# EDF RENEWABLES IRELAND LIMITED



# KELLYSTOWN WIND FARM

# CO. LOUTH

# PLANNING STATEMENT

## NOVEMBER 2024



**EDF Renewables Ireland Limited.,**
Unit B, Ground Floor
Portview House, Thorncastle Street
Dublin 4, D04 V9Y9, Ireland

**Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited,**
Consulting Engineers,
Finisklin Business Park,
Sligo.
Tel.: 071 9161416
Fax: 071 9161080
email: info@jodireland.com

**JENNINGS O'DONOVAN & PARTNERS LIMITED**
*Project, Civil and Structural Consulting Engineers,*
*FINISKLIN BUSINESS PARK,*
*SLIGO,*
*IRELAND.*
Telephone (071) 9161416
Fax (071) 9161080
Email info@jodireland.com
Web Site www.jodireland.com



# ***DOCUMENT APPROVAL***

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PROJECT** | Kellystown Wind Farm | |
| **CLIENT / JOB NO** | EDF Renewables Ireland | 6918 |
| **DOCUMENT TITLE** | Planning Statement | |

| | **Prepared by** | **Reviewed/Approved by** |
|---|---|---|
| Document<br>**Final** | Name<br>Breena Coyle<br>Sarah Jones | Name<br>David Kiely |
| Date<br>November 2024 | Signature | Signature |

# EDF RENEWABLES IRELAND

# KELLYSTOWN WIND FARM

# PLANNING STATEMENT

## CONTENTS

**Tables:**



**Figures:**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared by JOD on behalf of EDF Renewables Ireland Ltd. hereafter referred as EDF, to accompany a planning application to Louth County Council for planning permission for works associated with the proposed Kellystown Wind Farm in Co. Louth.

The purpose of this Planning Statement is to outline the background to the development, the key elements of the proposal and to demonstrate that the Proposed Development complies with all relevant planning policy and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

This statement provides a comprehensive assessment of the Proposed Developments consistency with the relevant planning policy documents at European, national, regional and local levels.

A design flexibility opinion issued by Louth County Council (Case Reference S32DF001-24) on 17th of May 2024 accompanies the Wind Farm application. The details unconfirmed in this application are the turbine tip height, rotor diameter and hub height. The range of parameters under which the turbine dimensions will fall are specified on the site notice and in the design flexibility opinion that accompanies this application and outlined in section 3 of this statement.

This planning application for the Proposed Development is being submitted to Louth County Council under the provisions of Section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ("the Act").

## 1.1 Structure of the Report

This Planning Statement is set out as follows:

- **Section 1: Introduction**
- **Section 2: Project Background**
  - **The Applicant**
  - **Site Location and Context**
  - **Planning History**
  - **Pre-Application Engagement**
    - **EIAR Scoping**
    - **Pre-Planning Meeting with Louth County Council**
    - **Design Flexibility Meeting with Louth County Council**

  - **Community Consultation**
- **Section 3 The Proposed Development**
- **Section 4 Project Design Process**
  - **Strategic Site Screening**
  - **Suitability of Candidate Site**
  - **Detailed Constraints Mapping**
  - **Turbine Layout Iterations**
- **Section 5: Planning Policy Context**
  - **The Climate Emergency**
  - **International Energy Policy**
  - **European Energy Policy**
  - **National Policy**
- **Section 3: Development Plan Policy Appraisal**
- **Section 4 Other Relevant Policy**
- **Section 5: Planning Assessment**
- **Section 6: Local Policy Context**
- **Section 7: Other Relevant Policy**
- **Section 8; Planning Assessment**
- **Section 9 Material Planning Considerations**
  - **The National Interest and Strategic Importance**
  - **Economic Importance of the Proposed Development**
  - **The Development as Sustainable Development**
- **Section 10: Summary and Conclusion**

Defined terms used in this Planning Statement are set out in the EIAR **Chapter 1**; **Introduction, Table 1.1**.

# 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

## 2.1 The Applicant

The applicant and Developer for the Proposed Development is EDF Renewables Ireland Limited. EDF Renewables Ireland is part of one of the world's largest electricity companies and their investment and innovation in renewable energy projects is reducing costs for consumers and bringing significant benefits to communities. EDF Renewables Ireland's team has a wealth of experience in bringing complex development projects to fruition, across onshore and offshore wind, solar PV and battery storage technology, and is supported by more than 400 colleagues in the UK.

In 2020 EDF acquired 50% of Codling Wind Park, a major offshore wind farm which will be located off the coast of Wicklow and have also entered into a 50:50 partnership to develop the Emerald and Western Star floating offshore wind farms, to be located off the coasts of Cork and Clare, respectively. Together, these three projects could power over two million homes across Ireland.

In 2023 EDF energised three of Ireland's first grid-scale solar farms and have announced plans for five onshore wind farms across Ireland. In total EDF will have an Irish onshore development pipeline of almost 1GW. In the UK, EDF Renewables has an operating portfolio of 36 wind farms and two battery storage units (together totalling more than 1.5GW) and a development pipeline of 14GW across wind, solar and battery storage. EDF Renewables operates in more than 20 countries around the world.

## 2.2 Site Location and Context

The Wind Farm Site, as shown in **Figure 2.1** has an area which extends to 64.5ha. The total area of the Redline Boundary is 83.3ha. It is located 8.3km north of Drogheda, 23.6km South of Dundalk and 50km North of Dublin. The Louth CDP[1] includes an assessment of the county in terms of the suitability for wind development. The county is split in to three categories; 'No Go Area', 'Open for Consideration' and 'Preferred Areas'. The relevant policy is Objective IU 58;

