GDG
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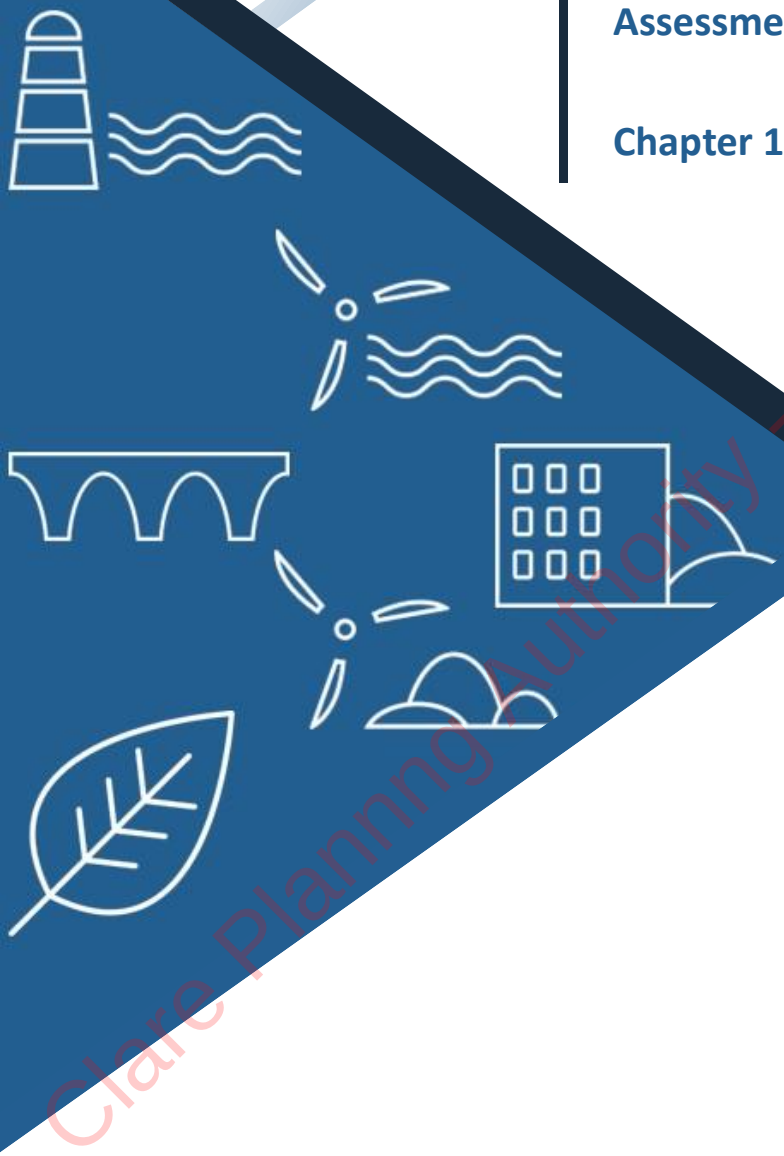
GEOSOLUTIONS

Illaunbaun Wind Farm - Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 1: Introduction & Methodology



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ACRONYMS

AA	Appropriate Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GDG	Gavin & Doherty Geosolutions Ltd.
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GW	Gigawatt
mOD	Metres above ordnance datum
MW	Megawatt
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
RECODE	Renewable Energy Community Developer Engagement
RSES	Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), along with supporting documentation, has been prepared by Gavin and Doherty Geosolutions Ltd. on behalf of JC Mont-Fort Holding SA. It supports an application for planning permission and associated consent for the construction and operation of the Illaunbaun Wind Farm Project (hereinafter referred to as the Proposed Development). The EIAR forms part of the development consent application submitted to Clare County Council for approval.

The EIAR has been prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), and the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018. It has also been informed by all relevant guidance listed in Chapter 2: Policy & Legislation, including the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2022 *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*. These documents provide the statutory and procedural framework that governs the preparation, structure, and content of the EIAR.

This EIAR has been developed to ensure that the consenting authority is provided with sufficient and reliable information to reach a reasoned conclusion on the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the environment, as required under Article 3 of Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU).

The EIAR aims to inform the decision-making process by presenting an objective assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development. According to the EPA's EIAR Guidelines, an EIAR is defined as "a statement of the effects, if any, which the Proposed Development, if carried out, would have on the environment." The EIAR includes a description of the existing environment (baseline conditions), identifies the potential significant effects (both positive and negative) of the Proposed Development, and proposes appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures where necessary. It represents the outcome of a systematic and evidence-based assessment process, developed in consultation with statutory stakeholders and relevant authorities throughout the EIA process.

This chapter provides an overview of the context, purpose and structure of the EIAR. It outlines the environmental topics addressed, the professionals responsible for the assessments and their qualifications, and some key assumptions that underpin the evaluation.

1.2 THE APPLICANT

JC Mont-Fort Holding SA is an international renewable energy developer, active in the fields of Renewable Energy Sources such as wind power, solar photovoltaic energy & battery storage facilities. The company is involved in all stages of project development, including site selection, design, coordination, financing, project management consultancy, and operational oversight.

