

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The section of the EIAR provides an overview of relevant international, national, and regional legislation and policy, along with a detailed review of the planning policy framework. It includes statistics on Irish renewable energy production, climate emissions, and the benefits of the Proposed Development for meeting Ireland's renewable energy targets.

The planning policy assessment shows that the Proposed Development aligns with European, National, and Local Plan Policies, including the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Climate Action Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The Kellystown Wind Farm is anticipated to significantly contribute to Ireland's renewable energy targets with a generating capacity of 28.5 – 36MW, benefiting both the region and the state economically and socially.

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. Investing in renewable energy promotes sustainable economic development using secure and clean energy sources.

The Proposed Development will aid climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas reduction efforts on both international and European scales.

Ireland faces challenges meeting renewable energy and emissions targets, with high rates of imported fossil fuel dependency and increasing energy demand. Rising energy prices and potential political instability add to fossil fuel price volatility. The Proposed Development aims to address these challenges by providing reliable, secure, and affordable energy supplies, potentially reducing reliance on imported fuels.

4.1.1 Statement of Authority

Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Ltd. (JOD) have extensive experience in all aspects of wind farm development, from design and planning stages through to construction. JOD have been active as engineering consultants in the wind energy market in Ireland since 1998 and have completed numerous wind farm projects, varying from single wind turbine installations to large-scale, multi-turbine developments with a total of over 2,000 MW generation capacity.

This section has been prepared by Environmental Scientists of Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Ltd; Mr. Ryan Mitchell (Bachelors' Degree in Animal Conservation and Biodiversity obtained from Greenwich University) and Mr. Darren Timlin (Bachelors' Degree in Environmental Science from Atlantic University of Sligo) with input from Ms. Breena Coyle (MSc in Environmental Planning from Queens University Belfast and a Bachelor of Arts in History & Geography from NUI Galway). This chapter has been reviewed by Mr. David Kiely, Director of Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Ltd. Further details and biographies/CVs of the authors and reviewer of this chapter have been included in **Appendix 1.1: Author Qualifications**.

4.2 IRISH PLANNING LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

Table 4.1: Irish Planning Legislation and Policy Context

Legislation / Policy	Context
Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended)	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 (as amended)	The Planning and Development Regulations prescribe the requirements of the EIA process.
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 (in particular Part XAB), the Planning and Development Regulations (in particular Part 20), and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).
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 Directives	The relevant sections of the EIA Directive are transposed in Ireland through the Planning and Development Act (Part X)

Legislation / Policy	Context
	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 80% in 2021 according to the SEAI ¹ Energy demand in Ireland has been growing and is expected to continue to increase by 37% to 2031 ² . The high rate of imported fossil fuel dependency and the increasing demand for electricity make it vital to introduce more domestic renewable energy generation such as the proposed project. The National Energy Security Framework (DECC, 2022) sets out how Ireland is seeking to phase out dependency on Russian 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)	<p>The Climate Action Act 2015 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 Action Act 2015 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.</p> <p>The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 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 statutory basis to achieve our national, EU</p>

¹ SEAI. (2022). ENERGY IN IRELAND. https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/energy-in-ireland/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI-LH_o6r8_QIV09_tCh23YAykEAAyASAAEgJipvD_BwE Accessed 30/04/2024.

² EirGrid. (2022). EirGrid’s Generation Capacity Statement Predicts Challenging Outlook for Ireland <https://www.eirgridgroup.com/newsroom/eirgrids-generation-capac/#:-:text=The%20GCS%2C%20in%20its%20median,relatively%20consistent%20across%20the%20decade.> Accessed 30/04/2024

Legislation / Policy	Context
	and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.
Climate Action Plan 2024	The Plan was approved by Government on 20 December 2023, subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment. Climate Action Plan 2024 builds upon the previous plan (Climate Action Plan 2023) by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings, for example, a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Irelands emissions by 2030 and to 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 2018-2027	The National Planning Framework (NPF) (which is given statutory recognition in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018) 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.
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.
Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2019-2031	<p>The Local Government Reform Act 2014 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.</p> <p>The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Assembly area provides a long-term</p>

Legislation / Policy	Context
	<p>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 Eastern and Midland Region.</p>
<p>The Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027</p>	<p>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 (City/County Development Plan [CDP]) 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.</p> <p>The County Louth Development Plan 2021-2027 was adopted in July 2022.</p>
<p>The Wind Energy Development Guidelines, DoHLG 2006</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 2019)</p>	<p>The Draft Wind Energy Guidelines were published in 2019, however the current version dated 2006 remain valid until the revised, final version of the Draft WEDGs (DOHLGH, 2019) are adopted by the government. The draft guidelines 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</p>

Legislation / Policy	Context
	<p>aspects for the new draft proposed wind energy guidelines include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<p>The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025</p>	<p>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.</p>

4.3 INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICIES

4.3.1 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)³ 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. 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

³ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992). Available online at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf> Accessed 30/04/2024

other greenhouse gases. The convention has near universal membership, with 197 countries listed as being Parties of the Convention⁴.

4.3.2 The Kyoto Protocol (1997)

The Kyoto Protocol operationalised the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, with agreed individual targets. It was adopted on the 11th of December 1997 by 192 parties, although only entered into force on the 16th of February 2005 due to a complex ratification process. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the EU agreed to achieve a significant reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions of 8% below 1990 levels in the period 2008 to 2012. Ireland's contribution to the EU commitment for the period 2008 – 2012 was to limit its greenhouse gas emissions to no more than 13% above 1990 levels.

4.3.3 The Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol

In Doha, Qatar, on 8th December 2012, the "Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol" was adopted. The amendment includes:

New commitments for Annex I Parties to the Kyoto Protocol who agreed to take on commitments in a second commitment period from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2020.

A revised list of greenhouse gases (GHG) to be reported on by parties in the second commitment period; and amendments to several articles of the Kyoto Protocol which specifically referenced issues pertaining to the first commitment period and which needed to be updated for the second commitment period. During the first commitment period, 37 industrialised countries and the European Community committed to reduce GHG emissions to an average of 5% against 1990 levels. During the second commitment period, parties committed to reduce GHG emissions by at least 18% below 1990 levels in the eight-year period from 2013 to 2020; however, the composition of parties in the second commitment period is different from the first.

Under the protocol, countries must meet their targets primarily through national measures, although market-based mechanisms (such as international emissions trading) can also be utilised.

⁴ http://unfccc.int/essential_background/items/6031.php Accessed 30/04/2024

4.3.4 COP21- The Paris Agreement (2015)

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 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 by the EU in April 2021 to a 55% domestic Green House Gas reduction by 2030 compared to 1990.

However, a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) 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, in a report on the Nationally Determined Contributions relating to renewable energy 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.

4.3.5 COP26- Glasgow

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.

4.3.6 COP27 - Egypt

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.

4.3.7 COP28- United Arab Emirates

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.

4.3.8 Project Compliance with International Climate Policy

Ireland is one of the 186 countries signed up to the Paris agreement, under the terms, Ireland is required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030 when compared with levels in 1990. The Proposed Development will contribute to Ireland meeting these targets by displacing reliance on fossil fuels.

4.4 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 importance of delivering on these key objectives have been underlined by the Commission's robust and ambitious response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine – and has seen a suite of legislative files introduced in the sustainability and environmental sectors in its current mandate.

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 economy⁵.

4.4.1 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

⁵European Commission. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en Accessed 30/04/2024

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.

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.

4.4.2 Renewable Energy Directive

The EU produced the Renewable Energy Directive (REDI) 2009/28/EC, to make the EU a global leader in renewable energy and ensure that the target of the final energy consumption being at least 16% renewables by 2020 and 27% renewables are met by 2030. In 2015, the EU set itself a long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95%, when compared to 1990 levels, by 2050. Under the 2009 Renewable Energy Directive (REDI), Ireland committed to produce at least 16% of all energy consumed by 2020 from renewable sources. Ireland did not meet its 2020 target for overall Renewable Energy Share resulting in Ireland being obligated to acquire statistical transfers of 3.3 TWh of renewable energy from other Member States to compensate for this shortfall.

From 2021, REDI was replaced by the second Renewable Energy Directive (REDII), Directive (EU) 2018/2001, which continues to promote the growth of renewable energy out to 2030. The recast directive sets a new binding renewable energy target for the EU for 2030 of at least 32%, with a clause for a possible upwards revision by 2023.

In 2023, the European Union (EU) adopted an amendment of the Renewable Energy Directive, Directive (EU) 2018/2001, referred to as "RED III". RED III raises the share of renewable energy in the European Union's overall energy consumption to 42.5% by 2030, with an additional 2.5% indicative top-up to allow the target of 45% to be achieved.

4.4.3 The European Green Deal 2019

The European Green Deal 2019 resets 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.

The European Climate Law (2021) writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal (2019) for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050. This law binds member states into taking measures necessary to meet targets, with progress being reviewed every 5 years.

4.4.4 REPowerEU

In May 2022, the European Commission presented the REPowerEU Plan⁶, in response to the global energy market disruption caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It puts forwards a set of actions to:

⁶ 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 30/04/2024

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

The REPowerEU Plan also includes proposed amendments to the Renewable Energy Directive⁷ including:

- Specifying that renewable energy plants are presumed to be of overriding public interest.
- Increasing the Union's renewable energy target to 45% – up from 40% in the Commission's initial Fit-for-55 energy package.

In 2021, the EU reached a 22.8%⁸ share of its gross final energy consumption from renewable sources – down 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 proposes measures to streamline procedures at national level, addresses ambiguities in the application of EU legislation and sets out good practices in Member States. It recommends participatory approaches that

⁷European commission. (2022). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0222&from=EN> Accessed 30/04/2024

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 30/04/2024

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 30/04/2024

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.”*

“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.”

