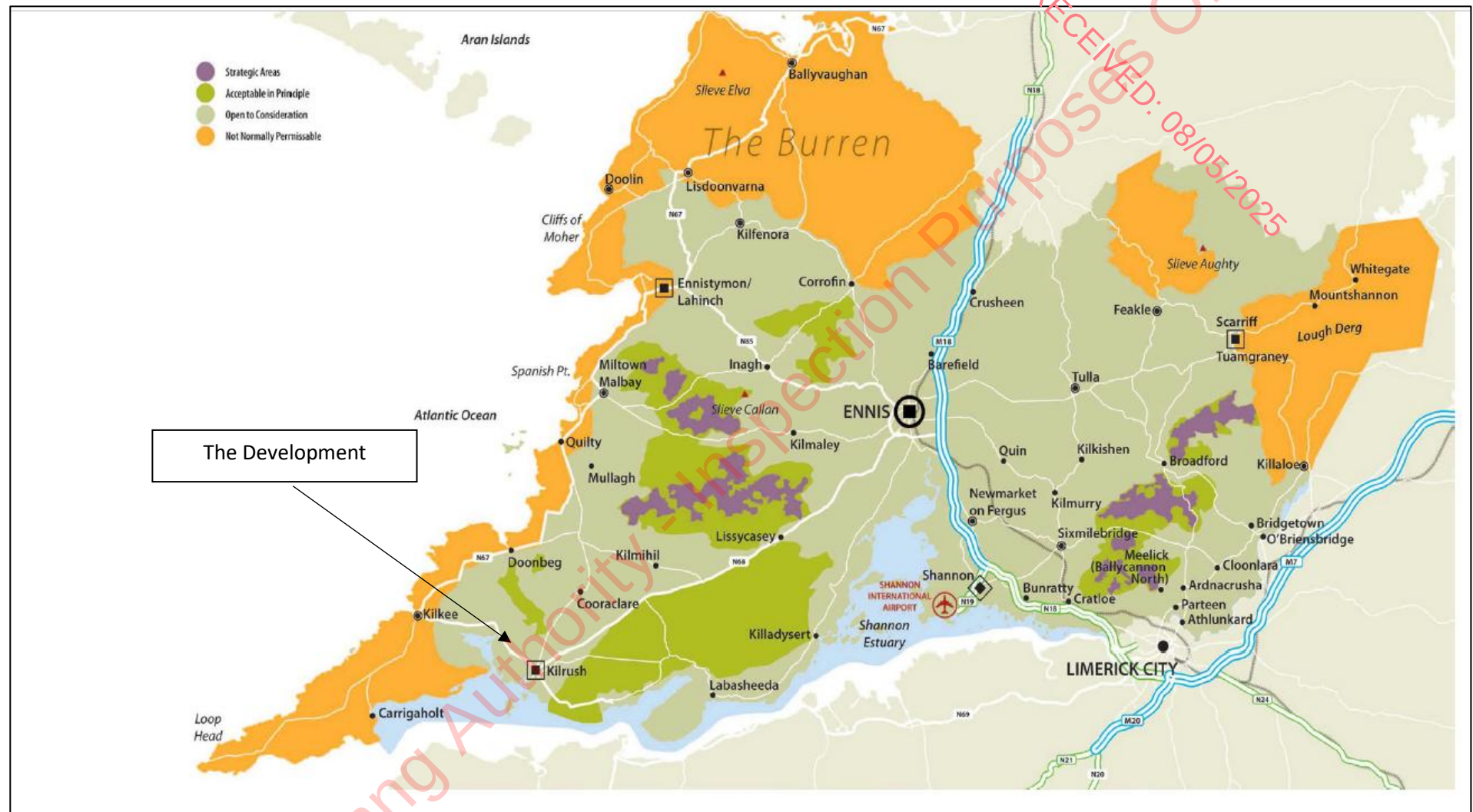


Figure 4.2: Extract from Chapter 6 -RES 'Figure 6.1 Wind Energy Designations

The RES includes Strategic Aims for the county which include:

- To support the attainment of and to exceed in County Clare, where possible, the National targets and commitments to renewable energy.
- To maximise the opportunities for renewable energy development whilst safeguarding the environment and existing residential amenities
- To safeguard, where appropriate, areas with potential for renewable energy projects and to guide renewable energy development to preferred locations.

