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## Illaunbaun Wind Farm - Environmental Impact Assessment Report

### Chapter 6: Project Scoping and Consultation



Clare Planning Authority - Inspection Purposes Only!

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## 6 PROJECT SCOPING AND CONSULTATION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed account of the EIA Scoping and pre-planning consultation process undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It sets out the objectives, scope, and methodology adopted to engage with prescribed authorities, key stakeholders, and members of the public in accordance with relevant national planning legislation and environmental guidance. The chapter identifies how the outcomes of the consultation process informed the definition of likely significant effects, the scope of the EIAR, and the development of appropriate assessment methodologies. It also provides a traceable record of stakeholder input and the applicant's response, thereby supporting the transparency and robustness of the overall EIA process.

Stakeholder engagement and consultation is a crucial aspect of the EIA process and an essential part of the development of any project, as it provides an opportunity to:

- Identify potential concerns and issues relevant to the Proposed Development and incorporate them into the preparation of the EIAR;
- Incorporate mitigation measures where possible into the design of the Proposed Development at the earliest possible stage;
- Take into consideration the expertise and knowledge of local communities, statutory consultees, and other relevant stakeholders; and
- Ensure that all parties are kept informed of project developments and opportunities to engage throughout the planning process.

JC Mont-Fort acknowledges the substantial benefits of early, proactive engagement with statutory consultees, local authorities, and the local community. The EIA Scoping Report was circulated to the relevant prescribed bodies while the environmental assessment process was underway, and responses were gathered during the consultation period.

### 6.2 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Consultation activities were undertaken by JC Mont-Fort and its consultant team at various stages of project development, including the EIA scoping process, pre-planning engagement, and wider public consultation. Engagement took place through direct correspondence (including circulation of the EIAR Scoping Consultation Document), as well as through meetings and outreach to local stakeholders. The list of consultees engaged during the EIA Scoping process is provided below.

- |                                |                                                   |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| • An Coimisiún Pleanála        | • Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland          |
| • An Taisce                    | • Chambers Ireland and Local Chambers of Commerce |
| • Atlantic Seaboard South CARO | • Clare County Council                            |
| • Bat Conservation             | • Clare County Council Archaeology Office         |
| • Bird Watch Ireland           | • Clare County Council Environment Section        |

- Clare County Council Heritage Office
- Clare County Council Planning Authority
- Clare County Council Roads and Transports Department
- Clare Environmental Network
- Clare Public Participation Network (PPN)
- Commission for Railway Regulation
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Construction Industry Federation
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment
- Department of Defence
- Department of Defence (Minister)
- Department of Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Dublin Airport Authority
- EirGrid
- Enterprise Ireland
- Environmental Protection Agency
- ESB Networks
- Failte Ireland
- Friends of the Irish Environment
- Gas Networks Ireland
- Geological Survey of Ireland
- Health and Safety Authority
- Health Service Executive
- IDA Ireland
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Ireland West Airport Knock
- Irish Air Corps
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Irish Business and Employers Confederation
- Irish Rail
- Irish Raptor Study Group
- Irish Tourist Industry Confederation ITIC
- Irish Water
- Irish Wildlife Trust
- Kerry Airport
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and The Marine
- Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for Rural and Community Development
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Minister for Transport
- National Monuments Service
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- National Roads Authority
- National Transport Authority
- Office of Public Works

- Rockmount School
- Shannon Airport Authority
- Sligo Airport
- Southern Regional Assembly
- Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland
- Teagasc – Agriculture and Food Development Authority
- The Arts Council
- The Heritage Council
- The Irish Environmental Network
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- West Clare Municipal District Residents

### 6.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

JC Mont-Fort and GDG have established a structured community engagement programme organised by JC Mont-Fort, which extends beyond the submission of the planning application for the Proposed Development. This programme is designed to ensure that local knowledge, views, concerns and feedback are actively considered and appropriately addressed throughout the design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

In line with best practice and emerging planning policy, JC Mont-Fort has had regard to the *Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines* (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2019). These Guidelines provide a comprehensive framework for community engagement, emphasising early, meaningful and transparent consultation with local communities and stakeholders.