4.4.5 Renewable Deployment Acceleration

Regulation 2022/2577

In recognition of the worsening energy crises arising from Russia's war against Ukraine, the Council of the European Union adopted Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 on 22 December 2022, laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy. This regulation applies to *“all permit-granting processes that have a starting date within the period of its application”* and includes a number of tangible measures aimed at streamlining the permit-granting process and facilitating the accelerated deployment of renewable energy. The period of application of the Regulation is 18 months from the 30 December 2022 and therefore applies to current EIAs. This validation period has since been extended by Regulation (EU) 2024/223 as outlined below in this section.

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:

- 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 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.... (emphasis added)*

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. The Commission completed its review of the Regulation and furnished its report to the Council on the 28 November 2023. In its report the Commission recommended the prolongation of the validity of certain measures in the Regulation, including Article 3(2), and 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 the all permit-granting processes commenced up to the 30 June 2025. This regulation (Regulation 2024/223) applies from 1 July 2024 and is relevant to this EIA.

The importance, continued need and effectiveness of Article 3(2) of Regulation 2022/2577 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.'

4.4.6 Project Compliance with European Climate Legislation

The Proposed 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 Proposed Development is anticipated to have an installed capacity of 28.5-36MW of renewable energy which would contribute towards the RED targets for 2030 and help prevent further requirements to acquire statistical transfers from other Member States.

4.5 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL CLIMATE POLICY AND LEGISLATION

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 4.6.1.7. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy is assessed in section 4.6.2.1. The relevant County Development Plan is assessed in section 4.6.3.1. The Proposed Development is not located in a Local Area plan.

4.5.1 National Climate Policy and Legislation

4.5.1.1 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 ten-year National Development Plan (NDP) which will guide strategic development and infrastructure investment at the national level.

The NDP 2018-2027 sets out investment priorities of €21.8 billion for climate action for the 10-year period, €7.6 billion is to come from the Exchequer. The remaining investment is to be made by Ireland's semi-state companies and by the private sector. In addition, some €8.6 billion funding has been made available for sustainable mobility projects, mostly in

public transport. This substantial funding increase will facilitate upscaling of investments and implementation of actions needed to move the country towards its 2030 climate targets.

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 in conjunction with the NDP will also set 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 parts of the country”*.

The NPF sets a number of shared goals for Ireland which the Proposed 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 is committed to a long-term climate policy based on the adoption of a series of national plans over the period to 2050, informed by UN and EU policy. This is being progressed through the National Mitigation Plan and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework, both of which will be updated and reviewed periodically.”*

In addition to legally binding targets agreed at EU level, it is a national objective for Ireland to transition to be a competitive, low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, guided by a long-term vision based on:

- *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.”

The NPF states that in relation to rural areas and renewable energy that:

Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society

“The National Climate Policy Position establishes the national objective of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. This objective will shape investment choices over the coming decades in line with the National Mitigation Plan 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 54

“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 55

“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.

4.5.1.2 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

At a national level, the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) 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.

The Act 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. Governments 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 Projections¹⁰ 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.

4.5.1.3 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. There then followed the publication of the Cross-Departmental Climate Action Plan 2019 on 17th June 2019 this was revised in 2021 and 2023.

4.5.1.4 Climate Action Plans 2021-2024

In May 2019, the Irish Dail declared a "climate emergency". As a response to combat this emergency the Government published the Climate Action Plan 2019 on 17 June 2019. The plan recognises that decisive and urgent action is required to arrest the acceleration of greenhouse gas emissions within the limited window of opportunity that remains. The Climate Action Plan 2021 was published in November 2021.

Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 2023)

On the 21st of December 2022 the Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP 2023) was published to replace the 2021 Plan. The CAP 2023 provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting us on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Program for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021.

The Plan is ambitious, affecting almost every sector of the economy. The key difference however, between this Plan and previous ones is that it creates new governance structures necessary to implement the far-reaching changes. The key focus of the Plan is to identify

¹⁰ EPA 2023. <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/ghg/> Accessed 30/04/2024

how the Government plans to reduce Ireland's, still growing, greenhouse gas emissions. The scale of the challenge is huge, and the Plan identifies the need for everyone to contribute to tackling the challenges posed by climate change. It includes increased renewable electricity targets, the end of single use non-recyclable plastics and new building regulations. The Plan includes a new commitment to make Ireland 100% carbon neutral by 2050 and contains action points designed to achieve our national climate change targets.

The main points in the 2023 Plan, in relation to electricity generation are as follows:

- “Increase renewable electricity – wind and solar up to 80% by 2030
- Separate small scale generator scheme for farmers, business and communities to generate electricity and sell to the grid
- Reduce emissions from electricity by 75% from 2018 levels
- Deliver three new transmission grid connections or interconnectors to Northern Ireland, Great Britain, and the EU
- Complete the phase-out of coal and peat-fired electricity generation
- Review data centre strategy to ensure the sector supports renewables and emissions targets”

Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP 2024)

The Climate Action Plan 2024¹¹ sets out a detailed sectoral roadmap designed to deliver a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030. This requires significant reductions from all sectors. The Plan aims to evaluate in detail the changes that are required in order “*to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as we committed to in the Programme for Government*”.

CAP 2024 outlines six vital high impact sectors, of which one is “Renewable Electricity Share”, where it intends to increase renewable generation to supply 80% of demand by 2030. The driving force behind this aim is the intention to facilitate a large-scale deployment of renewables that will be critical to decarbonizing the power sector as well as enabling the electrification of other technologies.

The CAP 2024 shows how Ireland is putting climate solutions at the very heart of our social and economic development. Among the most important measures in the plan is a target of 9 GW from onshore wind, 8 GW from solar, and at least 5 GW of offshore wind energy by 2030.

¹¹ Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (2023), Climate Action Plan 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/79659-climate-action-plan-2024/> [Accessed on 30/04/2024]

The Plan sets an 80% target for electricity production from renewable sources by 2030 and highlights the need to remove barriers to the development of renewables, including onshore wind. The plan identifies that this will directly reduce emissions but also help with the electrification of other sectors such as transport and heat, reducing emissions in those sectors too. The plan notes that the transition away from fossil fuels and towards locally generated renewables will improve energy security and Ireland's dependence on imported energy.

The Key Message from CAP 2024 (Chapter 12) with regard to electricity is stated as follows: *"The electricity sector continues to face an immense challenge in meeting its requirements under the sectoral emissions ceiling, as the decarbonisation of other sectors, including transport, heating, and industry, relies to a significant degree on electrification. The deployment rates of renewable energy and grid infrastructure required to meet the carbon budget programme for electricity is unprecedented and requires urgent action across all actors to align with the national targets".*

Section 12.1.3 of the CAP 2024 sets out the scale of the challenge for the electricity sector: *"At a time when the energy system is under severe pressure to ensure security of supply, amid projections of rapid electricity demand growth over the coming decade, the electricity sector has been set one of the smallest carbon budget allocations and the steepest trajectory (-75%) across all sectors. The scale of the challenge to meet the sectoral emissions ceiling is immense and requires policies to be moved from an 'end of decade' target trajectory towards a 'remaining carbon budget' target".*

Section 12.3 outlines the projections for the energy sector. The CAP 2024 clearly outlines the need to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy:

"Given that the programme of large-scale offshore wind deployment is expected to be realised towards the end of the decade, deployment rates for onshore renewables will need to increase to match demand growth to ensure we keep electricity emissions within range of the carbon budgets. This requires a major upscaling and accelerating in current deployment of renewables, particularly onshore wind.

As an example, the historical average deployment of onshore wind installed capacity connected between 2008 and 2020 inclusive was ~280 MW per annum from 19 projects (with an annual maximum of 612 MW). To achieve the necessary emissions abatement, an

approximately eight-times increase of renewable energy deployment to 2.3 GW annually would be needed between 2024 and 2030".

In short, CAP 2024, approved by Government on 21 May 2024, highlights the national obligation to increase the deployment of renewables including onshore wind to meet our legally binding sectoral emissions targets. In this regard, it stresses and makes abundantly clear that the rate of required renewable deployment is unparalleled and must be circa eight times faster in the period 2024 - 2030 than the historical average.

4.5.1.5 National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030

The National Energy and Climate Plan (ENCP)¹² 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:

- Ireland has established an objective of achieving a 34% share of renewable energy in energy consumption by 2030.
- Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70% (note this target has been increased to 80% in the CAP2024), underpinned by the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS).
- Streamline consenting and connection arrangements.
- Phase-out of coal and peat-fired electricity generation
- Increase onshore wind capacity by up to 8.2 GW (note increase to 9 GW in the CAP2024)

Key, relevant energy security objectives include:

- Support efforts to increase indigenous renewable sources in the energy mix, including wind, solar and bioenergy.

¹² Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. (2021). National Energy and Climate Plan https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-08/ie_final_necp_main_en_0.pdf Accessed 30/04/2024

- 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.

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”.¹³

4.5.1.6 National Energy Security Framework

In April 2022, the Government of Ireland issued the National Energy Security Framework¹⁴ 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”.

¹³ 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 30/04/2024

¹⁴ Government of Ireland. (2022) National Energy Security Framework. <https://assets.gov.ie/221399/86cb99f5-58e3-4821-bc4c-e1bb1fa706fb.pdf> Accessed 30/04/2024

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, such as the Kellystown Wind Farm, in securing Ireland's energy supply in light of the war in Ukraine and resulting energy supply issues.

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.¹⁵

4.5.1.7 Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment: Renewable Electricity Support Scheme 2018 (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:

- An Enabling Framework for Community Participation through the provision of pathways and supports for communities to participate in renewable energy projects
- Increasing Technology Diversity by broadening the renewable electricity technology mix (the diversity of technologies)
- Delivering an ambitious renewable electricity policy to 2030
- Increasing energy security, energy sustainability and ensuring the cost effectiveness of energy policy

The RESS 2 auction will be a major step in meeting the ambition set out in the Programme for Government of at least 80% renewable electricity by 2030. It will also support the achievement of the increased ambition set out under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act and the policies and measures in the Climate Action Plan 2024.