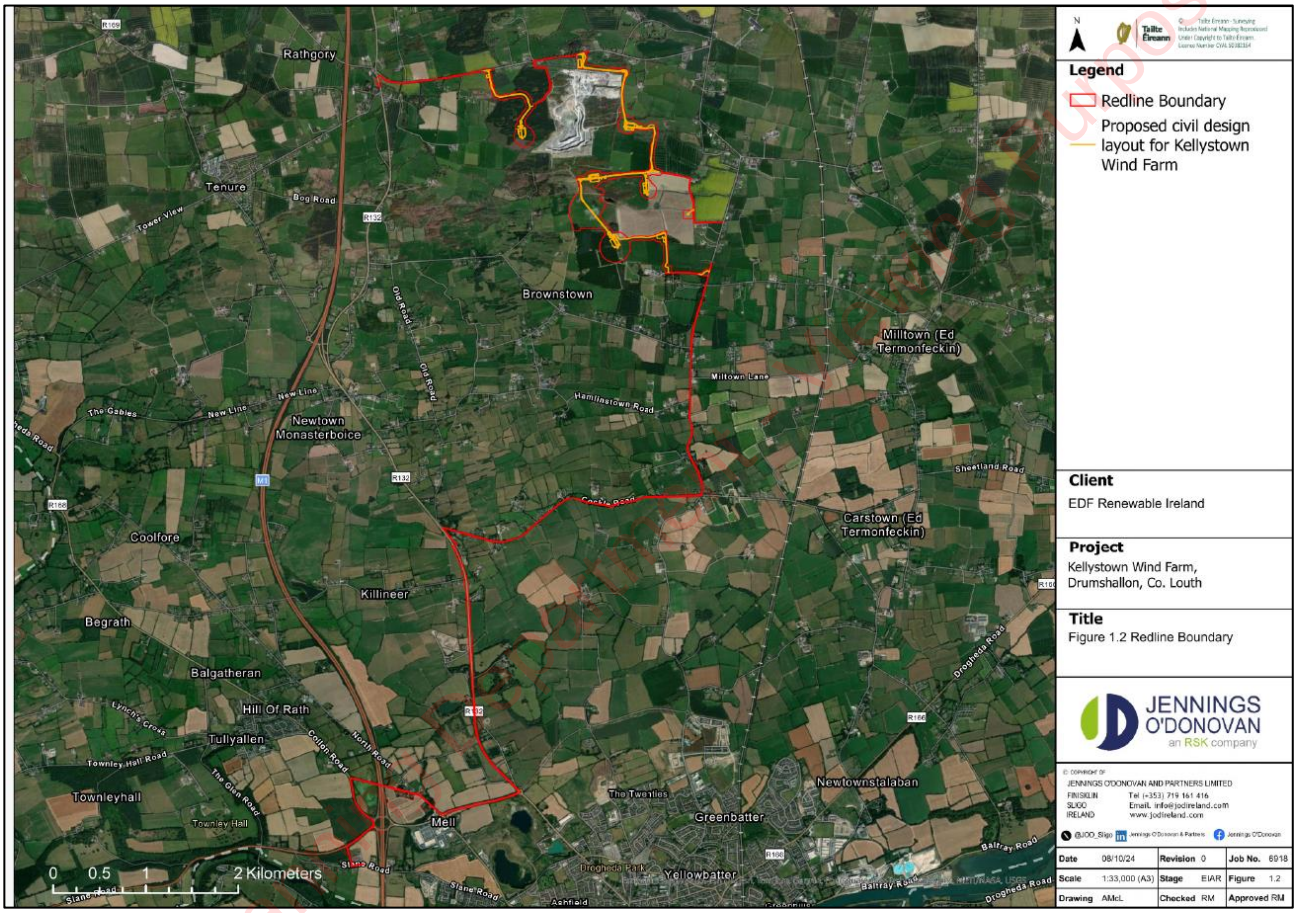
*'To promote the location of wind farms and wind energy infrastructure in the 'preferred areas' as outlined on Map 10.1, to prohibit such infrastructure in areas identified as 'no-go areas' and to consider, subject to appropriate assessment, the location of wind generating infrastructure in areas 'open for consideration'.*

[1] Louth County Development Plan 2021-2024 – Chapter 10 Infrastructure and Public Utilities https://www.louthcoco.ie/en/publications/development-plans/louth-county-development-plan-2021-2027/chapter-10-web-.pdf

The Wind Farm Site falls within two wind energy designation zones labelled **'Preferred'** and **"Open to Consideration".** The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.



**Figure 2.1: The Location of Kellystown Wind Farm**




The Wind Farm Site is situated within an area of livestock and pasture farmland and forestry. There are areas of scrubland, native woodland and one recognised wetland site (Drumshallon Lough Candidate Natural Heritage Area cNHA). The Wind Farm Site is situated within the following townlands: Brittas, Brownstown, Cartanstown, Castletown, Drumshallon, Gallstown, Groom, Kearneystown, Keeverstown, Piperstown, Rokeby, Stonehouse and Swinestown.

## 2.3 Planning History

There are two previous planning applications within the site boundary. A Planning Search was conducted on the area surrounding the Wind Farm Site and is available in **Appendix 2.4** of the EIAR.

A forestry road opening licence was granted 25th October 2022 (forestry service Ref: CN86924) by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The new forestry road is 1957m in length new site entrance on the local road L6274 to facilitate harvesting.

Louth county council granted permission 17th November 2017 for a proposed building incorporating horse loose housing and storage area over previous silage pit and storage yard (LCC Reg. Ref. 16/761).

## 2.4 Pre-Application Engagement

### 2.4.1 Scoping

The scoping and consultation process was carried out in accordance with the Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (the EIA Directive), Planning Development Act 2000 as amended, Planning Regulations 2001 as amended, and in accordance with the Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022). A scoping exercise was carried out in July 2023. **Table 1.8 in Chapter 1: Introduction** of the EIAR documents individuals and organisations that have been consulted as part of the EIA process. The purpose of this consultation process was to provide a focus for the EIA by identifying the key issues of relevance. As such, the consultation process informs the various organisations of the Project, thereby providing an opportunity to submit comments and to offer information relevant to the preparation of this EIAR.

### 2.4.2 Pre-Planning Meeting

A pre-planning meeting was held with Louth County Council Planning Department on 15th February 2024. A presentation on the Project was delivered covering key infrastructure components and details of the submission content. Notes from the preplanning meeting were sent by Louth County Council, these are included in **Appendix 1.2** of the EIAR. Louth County Council noted several key policy objectives that are relevant to the Proposed Development. These are all addressed in section 4.1. The notes state;

*'The Site appears to be located in the "Preferred Areas", as per Map 10.1 of the Louth CDP 2021-2027, which shows areas suitable for wind development in the county.'*

The notes also highlight that an EIAR and NIS will be required for the project and;
*'that the new "North West Irish Sea SPA" is located to the south of Dunany Point.'*

This has been assessed in the NIS submitted with the application.

The notes flag the importance of cumulative assessment which has been included in each of the technical assessments included in the EIAR.

The notes state that;
*'I advised that this is a large windfarm proposal and that it is very likely to attract significant levels of public interest, so community engagement needs to be carefully considered (i.e. Community Report).'*
Community engagement is set out in section 1.5 of this Planning Statement.