The Draft Guidelines outline the expectation that wind energy developers implement a robust and continuous programme of public engagement. This includes identifying relevant stakeholders at an early stage and maintaining effective communication throughout the design, construction and operational phases of the development. The consultation strategy adopted by JC Mont-Fort has been guided by these principles and is intended to ensure consistency with national policy direction and planning authority expectations.

#### 6.3.1 COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

JC Mont-Fort is committed to transparent and effective stakeholder engagement as a core component of its approach to sustainable development. In line with national guidance and industry best practice, a Community Liaison Officer (CLO) was appointed to lead and coordinate consultation with local residents and stakeholders for the Proposed Development in West Clare. The CLO has been actively engaged on the project since October 2023.

Initial engagement involved the distribution of project information flyers to households within the proposed turbine study area over a two-week period in October 2023. A second round of door-to-door consultation was undertaken in August 2024. The extent of this consultation area is illustrated in Figure 6-1. During these visits, the CLO engaged directly with approximately 50% of households located within the defined consultation zone. A range of feedback was received, encompassing

positive, negative, and neutral responses, all of which were documented and considered in the ongoing refinement of the project design.

This approach reflects the emphasis placed on early and meaningful engagement as outlined in the *Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines*, which recommend the appointment of a CLO and direct outreach as part of a comprehensive community consultation strategy.