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 Development 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).

4.5.1.8 National Energy & Climate Plan 2021-2030

In accordance with the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation, Ireland's first National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP)¹⁶ 2021-2030 was published in June 2020.

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5c499-energy-security-in-ireland-to-2030/> Accessed 30/04/2024

¹⁶ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-08/ie_final_necp_main_en_0.pdf [Accessed: 30/04/2024]

The first draft of the NECP took into account energy and climate policies to that date as well as the levels of economic and demographic growth predicted under Project 2040 and the climate and energy measures set out under the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

The NECP incorporates all planned policies and measures identified up to the end of 2019 which aim to deliver a 30% reduction in non-ETS greenhouse gas emissions (from 2005 levels) by 2030.

Ireland is committed to achieving a 7% annual average reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 2021 and 2030. However, the NECP reflects the current EU effort sharing approach and not this higher level of commitment. Therefore, the NECP will be revised to take account of these commitments required for the increase in the overall EU contribution agreed as part of the Paris Agreement.

4.5.1.9 White Paper on Energy Policy in Ireland 2015 – 2030

A Government White Paper entitled 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030' was published in December 2015 by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources¹⁷. This Paper provides a complete energy update and a framework to guide policy up to 2030. The Paper builds upon the White Paper published in 2007 and takes into account the changes that have taken place in the energy sector since 2007. The White Paper states the advances in Ireland's energy efficiency and renewable energy and generation use between 2007 and 2015. Renewable electricity sources (including wind) accounted for 27% of Ireland's electricity consumption in 2015, which was just over halfway to Ireland's 2020 target of 40% (Energy in Ireland: 2016 Report, SEAI, November 2016).

The policy framework sets out a vision for a low carbon future that maintains Ireland's competitiveness and ensures a supply of affordable energy. The paper advises that a range of policy measures will be employed to achieve this vision and will involve generating electricity from renewable sources, of which there is plentiful indigenous supplies, and increasing the use of electricity and bio-energy to heat homes and fuel. The impacts of climate change in the context of EU and national policy refers to the change in climate that is attributable to human activity arising from the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and which is additional to natural climate variability (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006). In 2008, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published the results of a study entitled 'Climate Change –

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/77389/e5aa9f25-da81-43eb-804d-57309615681e.pdf#page=null> [Accessed: 12/05/2023]

Refining the Impacts for Ireland, as part of the STRIVE (Science, Technology, Research and Innovation) Programme 2007 – 2013. This report states that mean annual temperatures in Ireland have risen by 0.7° Celsius (C) over the past century. Mean temperatures in Ireland relative to the 1961 to 1990 averages are likely to rise by 1.8 to 4.0°C by the 2050s and by in excess of 2°C by the end of the century due to climate change.

Future precipitation changes are less certain to predict than temperature but constitute the most important aspect of future climate change for Ireland. The study projects that winter rainfall in Ireland by the 2050's will increase by approximately 10%, while summer rainfalls will reduce by 12 – 17%. Lengthier heat-waves, much reduced number of frost days, lengthier rainfall events in winter and more intense downpours and an increased propensity for drought in summer are also projected. The STRIVE report on climate change impacts states that Ireland can and must adapt to the challenge of climate change. It notes that:

“Barriers to this, both scientific and socio-economic, are required to be identified and addressed in order that Ireland can be optimally positioned to thrive in a changing world.”

The report discusses the impacts of climate change in terms of water resource management, agriculture and biodiversity.

4.5.1.10 Emissions Projections

In 2021, the EPA published an update on Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections to 2040¹⁸. Ireland's target is to achieve a 30% reduction of non-Emissions Trading Scheme (non-ETS) sector emissions, i.e. agriculture, transport, residential, commercial, non-energy intensive industry and waste, on 2005 levels, with annual binding limits set for each year over the period 2020 – 2030.

Greenhouse gas emissions are projected to 2040 using two scenarios; '*With Measures*' and '*With Additional Measures*'. The '*With Measures*' scenario assumes that no additional policies and measures, beyond those already in place by the end of 2019 are implemented. The '*With Additional Measures*' scenario assumes implementation of the '*With Measures*' scenario in addition to full achievement of Government renewable and energy efficiency targets for 2040, as set out in the National Renewable Energy Action Plan and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

The EPA Emission Projections (2021) notes the following key trends:

¹⁸ <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/EPA-Irelands-Greenhouse-Gas-Emissions-Projections-report-2020-2040v2.pdf> [Accessed: 30/04/2024]

- Ireland's non-Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) emissions are projected to be 6% and 11% below 2005 levels in 2030 under the 'With Measures' and 'With Additional Measures' scenarios, respectively. The target for Ireland is a 30% reduction.
- Ireland is projected to cumulatively exceed its Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR) emissions allocation in both scenarios over the period 2020 – 2030. Ireland is projected under the scenario 'With Existing Measures' to cumulatively exceed its compliance obligations by 51.3Mt CO₂ (metric tonnes of Carbon Dioxide). Under the 'With Additional Measures' scenario Ireland is predicted to cumulatively exceed its compliance obligation by 11Mt CO₂.

4.5.1.11 Project Compliance with National Climate Policy

The Proposed 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 54 & 55.

4.5.2 Regional and County Policy

4.5.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Assembly

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region was adopted on the 28th of June 2019. The objective of the RSES is to support the implementation of the National Planning Framework – Project 2040 and the economic framework which shall be consistent with the NPF and the economic policies or objectives of the Government.

The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region provides a long-term regional level strategic planning and economic framework, to support the implementation of the NPF, for the future physical, economic, and social development for the Eastern and Midland Region.

The following Regional Policy Objectives have been listed with regards to climate change policy.

RPO 3.5: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

"Identification of suitable employment and residential lands and suitable sites for infrastructure should be supported by a quality site selection process that addresses

environmental concerns such as landscape, cultural heritage, ensuring the protection of water quality, flood risk and biodiversity as a minimum.”

RPO 3.7: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Local authorities shall have regard to environmental and sustainability considerations for meeting sustainable developments targets and climate action commitments, in accordance with the National Adaption Framework. In order to recognise the potential impacts on the environment, local authorities shall address the proper site/route selection of any new development and examine environmental constraints including but not limited to biodiversity, flooding, landscape, cultural heritage, material assets, including the capacity of services to serve any new development.”

RPO 4.83: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Support the rural economy and initiatives in relation to diversification, agri business, rural tourism and renewable energy so as to sustain the employment opportunities in rural areas”.

RPO 5.7: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Co-ordinate across local authority boundaries to identify, manage, develop and protect regional Green Infrastructure, to enhance strategic connections and develop Green Infrastructure Policy in the Dublin Metropolitan Area.”

RPO 6.23: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Support enterprise development agencies and local enterprise office (LEO) on the development of industries that create and employ green technologies and take measures to accelerate the transition towards a low carbon economy and circular economy.”

RPO 7.36: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Planning Policy at local authority level shall reflect adhere to the principles and planning guidance set out in Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publications relating to ‘Wind Energy Development’ and the DCCAE Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland on Guidelines for Community Engagement and any other relevant guidance which may be issued in relation to sustainable energy provisions.”

RPO 10.20: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Support and facilitate the development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the Region and facilitate new

transmission infrastructure projects that might be brought forward in the lifetime of this Strategy”.

RPO 10.22: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

“Support the reinforcement and strengthening of the electricity transmission and distribution network to facilitate planned growth and transmission/ distribution of a renewable energy focused generation across the major demand centres to support an island population of 8 million people, including:

- *Facilitating interconnection to Europe, particularly the ‘Celtic Interconnector’ to France and further interconnection to Europe/the UK in the longer term*
- *Facilitating interconnection to Northern Ireland, particularly the ‘North-South Interconnector’ and further co-operation with relevant departments in Northern Ireland to enhance interconnection across the island in the longer term.*
- *Facilitating transboundary networks into and through the Region and between all adjacent Regions to ensure the RSES can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local, regional and national scale to meet future needs.*
- *Facilitate the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to allow linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid in a sustainable and timely manner.*
- *Support the safeguarding of strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks”.*

4.5.2.2 Compliance with Regional Policy

The RSES recognises and supports many opportunities for onshore wind as a major source of renewable energy. It states that opportunities for both commercial and community wind energy projects should be harnessed, having regard to the requirements of DoHPLG Guidelines on Wind Energy. Wind Energy, with current and future developments technology, has an important role in delivering value and clean electricity for Ireland. As a form of sustainable energy, with an output potential of between 28.5-36MW of installed capacity at the Wind Farm Site, the Proposed Development will contribute significantly to renewable energy targets and the strategy supported in the RSES for the Eastern and Midlands Region.

The Project is fully aligned with regional climate and renewable energy policy objectives, as it not only facilitates the integration of renewable energy into the electricity transmission grid

but also safeguards strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks. By adhering to regional policy objectives, the Proposed Development ensures sustainable and timely delivery of renewable energy while supporting the region's long-term energy needs at local, regional, and national scales.

In support of the CAP 24 objectives, the Proposed Development is anticipated to contribute to the de-carbonisation of the Irish electricity network by producing between 28.5 - 40 MW of renewable electricity, contributing to the Government's 80% renewable electricity target by 2030 and helping achieve the CAP2024 target of 9GW of onshore wind capacity by 2030, helping to reduce the current 4.2GW shortfall¹⁹. This will help to mitigate climate change by reducing the emissions related to energy production and will help to decarbonise multiple sectors.

4.5.3 Local Sustainable Development Policy

4.5.3.1 The Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

The Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021 – 2027 (adopted on the 11th of November 2021) sets out the Council's overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Louth in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The CDP states that:

“The Plan provides a blueprint for development in County and is the over-arching strategic framework for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms. It offers clear guidance on sustainable development policies and objectives over a range of issues including, but not limited to; settlement, sustainable communities, movement and transport, heritage and climate action”.