The RES includes overarching objectives for environmental protection to be applied to all renewable energy developments. These are set out in **Table 4.4** below.

Table 4.4: RES 1.1 Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures (apply to all renewable energy development)

Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures	Development Contribution
A. Any proposals for renewable energy infrastructure shall comply with Chapter 17 Environmental Considerations & Development Management Advice and the overarching policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029	The Development is in compliance with Chapter 17 of the RES, including requirements relating to Biodiversity, Noise, Landscape and Visual, Water Resources, Built Heritage and Air Quality and Climate. Section 4.6.3.1 assesses the Development in relation to the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029. It concludes that the Development is in compliance with the policies outlined in the plan.

Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures	Development Contribution
B. The EPA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool and the Appropriate Assessment GeoTool should be applied to inform decision-making in terms of infrastructural/siting considerations as well as consideration of environmental sensitivities.	The Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR. No likely significant effects on the environment were identified. The EPA Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) Webtool and the Appropriate Assessment GeoTool were used along with other on Site and desk-based assessment tools to inform the assessments for the Chapter 6 Biodiversity, Chapter 7 Aquatics, Chapter 8 Soils and Geology and Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.
C. To ensure that renewable energy development proposals support and enhance the connectivity and integrity of habitats in the Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) area by incorporating natural features into the design of development proposals; and to work with infrastructure providers to co-develop infrastructural management plans to enhance biodiversity.	Biodiversity is assessed in Chapter 6. Throughout the preparation of the EIAR, the layout of the Development has been revised and refined to take account of the findings of all site investigations. The aim of this was to reduce potential for environmental effects while designing a project capable of being constructed and viable. A constraints led approach was taken, resulting in the avoidance of effects on the connectivity and integrity of the habitats in the vicinity of the wind farm. It concluded there will be no significant effect from the Project on Biodiversity. The Biodiversity and Enhancement Management Plan is presented in Appendix 6.11. The Plan will restore and enhance an area of cutover bog that has been degraded by afforestation. This will improve biodiversity at the Site, increasing

Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures	Development Contribution
	the habitats available for species of conservation value.
D. To require any Renewable Energy project to be in compliance with the objectives and requirements of the Habitats Directive, specifically Article 6(3) and where necessary 6(4), Birds, Water Framework (including the implementation of the 3rd Cycle RBMP), and all other relevant EU Directives and all relevant transposing national legislation.	Habitats Directive: A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared for the Project and will be submitted with the application. It concluded no reasonable scientific doubt remains that the proposed Project will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, in view of the conservation objectives of that site. Chapter 6 assesses the impact of the Project on Biodiversity. It concluded there will be no significant effect from the Project on Biodiversity. Following the implementation of the BEMP (Appendix 6.11), there will ultimately be a net increase in the area of cutover bog at the Site, which is rated as a Likely Positive Effect in the long-term. The Water Framework Directive is considered in Chapter 9 Hydrology and Hydrogeology. This Chapter has found the Project to be in compliance with the EIA directive and Renewable Energy Directive. It concluded there will be no significant effect from the Project on Hydrology and Hydrogeology.
E. To require project planning for any renewable energy project to be fully informed by ecological and environmental constraints at the earliest stage of project development and any necessary assessment to be undertaken, including	Impacts to Biodiversity are addressed in Chapter 6. A constraints led approach was followed to the design of the Development, as detailed in Chapter 3; Alternatives.

Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures	Development Contribution
assessments of disturbance to species and habitats, as required. Any ecological assessment shall also be required to consider ecological connectivity and potential supporting habitats to European Sites.	Constraints and associated buffers included – • 50m buffer of Watercourses (apart from crossing locations) in accordance with the Irish Wind Energy Industry Best Practice Guidelines (IWEA, 2012) • 50m buffer of Archaeological Sites or Monuments (professional judgement based on experience) • Avoidance of sensitive habitats The Site layout design has evolved through a series of iterations, to avoid or minimise potential effects, including effects on views, hydrology, peat, ecology and fisheries, ornithology and noise. Throughout the preparation of the EIAR, the layout of the Development has been revised and refined to take account of the findings of all site investigations, which have brought the design from its first initial layout to the current proposed layout.
F. To require the preparation and assessment of all planning applications for renewable energy projects to have regard to the information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment Natura Impact Report, SEA Environmental Report and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report of the County Clare County Development Plan	The design of the Development as detailed in EIAR Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and preparation of this EIAR has had regard to information, data and requirements of the Appropriate Assessment/Natura Impact Report, the SEA Environmental Report²¹ of the County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 which includes assessment of the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy and the

²¹ <https://clarecdp2023-2029.clarecoco.ie/stage3-amendments/adoption/volume-10b-i-strategic-environmental-assessment-environmental-report-51397.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

Proposed SEA Mitigation Measures	Development Contribution
2023- 2029 and SEA of the Renewable Energy Strategy.	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report of the County Clare ²² . A Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 9.1) has been undertaken for the Project and is attached as Appendix 9.1 . A Natura Impact Statement has also been prepared for the Project.

4.6.3.3 The Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024

The Clare Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2019-2024 outlines the strategy of the Council to adapt to the effects of climate change and to safeguard the biophysical infrastructure and wellbeing of the people and communities of County Clare. The strategy highlights that one of the main factors driving climate change is the increased level of CO₂ emissions caused by energy related power consumption. It includes a number of objectives relevant to the Development in relation to renewable energy including;

- *OBJECTIVE 2: To promote County Clare as a Low Carbon County and support the development of low carbon and green technology businesses and industries throughout the County.*

This objective includes supporting on-land and off-shore renewable energy production and the increased use of renewable energy in the commercial and agricultural sectors.

- *OBJECTIVE 4: To promote and facilitate the provision of high quality, secure, efficient and reliable renewable energy sources along with appropriate energy storage facilities in order to assist in the creation of a low carbon County Clare.*

This objective includes encouraging proposals for renewable energy developments and ancillary facilities in order to meet national, regional and county renewable energy targets, and to facilitate a reduction in CO₂ emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy.

4.6.3.4 Project Compliance with Local Policy

As outlined in Section 4.6.3.1 and Section 4.6.3.2 the Development is compliant with local policy within the Clare CDP and Clare RES. The Development, by producing renewable

²² <https://clarecdp2023-2029.clarecoco.ie/stage3-amendments/adoption/volume-10c-strategic-flood-risk-assessment-clare-county-development-plan-2023-2029-51404.pdf> [Accessed 01/12/2024]

energy, would assist County Clare in achieving the goal of becoming a national leader in renewable energy generation.

The Development will help county Clare to achieve the goals outlined in the RES and in National targets. This includes a minimum 550MW target for onshore wind in the county by 2030. The current installed capacity of County Clare stands at 246MW according to Wind Energy Ireland. This leaves a short fall of 304MW to be achieved in the next 7 years. The Development would contribute 12-15MW, circa 5% of this shortfall. The Development provides an opportunity to harness the excellent wind resources of County Clare, it has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR and has been found to be in a suitable location. It has been designed to safeguard the environment, including residential amenity. The WES identifies sites of strategic regional and national importance that have the potential to accommodate wind energy development. It designates areas as being either a) strategic, b) acceptable in principle, c) open for consideration or d) not normally permissible, for wind energy development, as shown on **Figure 4.2**. The Development is located in an area designated '*Open to Consideration*' to wind farm development.

By producing renewable energy which will displace greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels, the Development assists in achieving the outcomes of the Clare Climate Change Adaption Strategy 2019-2024.

4.7 OTHER CORE PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS

4.7.1 The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (WEDGs), Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DoHLG, 2006)

The Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DoHLG, 2006) advise that a reasonable balance must be achieved between meeting Government Policy on renewable energy and the proper planning and sustainable development of an area, and it provides advice in relation to the information that should be submitted with planning applications. The effects on residential amenity, the environment, nature conservation, birds and the landscape should be addressed. It states that particular landscapes of very high sensitivity may not be appropriate for wind energy development.

The Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 remain valid until the revised, Draft Wind Energy Guidelines 2019 are finalised and published by the government.

4.7.2 The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (DoHLG, 2019)

The key aspects for the draft proposed new wind energy guidelines include the following:

- a visual amenity setback of 4 times the turbine height between a wind turbine and the nearest residential property, subject to a mandatory minimum distance of 500 metres.
- the elimination of shadow flicker.
- the application of a more stringent noise limit, consistent with World Health Organisation standards.
- the introduction of new obligations in relation to community engagement with local communities along with the provision of community benefit measures.

The Development has been designed in accordance with the current Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 and has regard to the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 in relation to:

- Noise impacts (assessed in **Chapter 10: Noise**) are in line with the guidance.
- To eliminate shadow flicker at nearby dwellings, assessment and mitigation measures have also been included in the project, in line with the draft guidelines, full details of this can be found in **Chapter 5: Population and Human Health**.
- Engagement with local communities has taken place throughout the design and planning phases of the proposed development. Full details can be found in **Chapter 1; Introduction** and in the Community Report in **Appendix 1.5**.
- Community Benefit: Establishing a community fund of up to €75,000 annually in the first 15 years of operation that will be administered by a management committee including local community representatives, in line with the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) Community Benefit Fund Good Practice Principles published in 2021²³.

4.7.3 National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025

The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland sets out a roadmap. The objectives of the National Landscape Strategy are to:

- *Implement the European Landscape Convention by integrating landscape into our approach to sustainable development.*
- *Establish and embed a public process of gathering, sharing and interpreting scientific, technical and cultural information in order to carry out evidence-based*

²³ Government of Ireland. (2021) <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5f12f-community-projects-and-benefit-funds-ress/> Accessed 07/2/2024

identification and description of the character, resources and processes of the landscape.

- Provide a policy framework, which will put in place measures at national, sectoral - including agriculture, tourism, energy, transport and marine - and local level, together with civil society, to protect, manage and properly plan through high quality design for the sustainable stewardship of our landscape.
- Ensure that we take advantage of opportunities to implement policies relating to landscape use that are complementary and mutually reinforcing and that conflicting policy objectives are avoided in as far as possible.

4.8 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

4.8.1 The National Interest and Strategic Importance

The Development will make a valuable contribution to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas reductions as part of the international (Section 4.4) and European (Section 4.5) efforts to combat climate change.

Ireland is facing significant challenges in efforts to meet renewable energy and emissions targets and is falling behind in the longer-term movement away from fossil fuels. Ireland has one of the highest rates of importing fuel in Europe with energy import dependency increasing to 80% in 2021²⁴. Energy demand in Ireland has been growing and is expected to continue to increase, especially electricity demand which is expected to grow by 37% to 2031²⁵. Increases to the cost of carbon, supply issues, and potential political insecurity increases fossil fuel price volatility. Geopolitical instability has led to energy prices in Ireland increasing significantly. According to the SEAI The average residential electricity prices increased 29% from 2023 to 2024. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)²⁶ report on Energy Poverty published in 2022, has also warned that as many as 43% of households could now be in energy poverty.

The high rate of imported fossil fuel dependency, the increasing demand for electricity and current energy price volatility make it vital to introduce more domestic renewable energy generation plants, such as the Development, to provide reliable, secure and affordable energy supplies in Ireland. The Development could improve Irish energy security and

²⁴ SEAI. (2022). ENERGY IN IRELAND. https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/energy-in-ireland/?qclid=EAlaIqobChMI-LH_o6r8_QIV09_tCh23YAykEAAYASAAEgJipvD_BwE [Accessed 01/12/2024]

²⁵ EirGrid. (2022). EirGrid's Generation Capacity Statement Predicts Challenging Outlook for Ireland <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/newsroom/eirgrids-generation-capacity/#:~:text=The%20GCS%2C%20in%20its%20median,relatively%20consistent%20across%20the%20decade>. Accessed [Accessed 01/12/2024]

²⁶ ESRI. (2022). Energy poverty at highest recorded rate <https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate> Accessed [Accessed 01/12/2024]

reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels in line with the Clean Industrial Deal (4.5.1), National Energy Security Framework (4.6.1.5) and the REPowerEU Plan (Section 4.5.4). The construction of the Development will also positively contribute to the regional economy bringing investment and jobs that will help to support and retain confidence in the key regional industries of construction and renewable energy.