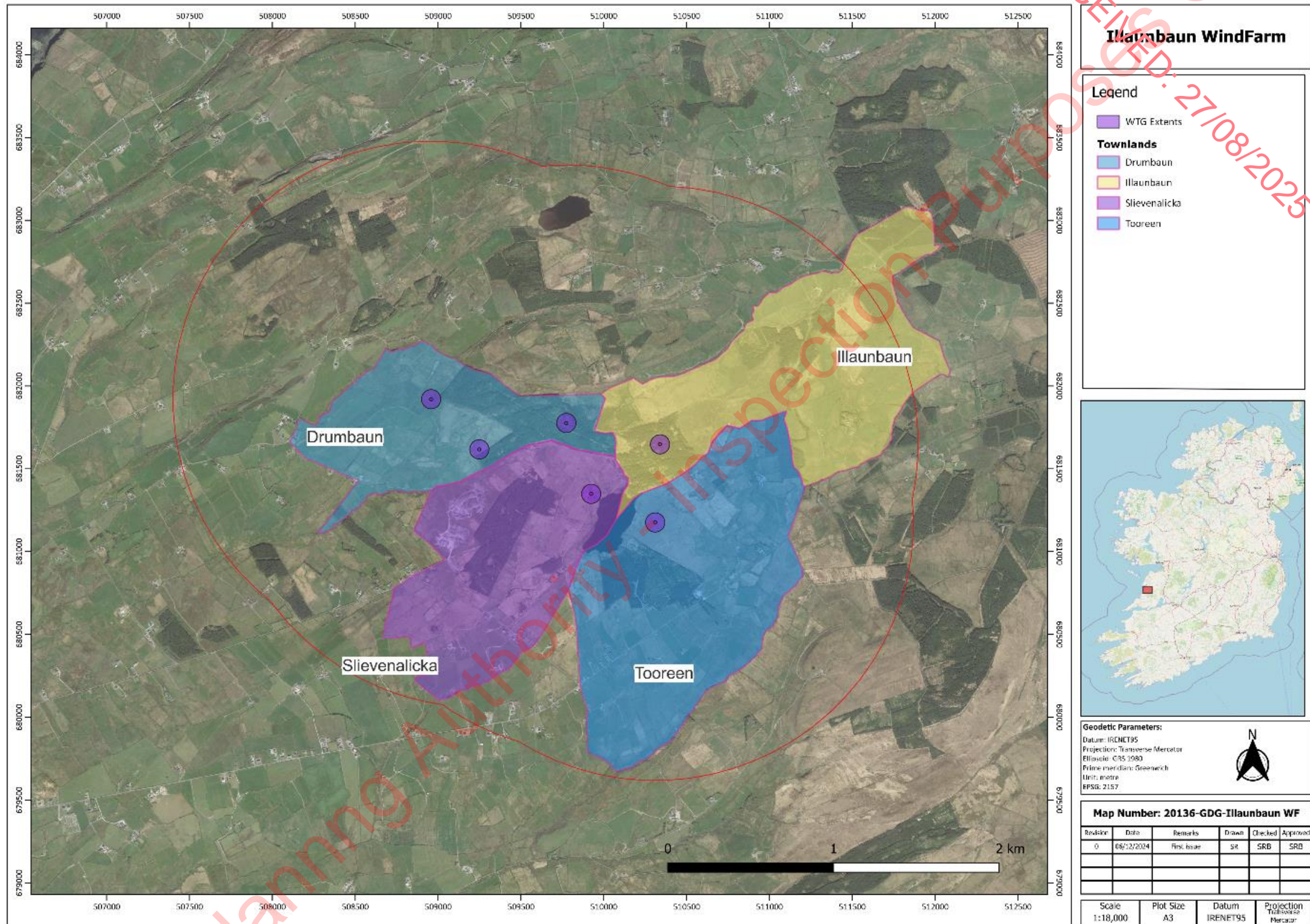


Figure 6-1: Door-to-door consultation undertaken in August 2024



### 6.3.2 COMMUNITY EVENT

JC Mont-Fort has been engaging with the community on an ongoing basis as part of its stakeholder engagement programme and JC Mont-Fort held a public consultation event in Miltown Malbay Community Centre on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2024. This event consisted of face-to face interaction with community members and was widely attended. All feedback has been recorded and reviewed, and the main concerns of community stakeholders can be viewed in this chapter of the EIAR report. The purpose of this event was to discuss the Proposed Development with residents and the general public. This provided an opportunity for interested parties and those local to the proposed development to engage with JC Mont-Fort to raise any queries or concerns about the Proposed Development. Members of the JC Mont-Fort project management team, including the CLO, were in attendance to answer questions and explain the information on display. Attendees were encouraged to provide feedback and raise any queries. These are summarised in Table 6-1.

**Table 6-1: Summary of concerns raised at community engagement event**

Topic	Response/Action
Landscape and Visual	<p>A key concern raised by residents was the potential visual impact of the wind turbines. The Proposed Development site layout has been carefully designed to minimise visibility from residential areas and sensitive viewpoints. Turbine locations were selected to avoid designated scenic points, and the turbine tip height has been limited to 150 metres in order to reduce prominence in the landscape.</p> <p>To support understanding, photomontages from a range of representative viewpoints were presented to attendees, illustrating the likely visual appearance of the development. Residents were also informed that additional photomontages could be provided on request for any other specific viewpoints of interest. To date, only one request has been received by a resident regarding potential views of the proposed development from his house. The quote has been gathered from the agency in this regard to carry out the works. These visual assessments are documented in <i>Chapter 15: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</i> of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.</p>
Noise	<p>A resident raised a point regarding the existing nearby wind farm. The members were provided with information regarding the noise assessment studies completed, the location of noise receptors deployed on different locations to show the extent and coverage of the study. The members were also ensured that the proposed development is conceptualized as per the noise limits outlined in the Wind Energy Guidelines. The noise assessment is further discussed in <i>Chapter 13: Noise &amp; Vibration</i>.</p>
Shadow Flicker	<p>Some of the residents living in the proximity of the proposed development raised concerns about the potential impact of shadow flicker when the turbines are in operation. While there is a limited potential for the shadow flicker to occur on a small number of residential properties, mitigation measures will be implemented to minimise any potential effects. The assessment of shadow flicker on nearby residential receptors, along with the proposed mitigation measures is detailed in <i>Chapter 14: Shadow Flicker</i>.</p>
Ecology	<p>A resident was concerned about the impact on the birds due to the operation of the wind turbines. On the day of the consultation event the ecology assessments were underway, but it was ensured to the concerned resident that more than required level of bird surveys have been conducted on site. Towards the end of the EIA program, the collected baseline data will be used to assess the impact on birds and other species during the operational phase of the proposed development. A collision risk model will be</p>