Significantly, in relation to Planning Policy the notes state;
*'Both national government and Louth CDP policy is generally in favour of promoting renewable energy production in the county, including wind energy, subject to compliance with all relevant planning, infrastructure, environmental standards and guidelines, etc.'*

### 2.4.3 Design Flexibility Consultation Meeting with Louth County Council

In accordance with section 32I and 32H of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the Applicant obtained an opinion on design flexibility from the Council (**Appendix 1.5 of the EIAR**). The Wind Farm Site is located on lands under the ownership of third-party private landowners who have consented to the application and the Proposed Development. Letters of consent accompany the application. The Grid connection infrastructure outside of the Wind Farm Site will be located in the public road corridor, a section of the TDR node is located on land under control of Louth County Council. The design flexibility meeting took place on the 17th of May 2024 via Microsoft Teams and included representatives from Louth County Council, JOD and the Developer. The discussion centred around the parameters within which the unconfirmed detail (i.e. the turbine dimensions) fall and how these elements will be adequately assessed in the application documents including the EIAR to enable the competent authority to make a decision on the application**.** The proposed range of turbine parameters selected is limited to a set of defined parameters. The EIAR has assessed these scenarios and all permutations within the range which has allowed for an assessment of all permutations within the range. The conclusion of the councils opinion on flexibility states;

*'Having considered the Design Flexibility details, specifications and information submitted, including the meeting request form (No. 20), cover letter, maps and drawings, the Planning Authority as per Section 321(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, is satisfied that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and decided before the prospective applicant has confirmed certain details of the application.'*



### 2.4.4 Community Consultation.

Public consultation for the Project was a multi-stage approach outlined in the Community Report (**Appendix 1.4 of the EIAR**). The Proposed Development was advertised in the local community; 2 no. leaflet drops were carried out to homes within 2km of the Proposed Development. Leaflets contained information such as; the scope of the project, the establishment of a Community Benefit Fund and contact details including the project website, email address and the phone numbers of the two Community Liaison Officers. There was also two rounds of door to door callouts to all homes within 1km and additional consultation when requested, this allowed for information to be shared and provided to local residents with the opportunity to ask any questions they have regarding the Proposed Development. There was a press release in local newspapers in October 2022. In addition, there was a Public Information Day held on the 1st of December 2023 in the Drumshallon Forge Heritage Centre. An invitation was distributed to all homes within 2km of the Wind Farm Site, adverts were placed in the Drogheda Independent newspaper and a press release was issued to all local media. All TDs, Senators and Councillors in the relevant area were invited to attend the event. This Public Information Day featured information about the Project, the environmental surveys completed to date, photomontages illustrating the visual impact of the turbines from local viewpoints, details of the project timeline and information on other aspects of wind energy. In total, the public information day was attended by c.150 people. The level of feedback received during the course of the community engagement programme has been high, in particular at the public exhibition held in December 2023. At all times the team have provided the relevant project information and answer any queries or concerns in relation to the project.

## 3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission is being sought by the Developer for the construction of 5 wind turbines, a Permanent Met Mast, 38kV on-site substation and all ancillary works and the construction of an underground Grid Connection to Drybridge 110kV Substation, in the townlands of Ballymakenny, Brownstown, Carntown, Carstown, Cartanstown, Castletown, Drumshallon, Gallstown, Groom, Kearneystown, Keeverstown, Killineer, Mell, Newtown Monasterboice, Piperstown, Stonehouse, Swinestown, Tullyallen, Tullyard and Tullyeskar, Co. Louth.

The Proposed Development will consist of the provision of the following:

- The construction of 5 no. wind turbines which are discussed in detail in **Section 2.6.2** of Chapter 2; Project Description in the EIAR, with the following parameters:
  a) Total tip height range of 179.5m – 180m,
  b) Rotor diameter range of 149m – 163m,
  c) Hub height range of 98m to 105m,
- Construction of Turbine Foundations, Turbine Hardstand areas and assembly areas;
- All associated wind farm underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the turbines and Permanent Meteorological Mast to the Onsite Substation and Control Building including cabling in the public road corridor in the townlands of Gallstown and Kearneystown;
- Construction of 1 no. permanent 38kV electrical substation compound including a single-storey control building with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing, gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, and all ancillary structures and works in the townland of Piperstown.
- A Battery Energy Storage System within the 38kV electrical substation compound;
- All works associated with the connection of the proposed wind farm to the national electricity grid which includes 5 no. of water crossings (3 no. bridges and 2 no. culverts). The provision of joint bays and associated communication chambers along the underground electrical cabling route via underground 38kV electrical cabling predominantly within the public road corridor, from the onsite substation in the townland of Piperstown to the existing Drybridge 110 kV Substation located in the townland of Tullyallen;
- Reinstatement of all road and track surfaces above cabling trench along existing roads and tracks in public lands;
- Provision of new Access Tracks and upgrade of existing site tracks to facilitate access to all onsite infrastructure this includes 3 no. water crossings, passing bays and all associated drainage;

- The provision of 2 no. new permanent site entrances for construction and operational access from the local road L6274 in the townlands of Kearneystown and Gallstown;
- The permanent realignment of 1 no. existing entrance for construction and operational access to the 38kV electrical substation compound from the local road L2275 in the townland of Piperstown;
- Use of 1 no. existing site entrance for construction, operational access to the permanent met mast on a private road off local road L2275 in the townland of Drumshallon.
- The construction of 1 no. new temporary track in the townland of Castletown at the R162 / L-6274-0 Junction to facilitate the delivery of the turbine components during construction. This track will be temporarily re-installed as required during the operational phase;
- 3 no. temporary construction compounds with associated temporary offices, staff facilities parking and security fencing in the townlands of Gallstown, Piperstown and Stonehouse;
- 1 no. permanent meteorological mast of c.36m in height, and associated foundation and hard-standing area in the townland of Drumshallon;
- The provision of 2 no. permanent spoil storage areas;
- Tree felling to facilitate the construction and operation of the Proposed Development;
- Operational stage site signage;
- All ancillary apparatus and site development works above and below ground, including soft and hard landscaping and drainage infrastructure.

A 10-year planning permission and 35-year operational life from the date of commissioning of the entire wind farm is being sought. However, part of the substation and all of the grid connection will be handed over to ESB networks to own and operate. As part of the national grid infrastructure, their life can extend beyond the life of the wind farm. Accordingly, permission is being sought for the grid connection and substation in perpetuity.

Decommissioning will include the removal of five wind turbines and above ground concrete plinths. It will also include removal of the Permanent Met Mast, all associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the wind farm substation (ducting is to remain in-situ). As stated above all other elements of the proposed development including the on-site substation will remain in-situ. The Access Tracks and associated drainage systems will serve ongoing forestry and agriculture activity in the area. All other hard surfaced areas will be allowed to revegetate naturally.

The area surrounding the Wind Farm Site contains approximately 64.5ha of commercial forestry, all of which is privately owned. Turbines T01 and T05 are surrounded by forestry. Therefore, tree felling will be required as part of the Proposed Development. To facilitate the construction of access tracks, civil works and turbine hardstands 9.41ha of forestry will need to be permanently clear-felled. The forestry areas comprise of Ash, Sycamore, Sitka spruce and Norway spruce. The felling area proposed is the minimum necessary to construct the Proposed Development and to comply with construction set back distances and environmental mitigation i.e. bat buffers. Felling will be licensed post-consent separately through a Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine felling licence.