4.8.2 The Economic Importance of Development

The Development would represent a strategically significant investment in the locality of County Clare and the wider southern region. The Development will provide a multi-million euro benefit to both the Irish and local economies and the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base, providing the stability and diversity to the rural economy that can stimulate further industry investment to take place. This will have a positive economic impact with several Irish firms commissioned to work on the design, environmental assessment and planning aspects of the Project. Local suppliers will be used wherever possible during the construction phase and in the operational stage, Irish businesses will benefit from the provision of a reliable, local renewable energy source.

4.8.3 Renewable Energy Policy

The Proposed Development meets the objectives of Project 2040 as it will contribute to the economic, environmental, and social objectives of the NPF, in particular National Policy Objectives 54 & 55.

It is critical that a progressive approach is taken to development of renewable energy projects in order to deliver the CAP2025 objective of meeting an 80% share of electricity generated by renewables by 2030. The Development would contribute 12-15MW of renewable electricity to the CAP2025 target of 9GW of onshore renewable electricity generation by 2030 helping to reduce the current 4GW shortfall. It also contributes to assisting Ireland to increase from 35% electricity produced by renewable sources²⁷ in 2024 to 80% by 2030 to meet the CAP2025 target.

As a form of sustainable energy, with an output potential of between 12-15MW of installed capacity at the Development, which will contribute significantly to renewable energy targets and the strategy set out in the RSES for the Southern Region.

²⁷ Wind Energy Ireland - <https://windenergyireland.com/latest-news> [Accessed 18/04/2025]

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 includes renewable energy targets for 2030, including a 550MW target for onshore wind. The current installed capacity of County Clare stands at 153MW²⁸, leaving a shortfall of 397MW to be achieved in the next 7 years. The Development would contribute circa 4% of this shortfall.

4.8.4 The Proposed Development as Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs²⁹. There are three pillars to sustainable development which are economic, social and environmental. The Development is an excellent example of sustainable development, enshrined in the National Planning Framework. The Development meets each of the three pillars of sustainable development as outlined in **Table 4.5**.

Table 4.5: How the Development Interacts with the three pillars of sustainable development.

Economic Role	The Development would represent a strategically significant investment in the locality. The Development provides the opportunity to reinforce and grow the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base, providing the stability and diversity to the rural economy that can stimulate further development by attracting new business to the region due to the improved supply of electricity. The Development will have a positive economic impact with several Irish firms commissioned to work on the design, environmental assessment and planning.
Social Role	The influence of the Development to the de-carbonisation of the Irish electricity network will contribute positively to issues of strategic social importance. It will assist in mitigating climate change and improve air quality while enhancing energy security, including helping to stabilise and reduce energy costs. The Development will also create jobs, economic development and rural diversification.

²⁸ Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2029 <https://clarecdp2023-2029.clarecoco.ie/stage3-amendments/adoption/volume-5-clare-renewable-strategy-clare-county-development-plan-2023-2029-51389.pdf> Accessed 07/02/2024

²⁹ Our Common Purpose: Brundtland Report, 1987

Environmental Role	Overall, the EIAR sets out that the environmental impacts arising from the Development can be satisfactorily mitigated. The findings demonstrate that the environment can accommodate the Development without giving rise to significant environmental effects in line with the Clare County Development Plan objectives as well as regional, national and international policy. The NIS concludes on the best available scientific evidence that it can be demonstrated objectively that no elements of the Development will result in a significant adverse effect on the integrity or on the Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests of any relevant European site, either on their own or in-combination with other plans or projects, in light of their conservation objectives. Over its' lifespan (40 years), the Development would displace between 335,568 tonnes and 419,460 tonnes of CO₂. This would help to mitigate climate change and the impacts to ecosystem globally.
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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Learn more and take action.