The CDP's strategic vision is to: *“Promote County Louth, in particular the Regional Growth Centres of Drogheda and Dundalk, as uniquely attractive place which to live, work, visit and business and where the quality of employment and educational opportunities, natural and built environment, cultural experiences and provisions of inclusive communities are all to the highest standards, while transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient society”.*

The CDP supports the concept of generating renewable energy at 'local' level and the significant contribution that wind energy can make as a clean sustainable solution to energy

¹⁹ Statista (2024) Installed wind power capacity in Ireland 2008-2023 Published by Lucía Fernández, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/421528/total-wind-power-in-ireland/> [Accessed 29/07/24]

requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions. A range of energy and renewable energy policies and objectives are identified throughout the CDP and included in these, relevant to the Proposed Development, are the following:

Table 4.1: Key Policies from the Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 relevant to the Proposed Development

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
Introduction	
<u>Strategic - Objectives & Policy</u>	
<p>S0 4: <i>Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County supporting energy efficiency and reducing energy demand, through a combination of mitigation and adaption responses to climate change. This includes for increased usage of renewable energy through developing indigenous resources, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050, ensuring flood risk management. The Council will work with other bodies and organisations as appropriate, to identify and help protect critical infrastructure.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. This will allow for renewable electricity to be stored on site when electricity demand on the local electricity transmission system is low and discharge electricity on demand when the transmission system requires it.</p> <p>This renewable energy development would be integral to the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County.</p>
<p>S0 18: Afford suitable protection to the environment and natural resources of the County and ensure the fulfilment of environmental responsibilities.</p>	<p>An Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Health and Population • Biodiversity • Aquatic Ecology