Access to the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will be accessed via four site entrances to facilitate the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of development. Two of which will be new site entrances; one existing entrance will be realigned and upgraded for the substation and associated infrastructure. Another existing entrance will be used for the permanent met mast.

A new site entrance (No.1) will be constructed at the north-west of the site on the Local Road L-6274-0. Proposed works to this entrance consists of the removal of existing vegetation to achieve visibility splays. This entrance will facilitate the delivery of construction materials to the site and will remain in-situ for the operational stage of development.

A new site entrance (No.2) will be constructed at the north of the site on the Local Road L-6274-0. Proposed works to this entrance include the removal of hedgerow and existing vegetation to achieve visibility splays. This entrance will facilitate the delivery of construction materials to the site and will remain in-situ for the operational stage of development.

The Turbine Delivery Route and the Construction Haul Routes will utilise Site Entrances No.1 and No. 2 for the construction stage of development.

The existing site entrance (No.3) will be realigned and upgraded this site entrance is located at the east of the site on the Local Road L2275-24. Proposed works to this entrance will consist of the removal of existing vegetation to achieve visibility splays. This entrance will facilitate the delivery of construction materials to the site and will remain in-situ to facilitate access to the substation for the operational stage of development.

The existing site entrance (No.4) is located on a private road, off the Local Road L2275-24, to the east of the site. No road upgrades are envisioned. The proposed works to this entrance will be the removal of existing vegetation to achieve visibility splays. This entrance will facilitate the delivery of construction materials to the site and will remain in-situ to access the Permanent Met Mast during the operational stage of development.

Grid Connection

Underground cabling will link the turbine transformers to the Proposed Onsite Substation. The substation will connect via underground 38kV cable to the existing Drybridge 110kV substation. This will provide a connection point between the wind farm and the grid connection point at the existing Drybridge 110kV Substation. The overall length of the underground grid connection between the onsite substation and the existing Drybridge substation is 12.65km, of which 900m is within the Site. The remaining 11.75 km is located in the local road network.

Habitat Restoration

The Proposed Development includes a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) in support of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). This has three main objectives;

Objective no. 1

To preserve and enhance existing wetland habitat, rated as of National Importance, by removal of grazing and control of spread of gorse scrub to offset the loss of wet grassland, and to comply with Policy Objective NBG 20 of Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (to protect and enhance wetland sites that have been rated A (International), B (National), C+ (County), C and D importance in the Louth Wetlands Surveys and any subsequent version thereof).

Objective no. 2

To offset the loss of hedgerows by a tree and shrub planting programme.

Objective no. 3

To enhance habitat for bats and to offset loss of hedging and forest edge due to implementation of bat buffers at turbines.

**Wetland Habitat Enhancement; Objective no. 1.**

The Drumshallon Lough wetland complex is partially located within the Red Line but no infrastructure is located inside the wetland. The complex comprises lake, marginal swamp vegetation, wet woodland, wet grassland, marsh and transition mire. The transition mire is listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (Transition mires and quaking bog, code: 7140). At the Drumshallon site, the conservation status and the functionality of the transition mire is considered generally good, with occasional grazing/wallowing by cattle the main threat. This habitat has been avoided in the design process and will not be impacted by the project. The Biodiversity Enhancement and Management includes two management areas (A & B), with an area of 3.53ha. These will be made stockproof by the erection of suitable fencing where required. The control and removal of gorse from the management area A will be imposed as this will be beneficial for establishment of semi-natural grassland, which would be expected to be of a wet or neutral character and useful for insects and other wildlife.

**Hedgerow off setting and Bat Mitigation; Objectives no 2 and 3.**

The permanent loss of hedgerows to facilitate the Proposed Development will amount to an estimated 301m. An additional loss of 249m (maximum) will be lost as a result of the implementation of bat buffers at the turbines. With an average hedgerow width of 3m, this equates to 1,650m$^2$ (0.165 ha). The loss will be offset by the planting of 0.52ha of broadleaved woodland (which includes mitigation planting for bats). The plantings will include a mix of species ranging from oak to hazel and hawthorn, and, apart from some beech which is included specifically as mitigation for bats, will be native species of certified Irish genetic stock. Full details of the planting scheme and its implementation are given in the BEMP (**Appendix 6.1** of the EIAR).

This is in compliance with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026 and Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 policy objectives;

***SO 6;*** *Conserve and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services supporting the sustainable management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the County's protected habitats and species to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.*

***NBG 11:*** *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.*

***NBG 31:*** *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 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.*

Further details are outlined in **Appendix 6.1: Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP)** of the EIAR**.**

# 4 SECTION 4 PROJECT DESIGN PROCESS

## 4.1 Strategic Site Selection

**Chapter 3** of the EIAR assesses the Alternatives Considered for the Proposed Development. This includes the strategic site selection. The site identification process considered multiple criteria over a two-phase process to identify possible sites, within numerous counties, with the potential to accommodate a wind energy development.

The following is a summary of the methodology used in the screening process. The screening process included the following phases:

- Phase 1 – Screening
- Phase 2 – Proximity to National Grid

Phase 1 –Screening

This stage in the selection process sought to identify lands within Ireland, with the least likelihood of resulting in negative environmental effects in the long-term, and suitable for the development of the wind farm. On that basis, the following screening criteria was applied:

- Planning policy governing the site with specific regard to the local County Councils Wind Energy Strategy;
- Proximity to residential dwellings plus a setback distance from occupied dwellings of 4 x tip height from a turbine (i.e., 720m in this case)
- Access to existing transport corridors
- Proximity to110kV/220kV/400kV Electricity Transmission Corridors
- Proximity to watercourses/Waterbodies plus 50m buffer
- Natura 2000 and Nationally Designated Sites (SAC, SPA, NHA, pNHA)
- Existing wind farms developments and lands committed to permitted/proposed developments.
- Protection of sensitive landscapes and visual amenity.
- Protection of cultural/archaeological heritage;
- Sufficient areas of unconstrained land to accommodate a windfarm development.

The application of the above criteria to identify a site resulted in the selection of a candidate site located in Co. Louth, 8.3km north of Drogheda, as a candidate site to be brought forward for more detailed analysis. The site is now known as Kellystown Wind Farm. Other sites also emerged from the screening process, including sites in Co. Clare and Co. Carlow, separate planning applications and EIAs are underway at these sites.

## 4.2 Suitability of Candidate Site

Kellystown Wind Farm, as a candidate site, was further examined under the following headings in order to confirm its suitability for wind energy development.