Topic	Response/Action
	developed to show the results. The bird surveys were concluded at the beginning of winter 2025 season and data was used in ecology assessments. This has been discussed in greater detail in <i>Chapter 8: Biodiversity &amp; Ornithology</i> .
Water Quality	A resident raised a concern regarding the potential impact on the water quality in local water streams during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. It was explained that all relevant watercourses have been accounted for, with water sampling points strategically located to capture potential effects on all streams. It was ensured that the Proposed Development is not expected to result in any significant alteration to water quality during either the construction or operation phases. A point was raised by a resident regarding water sample collection points were not taken from the appropriate places. All water sample locations and lab results were shown to the resident. The sample collection points and results of the sample testing are presented in detail in <i>Chapter 10: Hydrology, Water Quality, &amp; Flood Risk</i> .
Construction and Traffic	A resident raised a concern regarding the anticipated flow of construction traffic and its potential to cause disturbance in the form of noise and dust. In response, the baseline traffic data collected for key locations and the likely construction traffic route were presented. It was explained that while an increase in vehicle movements is expected for a limited period during the construction phase, these activities will be confined to normal working hours to minimise disruption to local residents. Further details regarding the number of vehicles expected during the construction phase are provided in <i>Chapter 19: Traffic &amp; Transport</i> , while the potential impact on air quality, including dust emissions, is outlined in <i>Chapter 11: Air Quality</i> .
Public Disturbance	In general, residents were concerned about the possible disturbances in the surroundings due to the proposed development. It was conveyed to the members that the construction period will only last approximately 12 months, and once the construction period is over, the wind farm will operate for another 25 to 30 years without causing any disturbances in the surroundings. The benefits of the proposed development were also explained, which will develop the local economy.

### 6.3.3 TIMELINE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Table 6-2 provides a timeline and description of JC Mont-Fort SA's public engagement activities for the Proposed Development, both in person and in digital/online format.

**Table 6-2: Public engagement activities**

Date	Description of Activity
October 2023	Community Liaison Officer Appointed, first door to door consultations undertaken by CLO
August 2024	Second door to door consultations undertaken by CLO
9 December 2024	Project Website Launched
11 December 2024	Community Engagement Event
19 December 2024	Pre-Planning Application meeting with Clare County Council
28 February 2025	EIA Scoping Report sent out to Statutory Consultees
14 March 2025	Consultation will continue throughout the lifetime of the project

### 6.4 PRE-PLANNING CONSULTATION

A pre-planning meeting was held with Clare County Council on the 19th of December 2024. The meeting was attended by Senior Executive Planner (Gareth Ruane) of Clare County Council Planning Authority. Project Members of the JC Mont-Fort & GDG team attended the meeting. The prospective applicant and consultant team shared a presentation which included a brief overview of the Proposed Development and information on the progress of baseline studies and surveys; the constraints and opportunities posed by the site location and characteristics in relation to project design; the community engagement programme; planning policy and technical standards applicable to the proposed development. The Planning Authority representative also provided feedback on aspects to be addressed in the EIAR

### 6.5 PROJECT WEBSITE

A [project website](https://illaunbaunwindfarm.com/)<sup>1</sup> has been established and is updated with information available to the general public. The project website provides information on the following:

- The developer
- Progress of the EIAR
- Project details and maps

<sup>1</sup> <https://illaunbaunwindfarm.com/>



- Information from Community Consultation Events
- All relevant contact details

## 6.6 EIAR SCOPING

JC Mont-Fort and GDG prepared an EIA Scoping Report that provided an overview of the Proposed Development, including the project scope, a description of the baseline environment, the proposed assessment methodologies, and the potential significant environmental effects. The Scoping Report defined the environmental topics to be assessed in further detail in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), based on the characteristics and sensitivities of the receiving environment. The Scoping Report also identified key sensitive receptors, potential effect pathways, and the direct and indirect significant effects that could arise during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. These were identified in relation to the environmental factors listed in Article 3 of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. For reference, Article 3 provides that:

“Article 3

The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe, and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on the following factors:

- (a) population and human health;
- (b) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC;
- (c) land, soil, water, air and climate;
- (d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape; (e) the interaction between the factors referred to in points (a) to (d).

The effects referred to in paragraph 1 on the factors set out therein shall include the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters that are relevant to the project concerned.”