Since its establishment in 2002, the group has developed projects in eight countries and currently has a portfolio exceeding 5GW of renewable electricity generation capacity. The group's operations

are underpinned by a strong commitment to sustainable development, climate action, and the promotion of long-term environmental stewardship.

JC Mont-Fort's development approach is informed by international best practice, national planning frameworks, and early, transparent stakeholder engagement. The company seeks to balance technical and commercial feasibility with the protection of environmental resources and the interests of local communities.

The Proposed Development reflects JC Mont-Fort's broader mission: to generate clean, renewable energy in a manner that supports national energy and climate targets while safeguarding the integrity of the natural and built environment.

1.3 COMMUNITY TURBINE

The Proposed Development also includes a locally owned community turbine, which forms part of a joint wind energy project brought forward by JC Mont-Fort Holding SA and Slievenalicka Locally Owned Turbine Ltd. While two separate planning applications will be submitted to Clare County Council, one EIAR has been prepared to assess the likely significant effects of the overall development at the site.

The development of this wind farm site with the piloting concept of a locally owned turbine under the stewardship of Sharedturbine Ltd. features heavily in Galway University's study of ways in which renewable energy projects can be better developed by involving people who live close to them, in their ownership. The Galway University study is titled; Renewable Energy Community Developer Engagement (RECODE), will run for two years and is funded by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland.

The EIAR has been developed to consider all aspects of the combined scheme (including both the commercial and community turbines) and to ensure that the cumulative environmental effects are addressed in a coordinated and transparent manner.

1.4 BACKGROUND CONTEXT

The Proposed Development has been brought forward in response to international, national, regional and local policies supporting Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy and the achievement of climate mitigation targets.

Ireland has legally committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030, as established by the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015 and 2021. The 2025 Plan reaffirms the target of delivering 9 GW of onshore wind capacity by 2030, alongside a broader goal of generating 80% of electricity from renewable sources by that year. This plan also acknowledges the electricity sector as having delivered the greatest GHG reductions to date and as being the sector with the most ambitious targets.

At a regional level, the National Planning Framework (2018, draft update 2024) and the National Development Plan 2021–2030 emphasise the need to scale up renewable electricity production. Specific renewable electricity capacity allocations have been assigned to each region, with 978 MW

of new onshore wind capacity targeted for the Southern Region by 2030. These targets are reflected in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region, which identifies wind energy as a strategic priority. At county level, the Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029 and its associated Renewable Energy Strategy (including Wind Energy Strategy) designate specific areas as strategically suitable for wind energy. The Proposed Development is located within such a designated area and is well aligned with Clare County's local renewable energy objectives.

The Proposed Development is also aligned with the broader climate, energy and spatial planning objectives of the following strategies and legislation:

- Climate Action Plan 2025
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015 and 2021
- Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029 and Renewable Energy Strategy (including Wind Energy Strategy)
- National Development Plan 2021–2030
- National Planning Framework (2018, draft update 2024)
- Project Ireland 2040

All relevant legislation, policies and guidance documents informing the preparation of this EIAR are summarised in Chapter 2: Policy and Legislation. Topic-specific legal and policy requirements are addressed within the relevant technical chapters throughout this EIAR.

1.5 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT LOCATION

The Proposed Development site was selected following a detailed alternatives and constraints study, which also considered the 'do-nothing' scenario as part of the scoping process. The site is located approximately 4.2 km northeast of Milltown Malbay and 2.9 km from the west coast of County Clare. It comprises a combination of commercial forestry, peatland and open upland. Surrounding land uses include low-density rural housing, agriculture, and other renewable energy developments. The red line boundary of the Proposed Development encompasses the townlands of Tooreen, Slievenalicka, Illaunbaun, Lackamore and Drumbaun, although no infrastructure is proposed in the Lackamore townland.

The topography of the site ranges from 115 m above Ordnance Datum (mOD) in the east to just over 200 mOD in the west and north, where two hills are present. Lough Keagh is located in the southern part of the site, at elevations between 180 mOD and 185 mOD. The Proposed Development is drained by four watercourses identified by the EPA: Illaunduff, Ballinphonta, Drumbaun, and Derrymore.

1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Development consists of the construction of a six-turbine onshore wind farm in Co. Clare, with each turbine having a tip height of up to 150 m and a rotor diameter of up to 117 m. The development will also include associated infrastructure within a site area not exceeding 500 acres. This includes an on-site substation (comprising a platform, control building, transformers, etc.),

turbine foundations, crane hardstands and laydown areas, borrow pits, peat storage areas, access roads and passing bays, , internal cabling and ducting, drainage systems, and grid connection infrastructure. The Proposed Development will also involve sediment control measures, temporary construction compound, tree felling, and all other associated works required for the delivery of the project. The proposed grid connection will be via underground cabling to the 110kV Slievecallan Substation.

The current layout, Design iteration has been designed to minimise the potential environmental effects of the wind farm whilst also maximising the energy yield of the wind resource. A comprehensive description of the Proposed Development is provided in Chapter 5: Project Description of this EIAR, including details of its infrastructural components, project phases, and key technical specifications.