- Wind Speeds
- Natura 2000 and Nationally Designated Sites including candidate Natural Heritage Areas cNHA (SAC, SPA, NHA, pNHA, cNHA).
- Available Set Back from Sensitive Receptors
- Residential Density
- Planning Policy
- Cumulative Developments (Kilsaran Quarry)

### Results of the Screening Process

The Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm site was identified for potential development following a detailed desktop screening appraisal, firstly at national level and then at regional and county level of all available sites which met the criteria referenced above. Following the screening exercise, the top-ranking sites were selected to progress with further detailed site-specific screening appraisals to determine initial feasibility for a planning application. The application of the above criteria to identify a site relevant to the project and its specific characteristics, resulted in the selection of a candidate site located in Co. Louth, 8.3km north of Drogheda, as a candidate site to be brought forward for more detailed analysis. The site is now known as the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm.

The Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm sits in an area with suitable unconstrained land and a high available wind resource. The Wind Farm Site is subject of two zoning designations, *"Open to Consideration"* and *"Preferred Areas"* for wind energy development according to Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations. The Wind Farm Site does not contain areas designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Area (SPA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The

Wind Farm Site is located entirely within the 'Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice' Landscape Character Area, which is designated as having Regional Importance. This designation is considered to have a medium level of sensitivity and is therefore considered to have the capacity to absorb development without significantly changing its character. A Cultural Heritage desktop analysis was undertaken during the screening process, and it was considered that the Proposed Development layout could be designed to avoid the locations of known and potential heritage receptors. The low population density allows for appropriate setback distance from residential dwellings. This set back distance minimises the potential disturbance to residential amenity which may be caused as a result of construction activities, as well as visual impacts, and noise during the operational phase.

A key consideration for the selection of the Wind Farm Site was the access to existing transport corridors. The major transport corridor of the M1 passes to the west of the site (within 2km). The N2 passes the site in a general north/south direction c. 7.7km to the west. The N51 passes through the southwest quadrant of the study area near Drogheda, in a southwest to northeast direction c. 6.9km away. The N33 connects the M1 to the N2 and is approximately 8km to the northwest of the site. The Regional Roads R132 and R170 pass the site in north/south and west/east directions at distances of c. 1.4km and 2.5km respectively. The nearest road to the site boundary is the L2275 local road which passes the site to the east at a distance of approximately 800m. Other unnamed local roads service the site as part of the local road network in the surrounding area. The connectivity of the subject site with the existing regional and national road network was considered to have the potential to contribute to avoiding significant and further reaching construction activities associated with the introduction of new roads infrastructure. It is considered that this has the potential to reduce impact upon the land, soils and local biodiversity.

Other sites that also emerged from the screening process, for which EDF are in the process of preparing separate planning applications are located in Co. Clare and Co. Carlow.

EDF intend to bring forward all these sites for wind energy development as all were considered to be viable sites for a wind energy development. Each are projects in their own right which will be subject to EIA. As such a description of the reasonable alternatives studied which are relevant to each project and its specific characteristics, together with an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen options with regards to their environmental impacts will be provided in the EIAR accompanying the applications for the same.

The alternative would be to bring forward a site that did not pass one or all of the above phases of the screening process. In that instance, there would be the potential for the construction and operation of a wind energy development to have an adverse effect on ecologically designated or sensitive areas and visually sensitive (scenic) or amenity areas. There would also be the potential for greater shadow flicker, noise and traffic impacts if the candidate site was located in an area in closer proximity to residential dwellings.



**Suitability of the Candidate Site**

Kellystown Wind Farm, as a candidate site, was further examined under the following headings in order to confirm its suitability for wind energy development:

- Wind Speeds
- Natura 2000 and Nationally Designated Sites (SAC, SPA, NHA, pNHA)
- Available Set Back from Sensitive Receptors
- Residential Density
- Planning Policy
- Cumulative Developments, including Kilsaran Quarry

**Wind Speeds**

The Irish Wind Atlas produced by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland shows average wind speeds for the country. A suitable wind regime and consistent wind speeds are required for the development of a wind energy project. Wind speeds in the northeast of the country are typically between (6.4m/sec at 30m, 7.90m/sec at 75m, 8.4m/sec at 100m and 9.2m/sec at 150m/s). While the wind resource of Ireland's northeast is lower than that of coastal and elevated regions, it is still very good in comparison with many parts of Europe. On-site monitoring of the wind resource, which is ongoing, will further verify that with a sufficient turbine height and blade diameter, the wind resource of the site is commercially viable.

**Designated Sites**

The Proposed Development site is not within or adjacent any areas designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Area (SPA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The Project is not located within any area designated for ecological protection. The nearest Natura 2000 site, i.e., SPA or SAC to the Project are The Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (Site Code: 001957), Boyne Estuary SPA (Site Code:004080), and the North-West Irish Sea SPA all at a distance of approximately 7.0 km. There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) within a 15 km radius of the Wind Farm Site. The closest NHA is the Skerries Islands NHA (Site Code: 001218), which is located approximately 28km southeast. There is a candidate

Natural Heritage Area (cNHA) Drumshallon Lough located within the Wind Farm Site. Candidate Natural Heritage Area is the name given to wildlife sites that are proposed by NPWS and by third parties for consideration as NHAs. Prior to designation these sites may require further detailed survey and evaluation for their conservation value. These sites have no legal protection until they are taken up into the formal NHA designation process. The Drumshallon Lough wetland system comprises the highest value ecological feature within the Study Area.

This was therefore considered as a key constraint and was carefully avoided when commencing the design stage of the Proposed Development.

**Residential Density**

The Applicant sought to identify an area with a relatively low population density. Having reviewed the settlement patterns in the vicinity, the study area has emerged as suitable to accommodate the Proposed Development. The surrounding area is largely rural with isolated residences and farmsteads and ribbon development throughout the area. The Wind Farm Site is located in the Electoral Divisions (EDs) of Mullary and Clogher (49.6km²). The population density of these EDS is;

- Clogher ED 68.8 persons per square kilometre
- Mullary ED 76.3 persons per square kilometre

The average population density across the whole of Ireland is 72 persons per square kilometre. Across County Louth the average population density per square kilometre is significantly higher than the national average at 169.6 persons per square kilometre Therefore, the EDs of Mullary and Clogher, where the Wind Farm Site and surrounds are located, have a relatively low population density in contrast to the County-wide population densities which are greater than 2 times that of the study area for the same period.

As detailed in **Chapter 2**, Section 2.4.1 of the EIAR, the proposed layout was designed to achieve an optimal separation distance between the dwellings and the proposed turbines, providing a minimum separation distance of 720m between turbines and the nearest dwellings. In accordance with Section 6.18.2 of the Draft 2019 Guidelines, 4 no. properties are owned by landowners involved with the Project and have agreed to a reduced setback distance with the Applicant. It is worth noting that the properties availing of the exception are all in excess of the mandatory minimum setback of 500 meters, with the closest dwelling located 552m from Turbine 05. The remaining 3 no. dwellings are setback in excess of 500m, with a setback of 563m, 686m and 689m from Turbine 02. This set back distance

minimises the potential disturbance to residential amenity which may be caused as a result of construction activities, as well as visual impacts, and noise during the operational phase. EDF are committed to ensuring that shadow flicker from the Proposed Development would not significantly impact the residential amenities of surrounding properties. As standard across all projects, EDF implement mitigation measures to cease operation of the turbines during periods of potential shadow flicker to ensure that no significant residual shadow flicker effects are experienced at any sensitive receptor within 10 rotor diameters of a turbine. In that regard, the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm will comply with the recommended limits of 30 hours per year and 30 minutes per day detailed within the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) and the zero shadow flicker policy as set out in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019).