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ornithology • Geology • Hydrology • Noise • Landscape and Visual • Material Assets • Traffic and Transport • Shadow flicker <p>The EIAR has shown that where significant impacts on the environment are anticipated, mitigation measures will be put in place.</p>
<p><u>Movement - Objectives & Policy</u></p>	
<p>MOV 47: <i>To require the preparation of Transport and Traffic Assessments for new developments in accordance with the requirements set out in the TII Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines.</i></p>	<p>A Transport and Traffic Assessment will form part of the Planning Application. See EIAR Chapter 16 Traffic and Transport.</p>
<p><u>Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure - Objectives and Policy</u></p>	
<p>NBG1: <i>To promote the implementation of the draft Louth Heritage Plan 2021-2026 and any subsequent Louth Heritage Plan endorsed during the life of this Plan.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will comply with provisions outlined in the current Louth Heritage Plan 2007-2011 (as advised by the LCC Heritage officer).</p>
<p>NBG2: <i>To promote and implement the objectives of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026 and any subsequent Louth Biodiversity Action Plan published during the lifespan of this Plan.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will comply with provisions outlined in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026. The potential for adverse effects upon the local flora and fauna has been assessed, particularly in relation to any effects posed by the construction and</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
	installation of wind turbines (including land take for crane hardstands and access tracks) and operation of the Proposed Development. Please refer to EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity for further details.
<p>NBG 3: <i>To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is not located within any SACs or SPAs. The closest SPA (River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA) is located 8.1km southeast of the Wind Farm Site. An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been submitted as part of this application. Further details available in Volume I - Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment. EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity and EIAR Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.</p>
<p>NBG 4: <i>To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the requirements set out in DECLG 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010'</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will comply with the requirements set out in DECLG 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010'.</p>
<p>NGB 6: <i>To ensure a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on all plans and/or projects and/or Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Report/Natura Impact Assessment) where appropriate, is undertaken to make a determination. European Sites located outside the County but within 15km of the proposed development site shall be included in such screenings as should those to which there are</i></p>	<p>An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been submitted as part of this application. Please see Volume I - Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate assessment for further details.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>pathways, for example, hydrological links for potential effects.</i></p>	
<p>NBG 9: <i>To ensure that proposals for development, where appropriate, protect and conserve biodiversity sites outside designated and require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professionals to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such sites.</i></p>	<p>The potential for adverse effects upon the local flora and fauna have been assessed particularly in relation to any effects posed by the construction and installation of wind turbines (including land take for crane hardstands and access tracks) and operation of the Proposed Development. See EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 10: <i>To ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of Natura 2000 Network of European Sites and encourage the retention and management of landscape features as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.</i></p>	<p>There are no Natura 2000 European Sites located on site. However, there is a pNHA Drumshallon Lough located onsite which is outlined in the Louth County Development Plan.</p> <p>Please refer to Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) in Volume I of the EIAR submission for further details.</p> <p>A Habitat Management Plan has been completed and submitted as part of the planning application, as an appendix to Chapter 6 Biodiversity in Volume II of the EIAR submission.</p>
<p>NBG 11: <i>Where feasible, ensure that no ecological networks, or parts thereof, which provide significant connectivity between areas of local biodiversity, are lost without remediation as a result of implementation of this Plan.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid ecological networks such as hydrological and ecological connectivity such as streams, hedgerows, and tree lines.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
	<p>Refer to EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity and the Habitat Management Plan for further details. Please also refer to Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) in Volume I of the EIAR submission for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 13: <i>Development sites must be investigated for the presence of invasive species, which if present must be treated and/or eradicated in accordance with best practice. Where appropriate, Invasive Species Management Plans will be prepared for such sites.</i></p>	<p>An invasive species survey has been carried out on site. The results and required management are outlined in EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 14: <i>To protect from inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of ecological interests listed as pNHA or that may be designated as NHA, during the lifetime of this Plan</i></p>	<p>The Site is not located within any area designated as a NHA. There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) within a 15km radius of the proposed Wind Farm Site. The closest NHA is the Skerries Islands NHA (Site Code: 001218), which is located approximately 28km south-east.</p> <p>The Blackhall Woods pNHA (site code 001293) is located approximately 2.5 km to the east of the proposed Wind Farm Site. After the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures listed in EIAR Chapter 6: Biodiversity, Chapter 9 Aquatic Ecology & Chapter 7: Ornithology, no significant effect on the any pNHA sites are predicted.</p>
<p>NGB 15: <i>To ensure that any development within or adjacent to NHA or pNHA is designed and</i></p>	<p>The Wind Farm Site is not located within any area designated as a NHA. The closest</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>sited to minimise its impact on the ecological value of the site and resist development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or a disturbance of species.</i></p>	<p>NHA is the Skerries Islands NHA which is located approximately 28km south-east. No significant effects on any NHA sites are predicted. See EIAR Chapter 6: Biodiversity for further detail.</p> <p>The Site has 1 no. candidate NHA site (cNHA) within the project boundary. Namely Drumshallon Lough. After the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures listed in EIAR Chapter 6: Biodiversity, no significant effect on pNHA sites is predicted.</p>
<p>NBG 17: <i>In consultation with the Geological Survey of Ireland, protect from any inappropriate development and maintain the character, integrity and conservation value of those features or areas of geological interests listed in Table 8.4 of the plan.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is not located within any sites of geological interests listed within Table 8.4 of the CDP. The closest sites of geological interest are 'Port Raised Beach (LH25)' located c. 4.7km north-east of the Proposed Development and 'Oriel Brook' located 6.5km west of the Proposed Development. Refer to EIAR Chapter: 10 Soils and Geology and Chapter: 15 Cultural Heritage for further details</p>
<p>NBG 23: <i>To ensure the preservation of the uniqueness of a landscape character type by having regard to its character, value and objectives in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the Louth Landscape Character Assessment and by ensuring that new development meets high standards of siting and design and does not unduly damage or detract from the character of a landscape or natural environment.</i></p>	<p>The landscape character assessment for Co. Louth was compiled in 2002 and informs the current version of the County Development Plan.</p> <p>The Wind Farm Site is entirely within the 'Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice' Landscape Character Area which is designated as having Regional Importance. The key values of this landscape are as follows.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>NBG 24: <i>To ensure development reflects and, where possible, reinforces the distinctiveness and sense of place of the landscape character types including the retention of important features or characteristics, taking into account the various elements, which contribute to their distinctiveness such as scenic quality, habitats, settlement pattern, historic heritage and land use.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Landscape quality is quite high with a variety of landcover elements. ○ The elevation of the area allows for a large number of views which have a high scenic quality value. ○ Rich in archaeological features, notably the round tower, high crosses and churches at Monasterboice. ○ The Fieldstown, Brownstown, Carricknashanagh areas offer a sense of tranquillity and isolation close to Drogheda. ○ New Mellifont Cistercian Monastery with its large estate, the greater part of which is a proposed NHA. <p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared as part of this application. See EIAR Chapter 13 Landscape and Visual Amenity for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 25: <i>Where appropriate, require that landscape and visual impact assessments prepared by suitably qualified professionals be submitted with development applications, which may have significant impact on landscape character areas, especially in highly sensitive areas.</i></p>	<p>A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared as part of this application. See EIAR Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Amenity for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 31: <i>Where in exceptional circumstances, trees and or hedgerows are required to be removed in order to facilitate development, this shall be done outside nesting season and there shall be a requirement that each tree felled is replaced at a ratio of 10:1 with native species and each hedgerow removed is to be replaced</i></p>	<p>The removal of trees and or hedgerows will be required to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development. The removal of trees and hedgerows will be done outside the nesting season and will follow measures set out in the accompanying Biodiversity Enhancement Management</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>with a native species. In Drogheda and Dundalk, replacement trees will be required at a ratio of 5:1 where the removal of trees is required in order to facilitate development.</i></p>	<p>Plan (Appendix 6.1). Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 6: Biodiversity, Chapter 7: Bat Ecology and Chapter 8: Ornithology.</p>
<p>NBG 36: <i>To protect the unspoiled natural environment of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) from inappropriate development and reinforce their character, distinctiveness and sense of place, for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.</i></p>	<p>The Wind Farm Site is not located in any area designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared as part of this application. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity for further details.</p>
<p>NBG 37: <i>To protect the unspoiled rural landscapes of the Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) from inappropriate development for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations</i></p>	<p>The Wind Farm Site is located outside any areas of AHSQ. The Wind Farm Site is located in close proximity to AHSQ 2 – Monasterboice. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>
<p>NGB 57: <i>To ensure that no development, including clearing or storage of materials, takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.</i></p>	<p>A minimum buffer zone of 10 - 50m will be applied to the bank of any river, stream or watercourse during the construction of the Proposed Development. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology and Appendix 2.1 CEMP.</p>
Built Heritage and Culture - Objectives & Policy	
<p>BH3: <i>To protect known and unknown archaeological areas, sites, monuments, structures and objects, having regard to the advice of the National Monuments Services of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage</i></p>	<p>All known archaeological features onsite will be monitored by an archaeologist. In the event that any sub-surface archaeological features are identified during the construction of the Proposed Development, they will be cleaned,</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>BHC 6: <i>To ensure any development, either above or below ground, adjacent to or in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument or a Zone of Archaeological Potential (including formerly walled towns) shall not be detrimental to or detract from the character of the archaeological site or its setting and be sited and designed to protect the monument and its setting. Where upstanding remains exist, a visual impact assessment may be required</i></p>	<p>recorded, and left in situ within cordoned off areas, as outlined in EIAR Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage.</p>
<p>BHC 10: <i>To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical surveys, test excavations and monitoring, as appropriate, where development proposals involve ground clearance of more than half a hectare or for linear developments over one kilometre in length or for developments in proximity to areas with a density of known archaeological monuments and history of discovery, as identified by a licensed archaeologist.</i></p>	<p>A full desktop and field archaeological survey has been carried out onsite by a suitable qualified and experienced archaeologist, named in Chapter 1: Introduction - Table 1.5, and an assessment of impact with recommended mitigation measures has been submitted as part of this planning application. Further details are available in EIAR Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage.</p>
<p>BHC 15: <i>To ensure no development which might have significant deleterious impacts upon the character of the World Heritage Site is permitted.</i></p>	<p>It is not predicted that the Proposed Development will have any significant deleterious impact upon the character of any 'World Heritage Site'. Further details are available in EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>
<p>BHC 16: <i>To protect the northern ridgeline (Chapter 13, Map 13.1) which frames the views within and from the World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from visually intrusive and inappropriate development, subject to the Development Management Assessment Criteria detailed in</i></p>	<p>The Wind Farm Site is not situated between the northern ridgeline and the <i>World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne</i>. Further details are available in EIAR Chapter 13</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>Chapter 13 and using view-shed analysis as a tool to guide and inform development management</i></p>	<p>Landscape & Visual Amenity and Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage.</p>
<p>BHC 38: <i>To ensure new development will not adversely affect the site, setting or views to and from historic gardens and designed landscapes of heritage significance.</i></p> <p>BHC 29: <i>To require proposals for new development in designed landscapes and demesnes include an appraisal of the landscape, designed views and vistas, and an assessment of significant trees or groups of trees, where appropriate, in order to inform site appropriate design proposals.</i></p>	<p>The closest turbine is located approximately c.1,068m from Stone House, 1,115m from Rokeby Hall and c.740m from Piperstown House. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity and Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage.</p>
Infrastructure and Public Utilities - Objectives & Policy	
<p>IU 14: <i>To require that on lands identified for non-domestic development where no public wastewater facility exists or is proposed, that the wastewater be adequately treated and discharged to suitable receiving water, subject to a discharge licence.</i></p>	<p>A detailed waste management plan has been prepared and included in the CEMP Appendix 2.1. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 14: Material Assets.</p>
<p>IU 19: <i>To require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of SuDS measures be incorporated in all new development (including extensions to existing developments). All development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.</i></p>	<p>A detailed surface water management plan has been prepared and included in the CEMP Appendix 2.1. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>IU 20: <i>To require all development proposals, meet the design criteria, (adjusted to reflect local conditions), and material designs contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS) and demonstrate how runoff is captured as close to source as possible with subsequent slow release to the drainage system and watercourse.</i></p>	<p>A detailed surface water management plan has been prepared and included in the CEMP Appendix 2.1. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.</p>
<p>IU 22: <i>To ensure all new development incorporates appropriate measures to protect existing water bodies, through appropriate treatment of runoff. In particular, discharges from car parks shall be appropriately treated so as to remove pollutant materials.</i></p>	<p>A detailed surface water management plan has been prepared and included in the CEMP Appendix 2.1. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology.</p>
<p>IU 25: <i>To ensure that no development including clearing or storage of materials takes place within a minimum distance of 10m measured from each bank of any river, stream or watercourse.</i></p>	<p>A minimum buffer zone of 50m will be applied to the bank of any river, stream or watercourse during the construction of the Proposed Development. Further details are outlined in EIAR Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology and Appendix 2.1 CEMP.</p>
<p>IU 26: <i>To reduce the risk of new development being affected by possible future flooding by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Avoiding development in areas at risk of flooding and</i> • <i>Where development in floodplains cannot be avoided, taking a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and adaptation to the risk.</i> 	<p>A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted as part of this planning application. Further details are outlined in Appendix 11.1 Flood Risk Assessment to Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology</p>
<p>IU 27: <i>To ensure all proposals for development falling within Flood Zones A or B are consistent</i></p>	<p>There are no excavation works planned within flood zone C (0.1% or 1 in 1000 year</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>with the “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities” 2009. Proposals for development identified as being vulnerable to flooding must be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority that the development and its infrastructure will avoid significant risks of flooding and not exacerbate flooding elsewhere. In Flood Zone C, where the probability of flooding is low (less than 0.1%), site specific Flood Risk Assessment may be required, and the developer should satisfy themselves that the probability of flooding is appropriate to the development being proposed. The County Plan SFRA datasets and the most up to date CFRAM Programme climate scenario mapping should be consulted by prospective applicants for developments in this regard and will be made available to lower-tier Development Management processes in the Council. Applications for development in flood vulnerable zones, including those at risk under the OPW’s Mid-Range Future Scenario, shall provide details of structural and non-structural risk management measures, such as those relating to floor levels, internal layout, flood-resilient construction, emergency response planning and access and egress during flood events.</p>	<p>annual exceedance probability) or within NIFM (National Indicative Fluvial Mapping) river Flood Extents for High End Future Scenario (HEFS).</p> <p>No areas within the main Wind Farm Site are within Flood Zones. There is one area within the Proposed Development (approximately 0.12 ha) that falls with a Flood Zone. The works planned within this area (overlapping area of the flood zone and the north-west corner of Redline Boundary) are limited to vegetation clearance only, along the west side of the R132. A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted as part of this planning application. Further details are outlined in Appendix 11.1 Flood Risk Assessment to chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology and in Chapter 19: Major Accidents and Natural Disasters</p>
<p>IU 49: <i>To support international, national and County initiatives for limiting and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through energy efficiency and the development of renewable energy sources at suitable locations, utilising the</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to generate between 28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>natural resources of the County, in an environmentally acceptable manner subject to normal proper planning considerations including in particular the impact on areas of environmental or landscape sensitivity.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. This will allow for renewable electricity to be stored on site when electricity demand on the local electricity transmission system is low and discharge electricity on demand when the transmission system requires it.</p>
<p>IU 54: <i>To support Sustainable Energy Communities and Local Community Group Initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the County.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will help supply surrounding local homes with clean energy</p>
<p>IU 56: <i>To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and guidance and the 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (2006) or any revisions thereof which may be issued during the lifetime of the Plan</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site. The Proposed Development will be constructed, operated and decommissioned in line with Government policy and guidance and 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (2006) or any revisions thereof which may be issued during the lifetime of the Plan.</p>
<p>IU 57: <i>To facilitate the development of wind energy in an environmentally sustainable manner ensuring proposals are consistent with the landscape preservation objectives of the Plan, the protection of the natural and built environment and the visual and residential amenities of the area.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to generate between 28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of this EIAR and is available in Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>IU 58: <i>To promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the 'preferred areas' as outlined on Map 10.1, to prohibit such infrastructure in areas identified as 'no-go areas' and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas 'open for consideration'.</i></p>	<p>The Wind Farm Site falls within two wind energy designation zones: labelled 'Preferred' and "Open to Consideration" in the Louth County Development Plan. According to IU 58, the aim is to encourage the placement of wind farms and related infrastructure in preferred areas specified on Map 10.1, prohibit such development in designated "no-go areas," and potentially consider, after appropriate assessment, installing wind energy infrastructure in areas marked as "open for consideration."</p>
<p>IU 65: <i>To encourage and support the development of solar energy infrastructure for onsite energy use, including solar PV, solar thermal and seasonal storage technologies.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. This will allow for renewable electricity to be stored on site when electricity demand on the local electricity transmission system is low and discharge electricity on demand when the transmission system requires it.</p>
<p>IU 78: <i>To support and facilitate the reinforcement and development of enhanced electricity and gas supplies, and associated networks, to serve the existing and future needs of the County and Region. This will include the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements facilitating linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity and gas transmission grid, in a sustainable and timely manner, subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity and will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. This Development will contribute to energy security and the improvement of the electricity transmission network within Co. Louth.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p>IU 80: <i>To ensure that development proposals for energy transmission and distribution infrastructure follow best practice with regard to siting and design. Proposed high voltage overhead lines shall as far as possible seek to avoid areas of sensitivity. Where avoidance is not possible, full consideration shall be given to undergrounding the lines where technically feasible and environmentally appropriate.</i></p>	<p>The grid connection will be connected from the Wind Farm Site substation to Drybridge substation via underground 38kV cable. It will be constructed to the requirements and specifications of ESB Networks Limited.</p>
<p><u>Environment, Natural Resources and The Coast - Objectives & Policy</u></p>	
<p>ENV 4: <i>To support the goals and objectives of the EU Green Deal, the Climate Action Plan 2019 and the Climate Action Charter in ensuring sustainable development across the County.</i></p> <p>ENV 5: <i>To promote the future sustainable development of County Louth in such a manner as to support climate change mitigation and adaptation measures through the implementation of infrastructure in designated settlements.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5mw – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. This will allow for renewable electricity to be stored on site when electricity demand on the local electricity transmission system is low and discharge electricity on demand when the transmission system requires it</p> <p>The Proposed Development will contribute to the objectives and goals of EU Green Deal, the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Climate Action Charter in ensuring sustainable development across the County.</p>
<p>ENV 6: <i>To implement the Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2018-2023 (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and</i></p>	<p>Detailed Noise Impact Assessments for the Proposed Development has been</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.</i></p>	<p>completed and is detailed in EIAR Chapter 13 Noise and the following appendices:</p> <p>Appendix 13.1 – Construction Noise Report</p> <p>Appendix 13.2 – Operational Noise Report</p> <p>Appendix 13.3 - Battery Energy Storage System Noise report</p>
<p>ENV 8: <i>To ensure that all external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and wildlife.</i></p>	<p>All external lighting whether free standing or attached to a building shall be designed and constructed so as not to cause excessive light spillage, glare, or dazzle motorists, and thereby limiting light pollution into the surrounding environment and protecting the amenities of nearby properties, traffic and any sensitive species i.e. bats. Further details are available in Chapter 7: Bat Ecology.</p>
<p>ENV 9: <i>To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.</i></p>	<p>Where planning is granted for the Proposed Development all details of on-site lighting associated with the Proposed Development will be submitted to, agreed with, and will comply with the regulations set forth by the planning authority.</p>
<p>ENV 14: <i>To ensure that adequate soil protection measures are undertaken where appropriate. Adequate and appropriate investigations shall be carried out into the nature and extent of any soil and groundwater contamination and the risks</i></p>	<p>Soil geology has been assessed and mitigations proposed to protect soil and groundwater from contamination as part of this EIAR. Please refer to Chapter 10: Soils and Geology for further details.</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.</i></p>	
<p>ENV 18: <i>To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.</i></p> <p>ENV 19: <i>To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development has been assessed, buffers zones implemented, and mitigations proposed to protect all waterbodies within or connected to the Wind Farm Site. Further details are available in this EIA Chapter 9: Aquatic Ecology and Chapter 11: Hydrology and Hydrogeology</p>
Climate Action - Objectives & Policy	
<p>CA 1: <i>To promote, support and direct effective climate action policies and objectives that seek to improve climate outcomes across the settlement areas and communities of County Louth helping to successfully contribute and deliver on the obligations of the State to transition to low carbon and climate resilient society through the encouragement and integration of appropriate mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures into all development.</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage.</p> <p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to contribute to the reduction of 29,010 (lower range) or 36,645 (higher range) tonnes of carbon dioxide per year (or 1,015,367 - 1,282,569 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the proposed 35-year lifetime of the wind farm) that would otherwise be produced by generating the equivalent amount of electricity using fossil fuel sources (i.e. gas and coal).</p>
<p>CA 8: <i>To seek to identify projects or initiatives that will assist in meeting national climate and</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between</p>