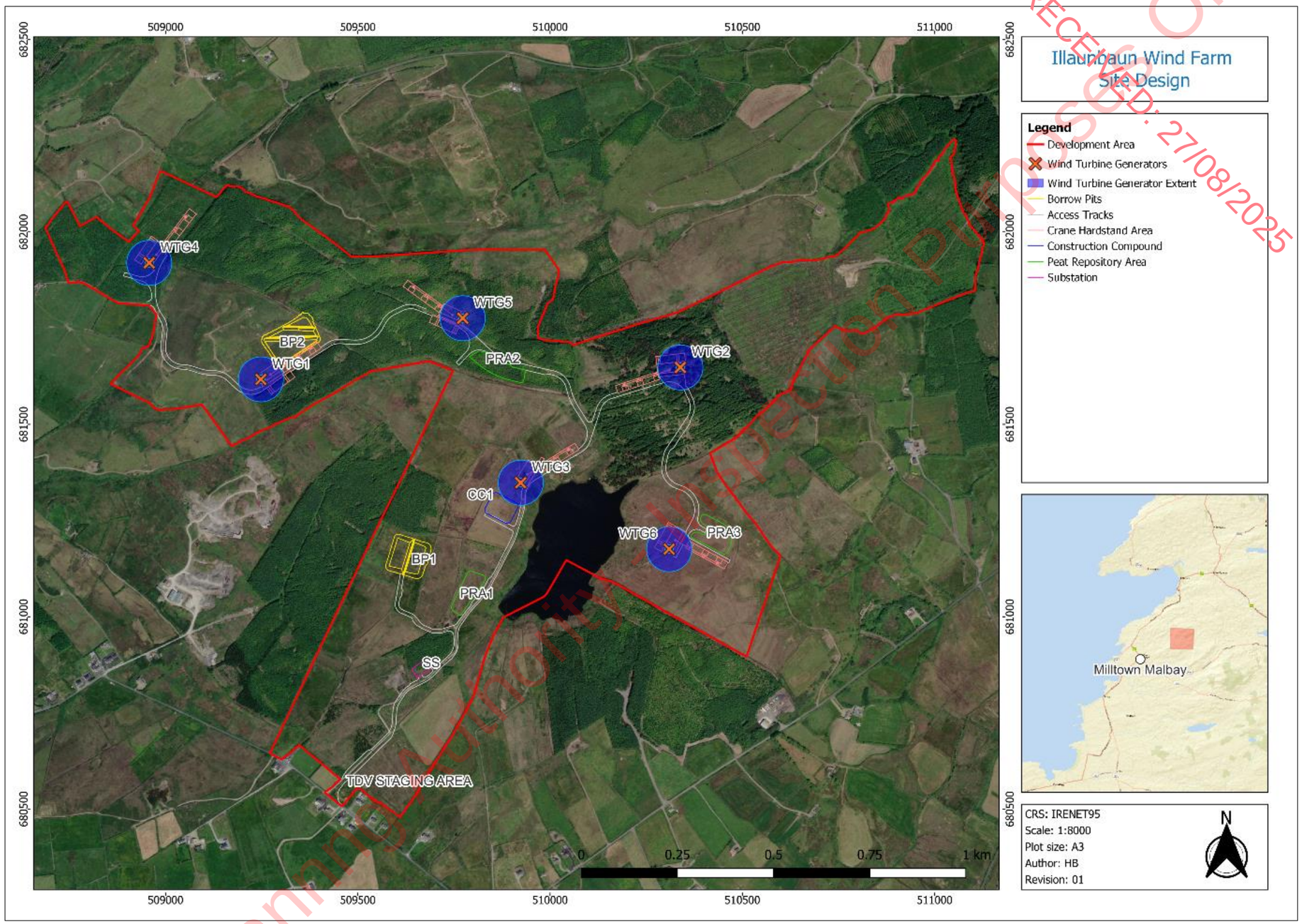

Figure 1-1 Site Layout Plan

1.7 EIA METHODOLOGY

All works have been assessed under a single EIA process, which is presented below. This EIAR has been prepared to inform the process illustrated in Figure 1-2.