The Development positively contributes to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:



By producing renewable energy, the Development contributes to the displacement of fossil fuels, which pollute the air, this improves air quality, which is closely linked to good health and well-being. See Chapter 12: Air and Climate for details.



The Development would produce a renewable energy source locally, this improves Ireland's energy security and helps to stabilize and reduce energy costs for households and businesses.



The Development is a renewable energy enterprise, representing a multi-million-euro investment into the Southern Region. This could attract new enterprise to the county, bringing jobs and economic growth. This is examined in more detail in Chapter 5: Population and Human Health.



The Development by producing renewable energy contributes to decarbonising industry sectors through electrification. The Substation and Grid Connection will become assets of the national grid under the management of EirGrid and assist in improving energy infrastructure in the region.



The renewable energy that the Development will generate will help support Ireland's low carbon transition and reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gases. The Development could provide power for to up to 12,000 homes with renewable energy.



By generating renewable energy and displacing fossil fuels the Development helps to reduce carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases and mitigate climate change, supporting Ireland's transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

4.9 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this Planning Policy Chapter, renewable energy has been identified as being required to play an essential role in mitigating climate change by transitioning to a low carbon economy and society. By investing in renewable energy, Ireland can promote sustainable economic development using its own, secure and clean energy.

All planning applications have to be determined on their individual merits with due consideration given to the overall planning balance of a scheme. The pressing need to address climate change, the challenges to energy security giving rise to the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2022/2577, and the overriding public interest being given to renewable energy projects, further supports additional renewable energy projects, such as the Development.

The development in Moanmore Lower, County Clare will provide up to 12-15MW of renewable, domestically produced wind energy. This additional renewable power generated will contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels, improve regional/national energy security and help Ireland achieve our renewable electricity targets.

The Development contributes to supplying the national demand for renewable energy, which in the context of the ongoing climate emergency and increasing demand is an urgent Irish national priority.

While renewable energy in Ireland has come a long way, there is still a shortfall in where the nation needs to be to achieve increasing targets. Ireland missed its 2020 target for renewable energy achieving 12% instead of 16% of overall renewable energy share. There is a clear national mandate to accommodate significant onshore wind within the next decade with The Climate Action Plan 2024 setting a 9GW target for installed wind energy capacity by 2030. In May 2022 this was 4.3GW, leaving a shortfall of 4.7GW to be achieved in the next 8 years.

Further, the National Planning Framework emphasises a move to a low-carbon economy, reducing Ireland's carbon footprint and integrating climate action into the planning system. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region supports opportunities for onshore wind as a major source of renewable energy with an important role in delivering value and clean electricity for Ireland. The Clare County Development plan reinforces the national and regional energy policies. The Development falls in an area

classified as '*Open to Consideration*' to wind farm development in the Renewable Energy Strategy for Co. Clare.

The Development meets the definition of Sustainable Development as defined by the National Planning Framework in terms of the three sustainability pillars: Economy, Environment and Social. It also contributes to the UN sustainability goals; 3 Good Health and Wellbeing, 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities and 13 Climate Action.

The development process adopted by the Developer has represented a best practice approach to a renewable energy scheme design, minimising the potential effects on the receiving environment through multiple design iterations and modifications, and ensuring compliance with the suite of planning policies and objectives of the Clare County Development Plan. The layout of the Development presented in the planning application and EIAR represents the optimum fit, considering the technical and environmental parameters of this project as discussed within this EIAR.

Likely significant effects have been considered within this EIAR and through the process of assessment, embedded mitigation, and additional proposed mitigation outlined in the EIAR, NIS, CEMP and Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan it has been shown that the Development can be constructed, operated and decommissioned without likely significant effects on the environment arising.

This chapter outlines how the Development is compliant with International, European and National policy on energy security, emissions reductions and renewable energy production. It has reviewed policy for the Southern region and local County Clare policies and finds the Development complies with key renewable energy and environmental policy objectives. The Development is aligned to all the relevant planning policies identified throughout this chapter, and it will contribute to achieving renewable energy and reduction in emissions targets locally, regionally and nationally.