Objective/ Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>energy targets and to seek funding or support any funding applications for the implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications Climate Action Fund.</i></p>	<p>28.5MW – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage.</p>

4.5.3.2 The Meath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027

Although the project is located entirely within the administrative boundary of Louth County Council, there is potential for transboundary visual effects to arise given the proximity of the Wind Farm Site to Meath County Council approximately 6.3km from the Wind Farm Site. For this reason, policies within the Meath County Council Development Plan related to archaeological landscapes and Visual effects on surrounding areas have been taken into consideration as part of this EIAR.

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027. The CDP states that:

“The Plan provides a positive vision for Meath which will enable the county to continue to make a significant contribution to national economic recovery by promoting sustainable development and facilitating stable economic growth thus delivering long term benefits for the citizens of the county.”

The CDP’s strategic vision is to: *“Improve the quality of life of all citizens in Meath by creating an environment that supports a vibrant growing economy and a well-connected place to live, learn and do business”.*

The policies from the Meath CDP that have the potential to be impacted by the Proposed Development, with particular relevance to landscape and visual impacts and archaeological landscape impacts have been taken into consideration in Table 4.2. Individual technical assessments included with the Environmental Report will also refer to CDP policies where relevant.

Table 4.2: Key Policies from the Meath County Development Plan (CDP) 2021 - 2027 relevant to the Proposed Development

Objective/Policy	Statement of Compliance
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE STRATEGY – OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES	
<p>HER POL 1: <i>To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sites and monuments included in the Sites and Monuments Record as maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht;</i> • <i>Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;</i> • <i>Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the National Monuments Acts; Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Chapter 8</i> • <i>National monuments subject to Preservation Orders under the National Monuments Acts and national monuments which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a local authority;</i> • <i>Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the</i> 	<p>It is considered that there will not be any Cultural and Natural Heritage significant effects arising from the proposed Development. See EIAR Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage for further details.</p>

Objective/Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>National Monuments Acts or otherwise included in the Shipwreck Inventory maintained by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</i></p>	<p>RECEIVED: 04/12/2024</p>
<p>HER POL 3: <i>To require, as part of the development management process, archaeological impact assessments, geophysical survey, test excavations or monitoring as appropriate, for development in the vicinity of monuments or in areas of archaeological potential. Where there are upstanding remains, a visual impact assessment may be required.</i></p>	<p>An Archaeological Impact Assessment and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment have been submitted as part of this planning application. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity and Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage for further details.</p>
<p>HER OBJ 3: <i>To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.</i></p>	<p>No significant visual impact is predicted, as shown in the Archaeological Impact Assessment and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity and Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage for further details.</p>
<p>HER POL 6: <i>To protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne in accordance with the relevant guidelines and national legislation, so that its integrity, authenticity and significance are not adversely affected by inappropriate development or change.</i></p>	<p>No significant visual impact is predicted in accordance with relevant and national legislation as detailed in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>
<p>HER OBJ 8: <i>To encourage and facilitate pre-application discussions, in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the</i></p>	<p>Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, were contacted during the scoping exercise on the 27th July 2023.</p>

Objective/Policy	Statement of Compliance
<p><i>Gaeltacht, regarding the siting and design of developments affecting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne and the scope of any necessary impact assessments.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right; color: red; font-size: 2em; transform: rotate(-15deg); opacity: 0.5;">RECEIVED: 04/12/2024</p>
<p>HER OBJ 11: <i>To protect the ridgelines which frame views within and from the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne from inappropriate or visually intrusive development.</i></p>	<p>There is no significant impact on ridgeline/UNESCO views as confirmed in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted as part of this planning application, confirms that See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity for further details.</p>
<p>HER POL 52: <i>To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the landscapes of the County in accordance with national policy and guidelines and the recommendations of the Meath Landscape Character Assessment (2007) in Appendix 5, to ensure that new development meets high standards of siting and design.</i></p>	<p>It is considered that there will not be any landscape, visual and cumulative assessment significant effects arising from the proposed Development. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>
<p>HER OBJ 49: <i>To ensure that the management of development will have regard to the value of the landscape, its character, importance, sensitivity and capacity to absorb change as outlined in Appendix 5 Meath Landscape Character Assessment and its recommendations.</i></p>	<p>It is considered that there will not be any landscape, visual and cumulative assessment significant effects arising from the proposed Development. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity.</p>
<p>HER OBJ 56: <i>To preserve the views and prospects listed in Appendix 10, in Volume 2 and on Map 8.6 and to protect these views from inappropriate development which would</i></p>	<p>It is considered that there will not be any landscape, visual and cumulative assessment significant effects arising from the proposed</p>

Objective/Policy	Statement of Compliance
interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape.	Development. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity .
Infrastructure Strategy – Objectives and Policies	
<p>INF POL 41: <i>To encourage the development of wind energy, in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Landscape Character Assessment of the County and the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) or any revisions thereof</i></p>	<p>It is considered that there will not be any landscape, visual and cumulative assessment significant effects arising from the proposed Development. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity for further details.</p> <p>An Archaeological Impact Assessment and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment have been submitted as part of this planning application. See EIAR Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity and Chapter 15: Cultural Heritage for further details.</p>

4.5.3.3 Louth County Landscape Appraisal

The Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Louth was compiled in 2002 and informs the current version of the County Development Plan. This assessment was prepared in accordance with the Government’s Draft Guidelines for Landscape and Landscape Assessment (2000), the aim of which is to:

- Heighten awareness of the importance of landscape in all aspects of physical planning.
- Provide guidance to planners and others, as how to deal with landscape considerations.
- Indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development controls.

The County Louth Landscape Character Assessment has identified the following nine Landscape Character Areas:

1. Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Area;

2. Carlingford Lough and Mountains, including West Feede Uplands;
3. Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River Basins;
4. Louth Drumlin and Lakes Areas;
5. Muirhevna Plain;
6. Dundalk Bay Coast;
7. Dunany, Boyne Estuary Coast;
8. Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice; and
9. Boyne and Mattock Valleys.

Landscape Character Areas in County Louth are mapped in Figure 4.17 of the SEA Environmental Report for the Louth County Council Development Plan 2021 – 2027.²⁰

The Wind Farm Site is entirely contained within the 'Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice' Landscape Character Area which is designated as having Regional Importance. The key values of this landscape are as follows:

- *'Landscape quality is quite high with a variety of landcover elements.*
- *The elevation of the area allows for a large number of views which have a high scenic quality value.*
- *Rich in archaeological features, notably the round tower, high crosses and churches at Monasterboice.*
- *The Fieldstown, Brownstown, Carricknashanagh areas offer a sense of tranquillity and isolation close to Drogheda.*
- *New Mellifont Cistercian Monastery with its large estate, the greater part of which is a proposed NHA.'*

The classification of landscape aims to heighten awareness of the importance of landscape in all aspects of physical planning, provide guidance to planners and others, as to how to deal with landscape considerations, indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development controls.