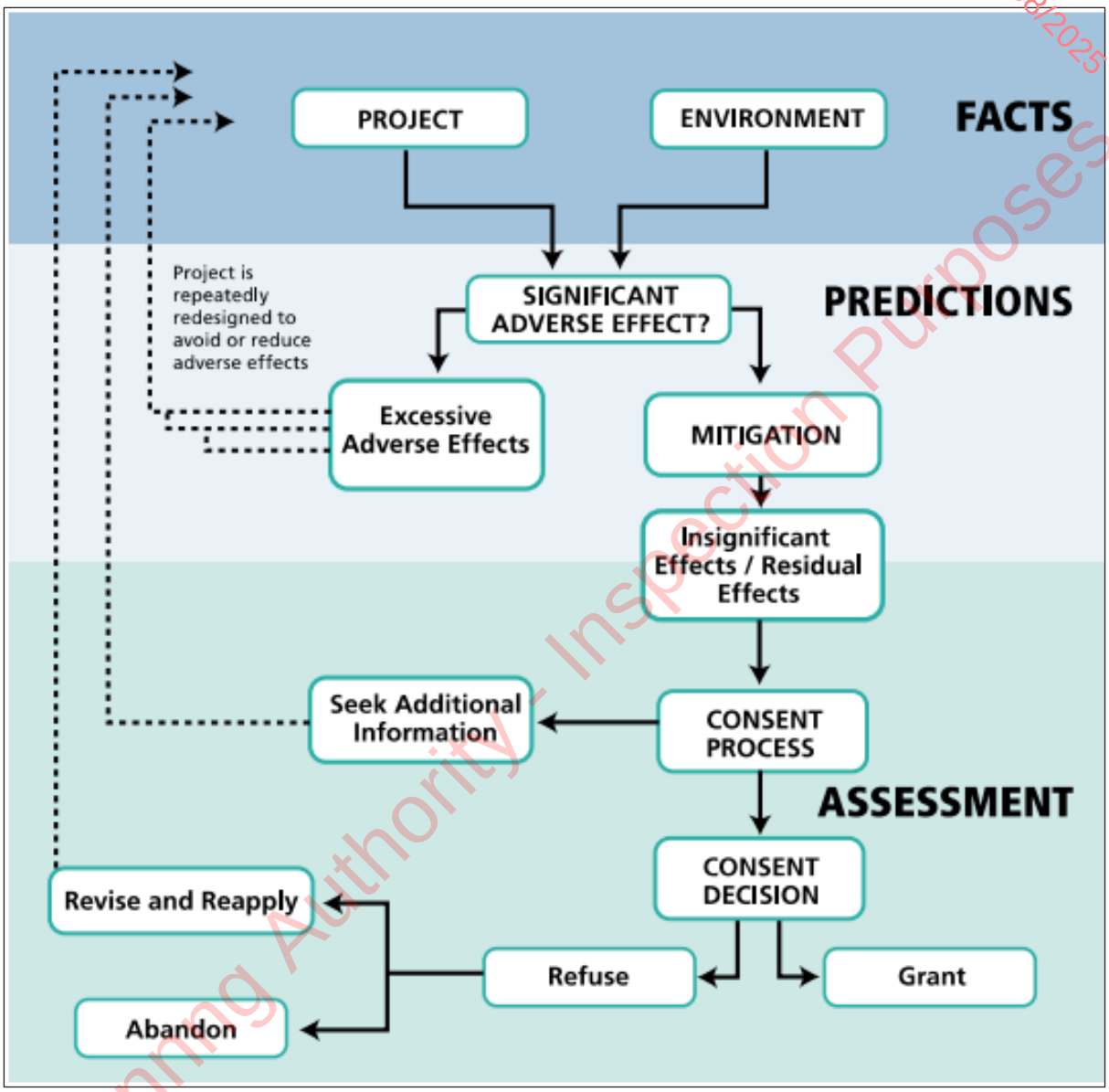

Figure 1-2: EIA Process flow chart (EPA, 2022)

1.7.1 CONSULTATION

Article 1(2)(g) of the amended EIA Directive states:

> "EIA means a process consisting of… the carrying out of consultations as referred to in Article 6 and, where relevant, Article 7…"

According to the 2022 EPA Guidelines, good practice in preparing EIARs involves clear and focused consultation with various parties at key stages of the assessment process. In addition, for projects

that fall under the EIA Directives, compliance with the Aarhus Convention[1] requires that the public is made as fully aware as possible of the likely environmental impacts of projects prior to a decision being made by the Competent Authority.

1.7.2 BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

The starting point for the EIAR is assessing the current state of the environment to determine the 'baseline scenario'. EPA's *Guidelines on the information to the contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, 2022) defines the 'baseline scenario' as "the current state of environmental characteristics, including any evident trends in status"

Baseline studies have been completed for each of the EIA topic areas that were required to be considered as part of this assessment. The following sources of information have been utilised in the compilation of baseline data:

- Desk based studies, making use of publicly available reports and scientific data;
- Stakeholder engagement and consultation, to identify additional data sources and information (see Chapter 6: Project Scoping and Consultation for full details of scoping and consultation undertaken and how this has informed the EIAR); and
- Site surveys and monitoring.

Full details of the data sources utilised, and survey and monitoring methods employed for each topic are provided within the topic-specific sections of this report.

The baseline information obtained has been used to provide an understanding of the value of each environmental receptor and its sensitivity to the potential impacts associated with the construction of the Proposed Development. This information has been used to assess the significance of the effects predicted to be caused by the proposed construction and operation activities.

1.7.3 DO-NOTHING SCENARIO

The baseline scenario has been determined with due consideration of the 'do nothing' scenario.

"The 'do nothing' scenario is the environment which would exist if the proposed project were not developed" (EPA, 2022).

The 'do nothing' scenario takes account of the continuation or change of current management regimes, as well as the continuation or change of trends currently evident in the environment. While some aspects of the baseline are unlikely to change under the 'do nothing' scenario (e.g., archaeology), others will (e.g., water quality), even without the introduction of the Proposed Development. Therefore, the effects of different stages of the proposed project are assessed against the likely future receiving environment, including where changes are likely in the absence of the project.

[1] United Nations Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters

1.7.4 IMPACTS, EFFECTS, RECEPTORS AND RESOURCES

> "Impacts and effects are changes resulting from the implementation of a project" (EPA, 2022).