Having reviewed the settlement patterns in the vicinity of the Wind Farm Site, and in particular considering that adequate set back distances to existing dwellings could be achieved, the Wind Farm Site emerged as suitable to accommodate the proposal. The low population density surrounding the Wind Farm Site provides a sufficient area of unconstrained land to accommodate a windfarm development allowing for a greater number of turbines to be constructed while maintaining appropriate setback distances from dwellings as set out in the Draft 2019 Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

**Planning Policy**

As detailed in **Chapter 4** of the EIAR, Planning Policy, there is a positive planning context for the Proposed Development as it supports national policy with regard to renewable energy provision and national renewable electricity targets. The Proposed Development is compliant with International, European and National policy on energy security, emissions reductions and renewable energy production. The Climate Action Plan 2024 sets out a detailed roadmap designed to increase the proportion of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030, including a target of 9 Gigawatts of onshore wind energy by 2030. The proposed pathway includes a more rapid build-out of renewable generation capacity, including wind power generation technologies. The proposed 5 no. wind turbines have an estimated maximum export capacity (MEC) of 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site, depending on the final turbine technology installed. It is considered that such development would contribute to achieving the Climate Action Plan's target of achieving 80% renewable electricity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030. The nature and export capacity of the proposed development accords with National Policy Objective 55 of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which seeks to 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.

At a regional level, the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly supports the delivery of renewable energy stating that "The Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region. This includes the use of wind energy – both onshore and offshore, biomass, and solar photovoltaics and solar thermal, both on buildings and at a larger scale on appropriate sites in accordance with National policy and the Regional Policy Objectives outlined in this Strategy". The nature of the Proposed Development is consistent with this objective.

At local level, the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 supports the development of Wind Energy projects in appropriate areas. The Louth County Development Plan 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 requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions with Objective S04 stating the following:

> "*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".*

The Proposed Development would therefore be integral to contributing to the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County in accordance with the policy objectives set out in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Proposed Development is subject of two zoning designations, "Open to Consideration" and "Preferred Areas" for wind energy development according to Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. According to Objective IU 58, the placement of wind farms and related infrastructure in "Preferred Areas" as specified on Map 10.1 will be encouraged, and the Council will 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." The

Wond Farm Site's designation as 'Preferred Areas' and 'Open to Consideration' for wind farm developments underlines its suitability for this type of project. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations.

In terms of landscape policy, the Wind Farm Site is located entirely within the 'Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice' Landscape Character Area, which is designated as having Regional Importance in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. This designation is considered to have a medium level of sensitivity and is therefore considered to have the capacity to absorb development without significantly changing its character. There are three designated views and prospects within the wider vicinity of the Wind Farm Site, Callystown to Clogherhead, Brownstown southwards over Areas of High Scenic Quality towards Drogheda, and Newtown Monasterboice towards Monasterboice Tower. Whilst these reflect the scenic opportunities presented in the wider area, it was noted that none of these views directly orientate towards the development, and two of the views orientate in the opposite direction from the site

To minimise visual intrusion, the development team applied the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) guidance on wind farms, which includes siting and design criteria for a number of different landscape types. The Wind Farm Site is located within a landscape setting that is consistent with the 'Hilly and Flat Farmland' landscape type according to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines. Therefore, the following criteria was applied when siting and designing the Proposed Kellystown Windfarm:

**Location:** the Proposed Development is located on a broad elevated plateau, which is preferred within the guidance, and is located at sufficient distance from surrounding properties such that they do not visually dominate them. Their elevated location also ensure that they do not contribute to visual clutter.

**Spatial Extent:** The Proposed Development has a relatively small spatial extent that responds to the scale of this landscape.

**Spacing:** The turbines are well spaced, allowing a high degree of visual permeability between the turbines. Their regular spacing corresponds with the scale of the underlying field pattern.

**Layout:** The staggered linear layout adopted is advocated for this landscape type.

**Height:** The turbines are considered to be consistent with the scale of this relatively elevated plateau landscape and responds to the scale of the surrounding agricultural and commercial forestry context. Importantly, the turbines do not appear over scaled

in relation to the topography of the receiving landscape and are in no instances considered to dominate.

**Cumulative effect:** Whilst the landscape contains other wind energy developments, where visible cumulatively, these are at such distances that the wind turbines are not perceived to visually dominate.

Having regard to the above, it was considered that the nature and export capacity of the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm was supported by national, regional and local policies and objectives regarding renewable wind energy. Regarding visual impact, it was considered that the proposed turbine structures, could be effectively integrated into the landscape character through adhering to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) guidance on siting and design.

**Cumulative Developments**

The location of proposed, permitted, and operational wind farm installations within a 20km radius of the Proposed Development were considered as part of the site selection process. There are a total of three wind farms within 20km radius of the Proposed Development, which collectively have a total of 6 turbines. Dunmore Wind Farm has a total of 4 turbines built in two stages (Part 1 & Part 2), whereas Collon Wind Farm and Meade Potato Company are both comprised of one turbine. The nearest operational wind farm is Dunmore Wind Farm (Part 1) which is located 11.4km to the west of the Wind Farm Site. Given that the Proposed Development will be one of four relatively small wind farm installations within the wider landscape and would be viewed in isolation due to the distances, it was considered that the Proposed Development would likely contribute to cumulative impacts in a minor way.

Kilsaran quarry, which operates adjacent to the Proposed Development was also considered as part of the site selection process. It was considered that the proximity of the turbines to this facility consolidates land use by facilitating compatible neighbouring industries to efficiently make use of the area. The proximity to the quarry will also reduce the construction phase impacts related to stone deliveries on the local road network. It is considered that the presence of the industrial scale quarry in proximity of the subject site creates a commercial context to the area and works towards assimilating the Proposed Development into the landscape.

An initial desktop study of the relationship between quarry blasting and wind farms found that wind turbines were robust structures and could withstand high levels of vibrations. This

was supported by a detailed Vibration and Air Overpressure Assessment (**13Chapter 13: Noise & Vibration -– Appendix 13.3**), which was undertaken to assess the impact of the quarry blasting on the Proposed Development. The assessment found there will be no impact from blasting at Kilaran quarry on the Proposed Development.