The landscapes of County Louth are classified as following:

- *International Importance (Carlingford Lough and Mountains including West Feede Uplands);*
- *National Importance (Boyne and Mattock Valley);*

²⁰ CAAS Ltd (2021) SEA Environmental Report for the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. Available at: <https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/publications/development-plans/louth-county-development-plan-2021-2027/4-final-louth-cdp-2021-2027-sea-er.pdf>

- *Regional Importance (Dundalk Bay Coast, Dunany to Boyne Estuary Coast and Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice); and*
- *Local Importance (Cooley Lowlands and Coastal Area; Lower Faughart, Castletown and Flurry River Basins, Louth Drumlin and Lake Areas; and Muirhevna Plain).*

These areas are the most sensitive to development and therefore developments which are likely to create a significant environmental and particularly visual impact is anticipated to best be absorbed in areas where the landscape is most robust, i.e. has the capacity to absorb development without significantly changing its character.

Most of the County is identified as having low to moderate levels of sensitivity. The most sensitive areas in the County include:

- Upland areas, including Cooley Mountains – on account of ecological and land cover sensitivities, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Areas of High Scenic Quality designations and extreme groundwater vulnerability.
- Coastal and marine areas within the County – on account of ecological designations, sensitive land cover sensitivities, shellfish production areas and/or nutrient sensitivity in surface water.
- Individual rivers throughout the County on account of areas of elevated groundwater vulnerability.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in **Chapter 12 - Landscape and visual impact** of the EIAR assessed the impact of the Proposed Development against designated views and prospects in County Louth and the impact to the overall landscape in County Louth based on the sensitivity of the adjoining area, as defined in the Louth County Development Plan. It found that the Proposed Development is of a modest overall scale and extent and is viewed within scenes that include a series of rolling hills. The assessment found The Proposed Development appears well assimilated in terms of both scale and function in such views and does not have significant adverse effects. Furthermore, the nature of the surrounding landscape reduces the effect of the Proposed Development and there are few notable impacts at centres of population, along major routes and on local community views. The assessment concludes that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant adverse effects on any landscape or visual receptors in County Louth, taking in to account the sensitivity of the landscape as dictated by the Louth County Development Plan.

4.5.3.4 *Meath County Landscape Character Assessment*

The Landscape Character Assessment for Co. Meath was compiled as part of the County Development Plan 2013-2019 in 2002 and informs the current version of the County Development Plan. This assessment was prepared in accordance with the Landscape and Landscape Assessment: Consultation Draft of Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2000), the aim of which is to:

- Heighten awareness of the importance of landscape in all aspects of physical planning.
- Provide guidance to planners and others, as how to deal with landscape considerations.
- Indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development controls.

The County Meath Landscape Character is assessed as shown in in Appendix 5 of the Volume 4 (Environmental Assessments SEA, AA & SFRA) of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The assessment divides County Meath into five main landscape character types, Map 1 of the Landscape Character Assessment. These are then subdivided into a further 20 geographically distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), Map 2 of the Landscape Character Assessment.

Map 3 of the Landscape Character Assessment, shows that the:

- land to the south and southwest of the Wind Farm Site is of 'High Sensitivity', these areas are:
 - Coastal plans (regional Importance)
 - Boyne Valley (International Importance)
 - Rathkenny Hills (regional Importance)
- land to the west of the Wind Farm Site is of 'Moderate Sensitivity', this area is:
 - North Navan Lowlands (regional Importance)

The classification of landscape aims to heighten awareness of the importance of landscape in all aspects of physical planning, provide guidance to planners and others, as to how to deal with landscape considerations, indicate specific requirements for development plans and for development controls.

These areas are the most sensitive to development and therefore developments which are likely to create a significant environmental and particularly visual impact is anticipated to best be absorbed in areas where the landscape is most robust, i.e. has the capacity to absorb development without significantly changing its character.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in **Chapter 12: Landscape and Visual Amenity** of the EIAR assessed the impact of the Proposed Development against designated views and prospects in County Meath and the impact to the overall landscape in County Meath based on the sensitivity of the adjoining area, as defined in the Meath County Development Plan.

The assessment concludes that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any significant adverse effects on any landscape or visual receptors in County Meath, taking in to account the sensitivity of the landscape as dictated by the Louth Meath Development Plan.

4.5.3.5 Compliance with Local Policy

The Proposed Development is compliant with local policy as it is supported by policies in the Louth County Council CDP to increase and support renewable energy developments at a local level, while avoiding significant environmental or visual impacts. The Proposed Development is not within an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or an Area of High Scenic Quality.

The Wind Farm Site falls within two areas "*Preferred*" and "*Open to Consideration*" for wind energy development (see Figure 4.2) in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 and has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, which has concluded that the Wind Farm Site is found to be in an appropriate location for a wind farm development.

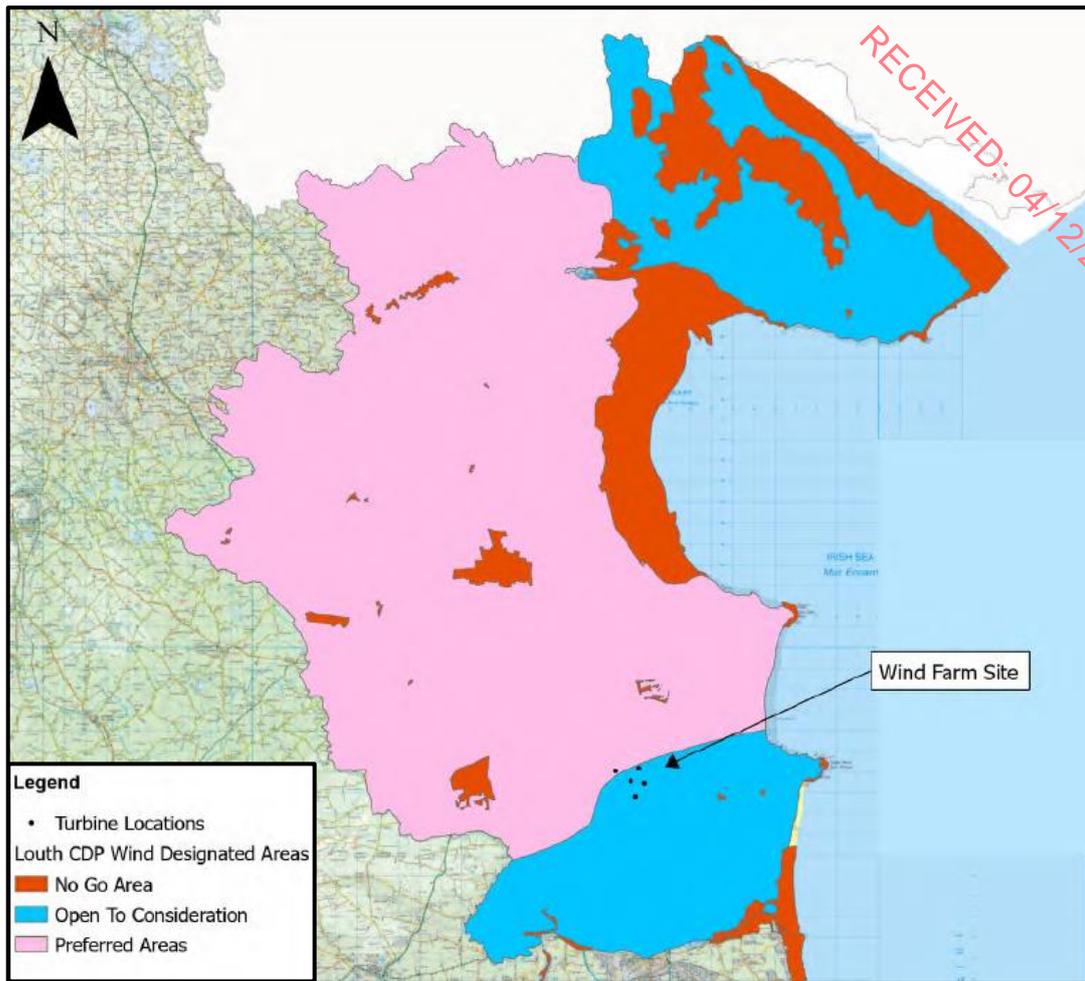


Figure 4.2 Louth County development plan 2021-2027 Chapter 10 (Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development)²¹ overlaid with the turbine coordinates for the proposed Kellystown Wind Farm.

4.6 OTHER CORE PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENTS

4.6.1 DoHPCLG Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government Guidelines

4.6.1.1 Department Circular PL5 / 2017

On the 3rd August 2017, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government issued Circular PL5 / 2017 to provide an update on the review of the wind energy and renewable policies in development plans, and the advice contained within a previous Departmental Circular PL20-13. Circular PL20-13 advised that local authorities should defer amending their existing Development Plan policies in relation to wind energy and renewable energy generally as part of either the normal cyclical six-yearly review or plan variation processes

²¹ [Chapter 10 \(louthcoco.ie\)](http://louthcoco.ie) Accessed 30/04/2024.

and should instead operate their existing development plan policies and objectives until the completion of a focused review of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. The circular (PL05/2017) reconfirms that this continues to be the advice of the Department.

The Department circular also reaffirms the four key aspects of the preferred draft approach being developed to address the key aspects of the review of the 2006 Wind Energy guidelines as follows:

- The application of a more stringent noise limit, consistent with World Health Organisation noise standards, in tandem with a new robust noise monitoring regime, to ensure compliance with noise standards.
- 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 between a wind turbine and the nearest residential property.
- The elimination of shadow flicker; and
- The introduction of new obligations in relation to engagement with local communities by wind farm developers along with the provision of community benefit measures.