Although the terms *effect* and *impact* are often used interchangeably, the definitions of both terms vary depending on which literary source is referenced and may vary depending on the individual receptor or parameter assessed.

For this EIAR, *impacts* are defined as 'the changes resulting from an action', and *effects* are defined as 'the consequences of impacts'.

A receptor is any environmental or other defined feature (e.g., human beings) that is sensitive to, or has the potential to be, affected by an impact.

There are different types of effects, as described in the EIAR Guidelines (EPA, 2022) including:

- Indirect effects – Effects on the environment, which are not a direct result of the project, are often produced away from the project site or because of a complex pathway.
- Cumulative effects – The addition of many minor or insignificant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects.
- 'Do-nothing' effects – The environment as it would be in the future should the subject project not be carried out.
- 'Worst-case' effects – The effects arising from a project in the case where mitigation measures substantially fail.
- Indeterminable effects – When the full consequences of a change in the environment cannot be described.
- Irreversible effects – When the character, distinctiveness, diversity or reproductive capacity of an environment is permanently lost.
- Residual effects – The degree of environmental change that will occur after the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect.
- Synergistic effects – Where the resultant effect is of greater significance than the sum of its constituents (e.g., combination of SOx and NOx to produce smog).

1.7.5 IDENTIFICATION OF IMPACTS & EFFECTS

The potential environmental impacts have been identified and evaluated for the Proposed Development and in combination with other plans and projects throughout the construction and operation phases.

The conceptual *source-pathway-receptor* model has been used to identify likely significant effects resulting from the proposed project activities on the environment and sensitive receptors within it. The purpose of the *source-pathway-receptor* model is to establish the relationship between the impacts generated during each phase of the Project and the receptor considered at risk.

Within the *source-pathway-receptor* model the source represents the activity or place from which an impact originates (e.g., piling); the pathway represents the route by which an impact is conveyed between a source and a receptor (e.g., noise propagation); and the receptors are components of the environment – physical/biological/cultural – that experiences the impact, resulting in an effect (e.g., marine mammals). If no 'pathway' to a receptor exists, then the potential for any impact can be screened out.

A range of *sources* and *pathways* can result in direct impacts on individual receptors, but also either indirectly or in conjunction with other impacts. An example of such is the potential impacts on marine mammals caused by underwater noise produced during the construction of a marine development, as noise and vibrations in the water may cause marine mammals to temporarily leave the area during these works. These indirect and inter-relationship effects can occur due to the complexity of the marine ecosystem.

For each of the environmental topics assessed, the appropriate professional guidelines for EIA have been applied and followed when considered necessary, along with any other relevant guidance documents and best practice techniques. As a result, where the standard assessment criteria and terminology set out below are not followed for a specific environmental factor, the preferred assessment criteria that has been applied and utilised, in line with factor-specific assessment guidelines, are identified within the relevant chapter of this EIAR.

1.7.5.1 SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTORS AND MAGNITUDE OF IMPACTS

"Sensitivity is the potential of a receptor to be significantly affected" (EPA, 2022).

The sensitivity of a receptor is characterised by the receptor's ability to tolerate, adapt to and recover from changes in the environment. Consideration has also been given to its importance, for example, protected status.

The following sensitivity value categories have been used for this EIAR:

- Negligible
- Low
- Medium
- High
- Very High

The magnitude of an impact provides an indication of the scale of change in the environment as a result of the impact. The following magnitude value categories have been used for this EIAR:

- Negligible
- Low
- Medium
- High

1.7.6 INTERRELATIONSHIPS

This EIAR considers the project life cycle from construction and throughout operation and identifies potential linkages between project activities and receptors, to ensure that a robust and holistic impact assessment for all receptors has been identified.

Interrelationships describe the potential interaction of multiple project impacts upon one receptor and have a spatial and temporal component. Impacts may be short term, temporary or longer term over the lifetime of the Proposed Development.

1.7.6.1 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Cumulative effects are "the addition of many minor or significant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects" (EPA, 2022).

Cumulative effects have been considered for each resource and receptor assessed.

1.7.6.2 TRANSBOUNDARY EFFECTS

Transboundary effects relate to the likelihood of significant effects on resources and receptors which are outside of the project's national boundaries.

The need to consider transboundary impacts has been embodied by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (referred to as the 'Espoo Convention'), adopted in 1991.

The Espoo Convention requires that assessments are extended across borders between Parties of the Convention when a planned activity may cause significant adverse transboundary impacts. The Espoo Convention has been ratified by the European Union, Ireland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Transboundary effects have been considered for each resource and receptor assessed.

1.7.7 NATURE OF EFFECTS

- A *positive* change improves the quality of the environment (for example, by increasing species diversity).
- A *neutral* change has no effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
- A *negative* change reduces the quality of the environment (for example, lessening species diversity).

1.7.8 SIGNIFICANCE

Significance is a core concept of the EIA Directive. Significance of an effect is, generally, determined by considering the magnitude of a predicted impact and the sensitivity of a receptor to the impact. Overall significance of an effect helps to inform the decision-maker to consider whether a project's impact can be determined to be unacceptable in its environmental and social contexts.