The scoping process was undertaken to provide statutory agencies and relevant organisations with information about the Proposed Development and to request feedback and relevant information that could support the preparation of the EIAR. The organisations consulted during the scoping exercise were selected from among the prescribed bodies listed under Article 28 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), based on their statutory remit, the location and characteristics of the Proposed Development, and the potential for interactions with environmental receptors. In addition to statutory bodies, relevant non-governmental environmental organisations (including those with a specific interest in birds and bats) were also consulted.

A template of the covering letter, which was sent out to consultees on 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2025, is presented in Appendix A06-01 of the EIAR.

A summary of all responses received from consultees as part of the EIA scoping process up to 14 March 2025, along with a description of how each issue has been addressed in the EIAR, is provided in Appendix A06-01 Scoping Consultation Responses.

The responses received during the scoping and consultation process have played a key role in informing the scope and structure of this EIAR. JC Mont-Fort and GDG have reviewed and considered all submissions received from prescribed bodies, relevant organisations and members of the public. The issues raised have been considered and addressed, where relevant, within the individual technical chapters of the EIAR and have also informed the design and layout of the Proposed Development. This process reflects a proactive and structured approach to consultation in line with national guidance and industry best practice. It is intended that this transparent and inclusive engagement will continue through the statutory consultation phase and beyond, in accordance with the project's ongoing commitment to responsible environmental planning and community involvement.

## **6.7 PLANNED FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

### **6.7.1 PLANNING APPLICATION**

JC Mont-Fort will continue to implement its community engagement programme up to and beyond the submission of the planning application. During the statutory consultation period, the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) will remain available to respond to public queries and will direct all formal submissions and observations regarding the Proposed Development to Clare County Council, in accordance with planning legislation.

The project website will be regularly updated with information on the progress of the planning application and guidance on how the public can participate in the statutory consultation process.

### **6.7.2 CONSTRUCTION PHASE**

JC Mont-Fort will continue its programme of community engagement throughout the construction phase of the project. Residents will be notified in advance of construction commencement and informed about relevant dates, as well as the proximity of works to residential areas.

This EIAR also contains the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which outlines the project description and identifies measures to minimise noise, dust, and air pollution arising from construction activities within the Zone of Influence (ZOI).

These outline documents will serve as the basis for the final CEMP, which will be prepared by the appointed contractor prior to the commencement of development works. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will also be prepared at that stage, following planning permission. The final versions will then be submitted to the planning authority for review and approval.

During construction, CLO will maintain communication with the public and relevant authorities prior to the start of construction activities, to minimise disruption and the impact of works on local roads. The CLO will also provide advance notice to households of any traffic disruptions resulting from the works, via direct communication and/or regular updates on the project website.

### 6.7.3 OPERATION PHASE

The CLO will remain available to address any concerns, questions or enquiries from the local community throughout the Proposed Development's estimated 25-year operational lifespan.

Twelve months prior to decommissioning, the wind farm operator and the appointed CLO will engage with all residents living within 1.5 km of the wind farm site to outline the proposed Decommissioning Plan and address any issues raised. Local residents will be consulted on relevant aspects of the plan and any associated concerns.

Information on the decommissioning phase will also be made available on the project website and will remain accessible to the local community.

### 6.8 CONCLUSION

The scoping and consultation activities described in this chapter have played a critical role in shaping the scope, structure, and content of the EIAR for the Proposed Development. Through proactive engagement with statutory bodies, prescribed consultees, and the local community, JC Mont Fort and its consultant team have sought to identify and respond to environmental sensitivities, local knowledge, and stakeholder concerns at an early stage. This has enabled the integration of appropriate mitigation measures into the design process and ensured that the EIAR addresses issues of relevance to the receiving environment and to those living and working in the surrounding area.

The consultation process will continue during the statutory planning phase and throughout the construction and operational life of the project, reflecting JC Mont-Fort's ongoing commitment to responsible development and open, transparent communication with all stakeholders.

## 6.9 REFERENCES

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. (2019). *Draft revised wind energy development guidelines*. Government of Ireland. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/56cf0-draft-revised-wind-energy-development-guidelines/>



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