Phase 2 – Proximity to National Grid

As part of the site selection process, it was necessary to integrate the areas identified in the above steps with information regarding accessibility to electricity transmission and distribution grids. Details of the electricity transmission and distribution network are provided in SEAI's Wind Atlas for Ireland. In addition, transmission network details are available on EirGrid's Smart Grid Dashboard. This process establishes, at a general level, areas which have electricity grid infrastructure, including in terms of distance to potential connection nodes and the grid capacity at the nodes, to accommodate the connection.

EDF commissioned TLI Group to prepare a Grid Connection Feasibility Report to identify potential grid connection options between the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm site and Drybridge 110kV Substation. To support this study, a map series using publicly available GIS datasets to map the location of possible constraints within the study area was produced. A desktop analysis was carried out using the study area constraints map to identify potential grid routes between the Wind Farm Site and Drybridge 110kV Substation. The feasibility assessment of the identified routes was then complemented with a high-level site survey. For the purpose of the Feasibility Study, only underground cable (UGC) grid connection options were assessed. This is in accordance with the Draft Wind Energy Guidelines 2019, which states that *"underground grid connections for wind energy projects are the most appropriate environmental and/or engineering solution, particularly in sensitive landscapes where the visual impacts need to be minimised".*

The study demonstrated that Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm site was in proximity to the Drybridge 110kV Substation on the national transmission system, located c. 7.2km from the site entrance by public road. Capacity at the substation was examined, and potential routes were identified and assessed in order to determine a viable connection from the proposed Kellystown Wind Farm Site to the national grid. The study identified and assessed five potential route options from the wind farm site to the Drybridge 110kV Substation examining key technical and environmental constraints including:

- Challenging ground conditions;
- Existing infrastructure;

- Land use;
- Flood Risk;
- Watercourse crossings;
- Protected sites (SAC/NHA);
- Other known grid connection applications.

The preferred route identified in the study is the proposed grid connection route presented in the EIAR and included as part of the planning application for the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm.

### 4.2.1 Summary

From the review of the criteria set out above, which is heavily weighted towards minimising any potential negative environmental impacts, the Proposed Development site was identified as a suitable location for the provision of a wind farm development.

The site's designation as 'Preferred Areas' and 'Open to Consideration' for wind farm developments underlines its suitability for this type of project. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations. The low population density of the Wind Farm Site and surrounding area provides a sufficient area of unconstrained land to accommodate a windfarm development allowing for a greater number of turbines to be constructed while maintaining appropriate setback distances from dwellings as set out in the Draft 2019 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. This set back distance minimises the potential disturbance to residential amenity which may be caused as a result of construction activities, as well as visual impacts, and noise during the operational phase.

The Wind Farm Site is located on agricultural land, which allows the Proposed Development to utilise existing access roads (which will be upgraded) and highlights the suitability of the Proposed Development site as it can make sustainable use of these established items of infrastructure potentially reducing the impact upon the land, soils and local biodiversity.

The Proposed Development site is not within or adjacent any areas designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Area (SPA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The proximity of the turbines to Kilsaran quarry consolidates land use by facilitating compatible neighbouring industries to efficiently make use of the area. The wind farm also

has reasonable access to the National Electricity Grid which is located a viable distance from the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm site.

Once the current candidate site emerged as a suitable location, the Applicant approached the landowners in order to assemble the site for the Proposed Development. Arising from the site assembly discussions and environmental considerations the current site layout was identified and brought forward as being capable of accommodating a cohesive viable area of sufficient size to cater for the Proposed Development.



## 4.3 Detailed Constraints Mapping

The design and layout of the Development follows the recommendations and industry guidelines set out in the 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006), 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry' (Irish Wind Energy Association, 2012) and is compliant with the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, December 2019 to the extent that the draft guidelines represent best practice. The draft guidelines are not considered to be best practice in relation to noise recommendations as explained in detail in **Chapter 13** of the EIAR. The layout and design were an iterative process which followed the constraints-led design approach.

The constraints-led design approach consists of the identification of environmental sensitivities within the Wind Farm Site by the design team with a view to identifying suitable areas in which wind turbines may be located. The resulting area is known as the 'Developable Area'. The constraints identification process included the gathering of information through detailed desk-based assessments, field surveys and consultation. Sensitive receptors were mapped, and the design constraints were applied. Appropriate buffers were applied to clearly identify the areas not suitable for development.

The following constraints and associated buffers were considered:

- 4 x tip height separation distance from residential properties
- Operator specific buffer from existing Telecommunication Links
- 10 to 50m buffer of Watercourses
- 20m buffer from Archaeological Sites or Monuments
- Avoidance of designated sites

- Proximity to Kilsaran Quarry
- Existing access points and general accessibility of all areas of the Wind Farm Site due to existing road infrastructure
- Avoidance of environmental constraints identified from desk top studies

The inclusion of the constraints on a map of the study area allowed for a viable developable area to be identified. As technical assessments progressed during the EIA process, additional constraints were added and the layout amended accordingly, this included habitat mapping, hydrological and geotechnical investigations, peat stability analysis and identification of watercourses, groundwater constraints, flood risk and wells.

### 4.4 Turbine Layout Iterations

The development of the final proposed wind farm layout has resulted following feedback from the various studies and assessments carried out as well as ongoing negotiations and discussions with landowners and the local community. As the design of the wind farm layout progressed and as the constraints mapping evolved, four turbine layout iterations were considered. These are outlined in **Chapter 3 alternatives**. The specific locations of the various turbines were reviewed during the optimisation of the Wind Farm Site layout. The final layout was chosen due to its reduced impacts on bats, increased set back to watercourses and wetlands helping to protect the biodiversity of these areas, reduced impact on bird populations, and an increased set back from the neighbouring quarry, which reduced cumulative noise impacts.

## 5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This section outlines the need for the Proposed Development based on international, National and regional policy and guidance and an assessment of the need to implement legally binding national climate change targets by encouraging appropriate renewable energy development throughout Ireland.

### 5.1 The Climate Emergency

In April 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): made up of scientists from around the world, which provides regular assessments on the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, released their AR6 report[2]. The report shows the widespread, dangerous disruptions caused by climate change in nature and shows how billions of people's lives are being impacted. It outlines how countries are falling behind on

[2]IPCC. (2022) AR6. https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/ Accessed 16/09/2024

policies and actions needed to limit global temperature increases and achieve net zero emissions. Reducing carbon emissions by phasing out fossil fuels is stated as being urgently needed. Throughout the report, renewable energy such as wind is highlighted as an adaptation to displace fossils fuels, and so reduce emissions and mitigate climate effects. Renewable energy is also credited with benefits such as improving air quality, reducing the cost of electricity, improving wealth and development and increasing energy security.

The Environmental Protection Agency[3] highlights that human activity has led to widespread and rapid changes in all components of the global climate system with recent extreme events in Ireland highlighting the vulnerability of individuals, communities, sectors and ecosystems to climate change and indicate an adaptation deficit.