Significance criteria are developed based on the consideration of the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the impact. EIA focuses on the likely significant effects on the environment. Effects which fall outside of this description need not be assessed as part of the EIA process. Likely significant effects should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project.

The determination of the significance of effect incorporates and describes any uncertainty inherent within the assessment. This may arise from the data used within the assessment, the identification of activities and impacts, the confidence in determining impact magnitude and receptor sensitivity and ultimately in assigning significance levels of predicted resulting effects.

The assessment of the effect(s) on a particular resource or receptor, as a result of construction or operational activities, has been made by suitably qualified and experienced practitioner(s). Where possible, quantitative analyses were undertaken to support the assessments. Where the subject did not lend itself to quantitative analysis, qualitative analyses based on the relevant literature and similar studies and expert judgement were utilised to provide a robust assessment. This was determined for each environmental topic, depending on the nature of the receptor.

Significance of effects has been categorised as outlined in the EPA (2022) guidance:

- *Imperceptible* – An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
- *Not Significant* – An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
- *Slight* – An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
- *Moderate* – An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
- *Significant effects* – An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
- *Very Significant* – An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity, significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
- *Profound Effects* – An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics.

Extent and Context of Effects

- Extent includes the size of the area, the number of sites and the proportion of a population affected by an impact.
- Context can affect the perception of significance. It is important to establish if the effect is unique or, perhaps, commonly or increasingly experienced.

Duration and Frequency of Effects

- *Duration* has been categorised as follows for this EIAR, as described in the EPA (2022) Guidelines:

- Momentary effects – Effects lasting from seconds to minutes.
- Brief effects – Effects lasting less than a day.
- Temporary effects – Effects lasting less than a year.
- Short-term effects – Effects lasting one to seven years.
- Medium-term effects – Effects lasting seven to fifteen years.
- Long-term effects – Effects lasting fifteen to sixty years.
- Permanent effects – Effects lasting over sixty years.
- Reversible effects – Effects that can be undone, for example through remediation or restoration.

- *Frequency* has been categorised as follows for this EIAR (note hourly, daily, weekly, monthly and annually are also used, where relevant):
  - Once
  - Rarely
  - Occasionally
  - Frequently
  - Constantly

1.7.9 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Each potential impact has been assessed in terms of its magnitude and in the context of the receptor's sensitivity or value, resulting in a prediction of the level of significance of the resulting effect. Thus, a determination of whether significant effects will result was made.

Effects determined as moderate or lower will be considered to have no likely significant effect, unless they are determined to have likely significant effects when combined with other effects.

As illustrated in Table 1-1 and Figure 1-3, the environmental assessment undertaken characterises the magnitude of the impacts identified in the context of the sensitivity of the receptors to then determine the level of significance of the effects.

Table 1-1: Illaunbaun Wind Farm Project EIAR Effect Significance Matrix, according to (EPA, 2022)

		Magnitude			
Sensitivity		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	Very High	Profound	Very Significant	Significant	Moderate
	High	Very Significant	Significant	Moderate	Slight
	Medium	Significant	Moderate	Slight	Not Significant
	Low	Moderate	Slight	Slight	Imperceptible
	Negligible	Slight	Not Significant	Imperceptible	Imperceptible