The release of Circular Letter PL05/2017 and the Interim Guidelines coincide with the publication of Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan (discussed in Section 4.5.4. above).

4.6.1.2 DoEHLG Wind Energy Guidelines (Draft revised) 2019

In December 2019, the then Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published a revised draft '*Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities*' (the Guidelines) under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The aim of these guidelines was to assist the proper planning of wind power projects in appropriate locations around Ireland. The Guidelines highlight general considerations in the assessment of all planning applications for wind energy. They set out advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. They contain guidelines to provide for consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development. Each wind project has its own characteristics and defining features, and it is therefore impossible to write specifications for universal use. Guidelines should be applied practically and do not replace existing national energy, environmental and planning policy.

IWEA Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry 2012

Wind Energy Ireland (WEI), formerly Irish Wind Energy Association (IWEA), published updated Wind Energy Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Industry in 2012. The guidelines aim to encourage and define best practice development in the wind energy industry, acting as a reference document and guide to the main issues relating to wind energy developments. The purpose of the guidelines is to encourage responsible and sensitive wind farm development, which takes into consideration the concerns of local communities, planners, and other interested groups. The guidelines outline the main aspects of wind energy development with emphasis on responsible and sustainable design and environmental practices, on aspects of development which affect external stakeholders, and on good community engagement practices. In approaching the development of IWEA's guidelines, the aim was to be complementary to the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government's '*Wind Energy Development Guidelines*' (2006).

4.6.1.3 IWEA Best Practice Principles in Community Engagement and Community Commitment 2013

Following on from the IWEA published Best Practice Guidelines in March 2012, the Association extended its guidance with the publication of this Best Practice in Community Engagement and Commitment. IWEA and its members support the provision of financial contributions by wind farm operators to local communities and have sought to formulate best practice principles for the provision of a community commitment. The document sets out IWEA's best practice principles for delivering extended benefits to local communities for wind farm developments of 5 MW or above. Best Practice Principles of community engagement when planning the engagement strategy and preparing associated literature are also outlined in the document. The aim of these guidelines is to see that the views of local communities are taken into account at all stages of a development and that local communities can share in the benefits. Details of the community engagement and financial contributions undertaken by the developer are outlined in **Chapter 2: Description of the Proposed Development – Section 2.11**.

4.6.1.4 Enduring Connection Policy Stage 2 (ECP-2)

The Irish energy regulator, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), has introduced a new grid connection policy - Enduring Connection Policy (ECP). ECP-1 was the first stage of the CRU's development of enduring connection policy in Ireland. On the 27th March 2018 the CRU published their decision on ECP-1.

ECP-2 is the second stage of the CRU's development of enduring connection policy in Ireland. On the 10th of June 2020 the CRU published their decision on ECP-2, which set policy for at least three annual batches of connection offers (ECP 2.1, ECP-2.2, and ECP-2.3). Under ECP-2, grid connection applications are categorised as either Category A, Category B or Category C. The Proposed Project lies within Category A 'Generation, storage and other system services technology projects (MEC >0.5MW)'. The ECP application process aims to eliminate speculative applicants and allow viable projects to be delivered.

On 4th April 2023, the CRU published the ECP-2.4 decision (CRU202326), a policy update to ECP-2, to address the volume of grid connection applications in a way that promotes optimal use of the existing network considering the system needs, national policy, and consumer interest. This introduced amendments to ECP-2. These included a longer batch opening window, increased from one month to two months, a reduction in the connection offers from 115 to 100. ESB will contact applicants every 6 months following the connection assessment issuance to request an update from the applicant as to the status of the project and the planning permission application. It is expected that, as a result of the ECP system, project development / project finance risk will significantly diminish, reducing one of the key barriers for developers and financiers in the Irish market.

4.6.1.5 Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS)

The present Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) replaces the former Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) support scheme. It is intended that the new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme will provide support to renewable electricity projects in Ireland. With a primary focus on cost effectiveness, the RESS will deliver a broader range of policy objectives, including those outlined in section 4.5.1.7.

RESS auctions will be held at frequent intervals throughout the lifetime of the scheme. The Scheme will provide for a renewable electricity (RES-E) ambition of up to a maximum of 55% by 2030, subject to determining the cost-effective level which will be set out in the draft National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2020.²²

In terms of Communities, all projects looking for support under the new RESS will need to meet pre-qualification criteria including offering the community an opportunity to invest in

²² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0015c-irelands-national-energy-climate-plan-2021-2030/>

and take ownership of a portion of renewable projects in their local area. A national register of community benefit payments will also be established.

4.6.2 The Economic Importance of The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development would represent a strategically significant investment in the locality of County Louth and the wider Eastern and Midland region. The Proposed Development is aligned with national, regional and local planning goals and policies by supporting economic development (including local employment and rural economy support). Some examples are;

- strengthening rural economies and communities, as outlined in a number of the NPF shared goals for Ireland (section 4.5.1.1)
- support of rural economy and initiatives in relation to renewable energy for sustaining employment opportunities in rural areas (RSES, RPO 4.83), which is outlined in section 4.5.2.1
- benefiting the local community by providing fund that will be made available to the local community for the duration of the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme, as detailed in section 4.5.1.7
- contributing to rural economic development in line with the Louth County Development Plans and objectives, as outlined in section 4.5.3.1

4.6.3 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 needs, as outlined in the Brundtland Report²³, is still the overarching understanding of sustainable development today. The Proposed Development is an excellent example of sustainable development, and is aligned with national, regional and local policies and objectives, some examples are:

- The objectives in section 1 of the NPF, (refer to section 4.5.1.1) which sets out that “*sustainability is at the heart of long-term planning and the National Planning Framework*”.
- the national objective of the “The National Climate Policy Position, of achieving transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050.

²³ Brundtland, G.H. (1987) Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427.

- The Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021 – 2027 which sets out the overarching strategic framework for sustainable development in spatial, economic, social and environmental terms (refer to section 4.5.3.1)

A key challenge for the National Planning Framework has been to explore alternatives that can accommodate projected growth in the most optimal and sustainable manner that would achieve Ireland’s economic, social and environmental requirements. The Proposed Development meets each of these three requirements as outlined in **Table 4.5**.

Table 4.5: How the Proposed Development Interacts with the economic, social and environmental requirements of sustainable development.

<p>Economic Role</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would represent a strategically significant investment in the locality. The Proposed 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 Proposed Development will have a positive economic impact with several Irish firms commissioned to work on the design, environmental assessment and planning.</p>
<p>Social Role</p>	<p>The influence of the Proposed 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 Proposed Development will also create jobs, economic development and rural diversification.</p>
<p>Environmental Role</p>	<p>Overall, the EIAR sets out that the environmental impacts arising from the Proposed Development can be satisfactorily mitigated. The findings demonstrate that the environment can accommodate the Proposed Development without giving rise to significant environmental impacts in line with the Louth and Meath 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 Proposed 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.</p>

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.

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



(3) Good Health and Well-Being

By producing renewable energy, the Proposed 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.



(7) Affordable and Clean Energy

The Proposed 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.



(8) Decent Work and Economic Growth

The Proposed Development is a renewable energy enterprise, representing a multi-million-euro investment into the Eastern and Midlands 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.



(9) Industrial, Innovation and Infrastructure

The Proposed 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.



(11) Sustainable Cities and Communities

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



(13) Climate Action

By generating renewable energy and displacing fossil fuels the Proposed 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.

4.7 CONCLUSION

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 presumption of overriding public interest being given to renewable energy projects, may further support additional renewable energy projects, such as the Proposed Development.

The Proposed Development, in Kellystown, County Louth, is anticipated to provide between 28.5-36MW of renewable, domestically produced wind energy, contributing 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 Dec 2023 this was 4.8GW, leaving a shortfall of 4.2GW to be achieved in the next 6 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 Eastern and Midlands 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 Louth County Development plan reinforces the national and regional energy policies. The Wind Farm Site falls in an area classed as '*Open to Consideration*' and '*Preferred*' to wind farm development in the Renewable Energy Strategy for Co. Louth.

A key challenge for the National Planning Framework has been to explore alternatives that can accommodate projected growth in the most optimal and sustainable manner that would achieve Ireland's economic, social and environmental requirements.

The Proposed Development meets Ireland's Sustainable Development requirements (economic, social and environmental) as outlined in the National Planning Framework. 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 Proposed Development process adopted by the Developer has represented a best practice approach to a renewable energy scheme design, minimising the potential impact through multiple design iterations and modifications to minimise the impact on the receiving environment, and ensuring compliance with the suite of planning policies and objectives of the Louth County Development Plan. The layout of the Proposed Development presented in the Planning Application and EIAR represents the optimum fit with the technical and environmental parameters of this project.

Environmental Impacts 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 Proposed Development can be constructed and operated without significant effects arising, demonstrating the acceptability of the proposal.

This chapter outlines how the Proposed Development is compliant with International, European and National policy on energy security, emissions reductions and renewable energy production. It has reviewed policy for the Eastern and Midlands region and local County Louth policies and finds the Proposed Development complies with key renewable energy and environmental policy objectives.

In summary the Proposed 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 54.
- Contribute toward renewable energy use and generation as specified in the National Planning Framework's National Policy Objective 55.
- Contribute in the region of 28.5-36MW of renewable wind energy to the national CAP2024 target of 9GW by 2030 helping to reduce the current 4.2GW shortfall.
- Comply with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands region's goal of producing renewable energy to tackle climate change, meet predicted growth in demand and provide energy security.
- Support the local Louth County Development Plan policy on promoting appropriate renewable energy development and assist the county in achieving its goal of being the national leader in renewable energy generation to facilitate a low carbon future.
- Contribute to rural economic development in line with the Louth County Development Plans and of the RSES.

The Proposed 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 as outlined in section 4.5 of this chapter.