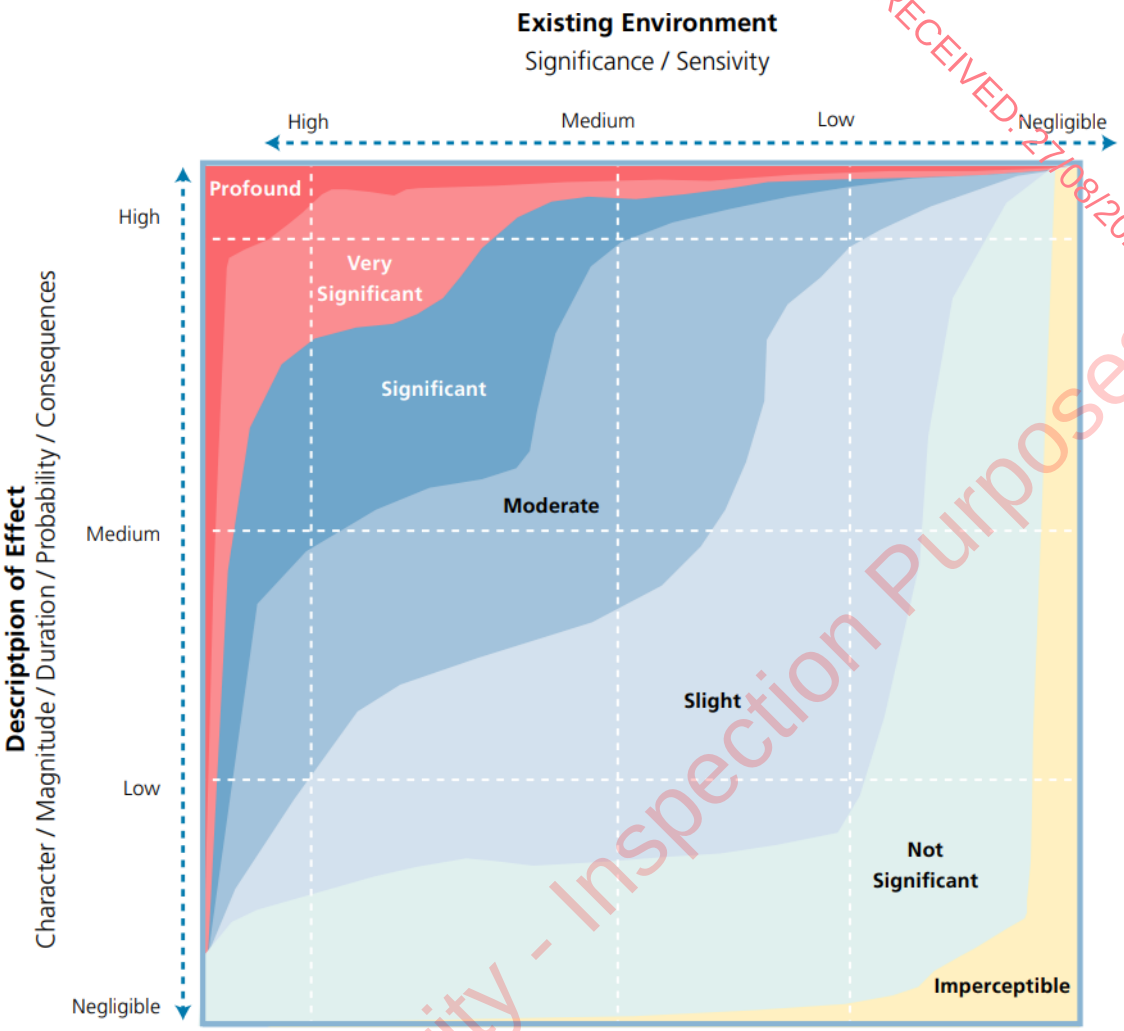

Figure 1-3: Determining the significance of the effect by comparing the character of the predicted effect to the sensitivity of the receiving environment (EPA, 2022)

1.7.10 MITIGATIONS AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS

Annex IV (7) of the Amended Directive states that an EIAR should include 'a description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example, the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.'

Mitigation measures that are incorporated into the design (i.e., primary mitigation) are intended to prevent, reduce and, where possible, offset any significant adverse impacts on the environment. These are effectively 'built in' to the impact assessment and, as such, this assessment includes consideration of these measures irrespective of their significance, to assist in reducing all effects.

Where potentially significant adverse effects have not been eliminated by project design or embedded mitigation, further mitigation measures may be required (i.e., secondary mitigation).

These measures have been informed by stakeholder engagement and determined by the relevant technical experts.

For each significant effect identified, appropriate secondary mitigation measures are prescribed. Where relevant, residual effects have been determined for each significant effect, considering all proposed mitigation.

1.7.11 MONITORING

Where potential residual effects are uncertain, or the success of implemented mitigation measures requires validation, monitoring programmes may be necessary.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE EIAR STRUCTURE

The EIAR comprises five volumes, as outlined below, including a stand-alone Non-Technical Summary. Each topic-specific chapter of the EIAR includes a description of relevant consultation activities, a baseline environmental characterisation, the assessment of likely significant effects, and the proposed mitigation and monitoring measures, where applicable. Chapters also include cross-references to supporting technical reports and other relevant sections of the EIAR to ensure consistency and traceability.

The EIAR is structured as follows:

- Volume I: Non-Technical Summary;
- Volume II: Environmental Impact Assessment Report (this report);
- Volume III: EIAR Technical Appendices;
- Volume IV: Photomontages; and
- Volume V: Other documents

1.8.1 VOLUME I – NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a clear and accessible summary of the findings presented in the EIAR. It follows the same grouped topic structure as the main report, addressing each environmental topic individually. The NTS is intended to assist members of the public and non-specialist stakeholders in understanding the nature and potential impacts of the Proposed Development, as well as the mitigation and monitoring measures proposed.

1.8.2 VOLUME II – MAIN EIAR

Volume II contains the main body of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and presents a comprehensive assessment of the Proposed Development across all relevant environmental topics.

It includes a detailed project description and the results of baseline studies, impact assessments, and proposed mitigation and monitoring measures. The chapters are structured as follows:

1) Introduction
2) Policy and Legislation
3) Need for the Proposed Development
4) Consideration of Alternatives
5) Project Description
6) Project Scoping & Consultation
7) Population and Human Health
8) Ecology - Biodiversity and Ornithology
9) Land, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology
10) Hydrology, Water Quality and Flood Risk
11) Air Quality
12) Climate
13) Noise and Vibration
14) Shadow Flicker
15) Landscape and Visual Impact
16) Archaeological and Cultural Heritage
17) Material Assets
18) Major Accidents and Disasters
19) Traffic and Transport
20) Forestry
21) Cumulative Effects
22) Mitigation and Monitoring Measures

1.8.3 VOLUME III – TECHNICAL APPENDICES

This volume contains the technical appendices that support the environmental assessments presented in Volume II. These appendices provide detailed data, methodologies, and reports referenced in Chapters 6 to 20 and form an integral part of the evidence base for the EIAR.

1.8.4 VOLUME IV – PHOTOMONTAGES

Volume IV includes a series of photomontages illustrating the anticipated visual appearance of the Proposed Development from a range of selected, representative viewpoints. These visualisations support the assessment presented in Chapter 15: Landscape and Visual Impact and are intended to assist both the public and decision-makers in understanding the potential visual changes associated with the Proposed Development.

1.9 THE EIA PROJECT TEAM

Article 5(3)(a) of Directive 2014/52/EU requires that *"the developer shall ensure that the environmental impact assessment report is prepared by competent experts"*, in order to guarantee the completeness and quality of the EIAR.

GDG, with support from external consultants, has carried out the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and prepared this EIAR on behalf of JC Mont-Fort Holding SA for the Illaunbaun Wind Farm. GDG has applied the most up-to-date and appropriate scientific methods and assessment procedures to ensure the accurate interpretation of environmental data.

Founded in2010, GDG is a specialist renewable energy consultancy headquartered in Dublin, with additional offices in Cork, Belfast, London and Edinburgh. Since 2021, GDG has been part of the Venterra Group, an international organisation bringing together key elements of the renewable energy supply chain to support the accelerated deployment of renewable energy required to meet European and global climate and electricity targets.

GDG has extensive experience in delivering environmental and engineering services for renewable energy projects, including EIA and Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening, EIA Scoping, feasibility studies, concept design, survey design, and the procurement and management of environmental and ecological surveys.

As a trusted advisor under the SEAI Enabling Community Renewables Framework, GDG also supports local communities through all stages of onshore renewable development, including planning, environmental assessment, & design.

The company's in-house expertise includes ecology, environmental science, EIA, AA, hydrogeology, planning, environmental consenting, survey coordination, civil infrastructure design, and emerging energy technologies.

Where topic-specific expertise was not available in-house, GDG engaged specialist subconsultants to contribute to relevant sections of the EIAR.

Table 1-2 shows the contributors to the production of the EIAR, including providers of supporting studies.

Table 1-2 List of external consultants that have contributed to the EIAR

Chapter Number	Chapter	Specialist Company
8	Biodiversity & Ornithology	Inis Environmental Consultants Ltd
11 & 12	Air Quality and Climate	AWN Consulting
13	Noise and Vibration	Irwin Carr Consulting
14	Shadow Flicker	Macro Works
15	Landscape and Visual Impact	

Chapter Number	Chapter	Specialist Company
16	Archaeological and Cultural Heritage	Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy Ltd.
19	Traffic & Transport	Systra
20	Forestry	Veon Ltd

1.10 TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND AVAILABILITY OF DATA

This EIAR has been prepared using the best available data and methodologies at the time of writing. The assessment has been undertaken during the initial design phase of the Proposed Development, and some technical details regarding construction methods, phasing, and operational parameters are still being refined.

In line with standard EIA practice, this report adopts a precautionary approach. Where design options remain under consideration, the assessment has identified and evaluated the option that represents the reasonable worst-case scenario in terms of potential environmental effects. This ensures that all likely significant effects are captured, even in the presence of uncertainty or variability in design.

A conservative assessment methodology has been applied across all technical chapters, incorporating appropriate assumptions and maximum design parameters (e.g. turbine height, traffic volumes, working hours) to avoid underestimation of potential impacts.

It is anticipated that refinements made during the detailed design and procurement stages will remain within the parameters assessed in this EIAR. Should material changes occur, these will be reviewed in consultation with the relevant planning authority to determine whether further environmental assessment or planning updates are required.

No significant technical difficulties were encountered during the preparation of this EIAR.

Where appropriate, expert judgement and guidance from statutory consultees were used to ensure the robustness of conclusions.

1.11 AVAILABILITY OF THE EIA

The EIAR can be accessed through the following options:

1) Via the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's EIA Portal, which will provide a link to the planning application on the planning authority's website. The EIA Portal can be accessed at: https://housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d7d5a3d48f104ecbb206e7e5f84b71f1
2) The EIAR can also be accessed in-person at Clare County Council's planning offices.

3) The EIAR can be downloaded via the dedicated project website at: https://illaunbaunwindfarm.com

Information about the Proposed Development. Including updates on the consenting process, will be provided at: https://illaunbaunwindfarm.com

The EIAR and planning application may be inspected, or purchased at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy at the offices of Clare County Council during its public opening hours and a submission or observation in relation to the application may be made to the authority in writing on payment of the prescribed fee within the period of 5 weeks beginning on the date of receipt by the authority of the application at the following addresses:

- Clare County Council Planning Department, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95DXP2

1.12 CONCLUSION

The approach adopted for this EIAR reflects a commitment to transparency, evidence-based assessment, and early stakeholder engagement. The scoping process, consultation feedback, and iterative project design have all contributed to shaping the scope, structure and content of the technical assessments. The remainder of this EIAR presents the findings of those assessments, organised by environmental topic, and provides a comprehensive account of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development, as well as proposed mitigation and monitoring measures. This introductory chapter should be read in conjunction with the dedicated chapters that follow, which collectively constitute the full Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted as part of the planning application.

1.13 REFERENCES

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