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, 2023 and 2024. The Climate Action Plan 2024 reflects the accepted wisdom that decisive and urgent action is required to arrest the acceleration of greenhouse gas emissions within the limited window of opportunity that remains. The Plan includes a commitment to make Ireland 100% carbon neutral by 2050. It includes increased renewable electricity targets and reduction in reliance of fossil fuels and supporting the growth of private electric vehicles and meeting 80% of electricity demand, from renewable sources, all by 2030. Among the most important measures in the CAP2024 is a target of 9GW from onshore wind, by 2030. In 2023, installed onshore wind capacity in Ireland reached 4.78GW[4]. This leaves a short fall of 4.2GW to be achieved in 7 years.

Therefore, in light of the climate emergency and legally binding targets related to emissions reductions there is a clear necessity, and it is of urgent national importance to increase the amount of energy from renewable sources, especially onshore wind, which is capable of being deployed in the near term. The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5-36MW towards these targets, helping to mitigate the effects of the climate emergency.

[3] EPA (2024). Ireland's Climate Change Assessment Synthesis Report https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/irelands-climate-change-assessment-synthesis-report.php
[4] Statista (2023). Onshore wind energy capacity in Ireland 2008-2023. Available here Accessed 18/9/2024.

## 5.2 International Policy Context

International energy policy is based on the demand to battle climate change and reduce carbon dioxide ($CO_2$) emissions and, therefore, is relevant to renewable energy development.

### 5.2.1 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC)[5] 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 other greenhouse gases. The convention enjoys near universal membership, with 197 countries listed as being Parties to the Convention.

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, which will displace heavily polluting fossil fuels, is in line with the UNFCC in relation to emissions reductions.

### 5.2.2 The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol came into effect in 2005, as a result of which, emissions reduction targets agreed by developed countries, including Ireland, are now binding. 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.

In Doha, Qatar, on 8 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.

[5] The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992). http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf Accessed 19/09/2024

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.

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, which will displace heavily polluting fossil fuels, is in line the Kyoto Protocol and the Doha Amendment in relation to emissions reductions.

### 5.2.3 The Paris Agreement

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. On 5 October 2016, the threshold for entry into force of the Paris Agreement was achieved. Ireland is legally bound by Article 7 of the United Nations COP21 Paris Agreement[10], signed in December 2015, to prepare and submit periodic updates on its national adaptation and mitigation plans in the global effort to keep global warming below 1.5°C. (See section 5.4; National Policy).

Out of 196 Parties that have ratified the Paris Agreement, 90% mentioned renewables and roughly 70% included quantifiable energy targets in their initial Nationally Determined Contributions. However, a report by the International Energy Agency [6] 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), in a report[7] on the Nationally Determined Contributions relating to renewable energy also note that even with the renewable energy pledges in the 2021 Paris agreement the 1.5ºC goal will still be exceeded before the end of the century.

[6] IEA. (2021) Renewables 2021 https://www.iea.org/reports/renewables-2021 Accessed 16/09/2024
[7] IRENA. (2021) https://www.irena.org/-/media/Files/IRENA/Agency/Publication/2022/Jan/IRENA_NDCs_RE_Targets_2022.pdf Accessed 16/09/2024

Ireland is one of the 196 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, by producing renewable energy, which will displace heavily polluting fossil fuels, is in line with the Paris Agreement in relation to emissions reductions to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

## 5.3 European Policy Context

The European Union's (EU) energy policy is based on the principles of decarbonisation, competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability. Its objectives include ensuring the functioning of the energy market and a secure energy supply within the EU, as well as promoting energy efficiency and savings, the development of renewable energies and the interconnection of energy networks[8].

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 economy[9].

In line with this broad outline of European Policy, the Proposed Development by producing additional renewable energy to the Irish electric system, contributes to secure energy supplies. The provision of energy storage also improves the reliability of the supply. The generation of renewable energy also helps to lower Irelands dependency on fossil fuels.

### 5.3.1 Renewable Energy Directive

The EU enacted the Renewable Energy Directive 2009/28/EC[6], revised in 2018[11] and again[10] in 2023, to make the EU a global leader in renewable energy set binding renewable energy targets. Subsequently, in 2015, the EU set itself a long-term goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The European Commission recently published guidance[11] for EU Member States adopting domestic measures to scale up their renewable energy deployment. The guidance, published on 2 September 2024, relates to the third revised Renewable Energy Directive (2023/2413/EU), commonly known as RED III. The Directive entered into force in November 2023 and, according to the guidance, is intended to expedite the EU's green transition and

[8] Euopean Parliament. Energy policy: general principles. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/68/energy-policy-general-principles. Accessed 06/11/2024.
[9] European Commission. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/climate-strategies-targets/2050-long-term-strategy_en Accessed 30/04/2024
[10] European Commission. (2023). Renewable Energy Directive https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en
[11] Renewable Energy Directive. (2024). https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/renewable-energy/renewable-energy-directive-targets-and-rules/renewable-energy-directive_en#recommendations-and-guidance-notes

energy independence following the outbreak of conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2022. RED III sets an EU-wide target of 42.5% renewable energy consumption by 2030, which stands as a significant increase relative to the equivalent 32% target under RED II. The Proposed Development is in compliance with the Renewable energy Directive as it will contribute additional renewable energy to the target of 42.5% renewable energy consumption by 2030.

Most notably, RED III sets out that Member States must speed up and simplify renewable infrastructure permitting procedures by ensuring that procedures for granting permits to build, repower and/or operate energy assets do not exceed certain timelines, depending on the asset type, size and location. We expect that this will accordingly speed up development and transaction timelines.

Member States were required, no later than 21 February 2024, to give effect to a legal presumption that renewable energy plants are in the "overriding public interest" when balancing legal interests in individual cases for the purposes of certain environmental assessments, including in particular Article 6(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, the 'Habitats Directive.' The Proposed Development does not give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites so no derogation under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive is required. This balancing of legal interests under RED III is therefore not applicable to the Proposed Development. However, the identification of renewable energy development, such as the Proposed Development, as being in the 'overriding public interest' when balancing certain legal interests is evidence of the importance placed on projects of this nature at EU level.

### 5.3.2 REPowerEU plan

In May 2022, the commission published The REPowerEU Plan[12] which puts forwards a set of actions to:

- Save energy;
- Diversify supplies;
- Quickly substitute fossil fuels by accelerating Europe's clean energy transition;
- Smartly combine investments and reforms.

It notes that:

[12]European Commission. (2022) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:fc930f14-d7ae-11ec-a95f-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF Accessed 16/09/2024

"*Slow and complex permitting processes are a key obstacle to unleashing the renewables revolution and for the competitiveness of the renewable energy industry*"

The REPowerEU plan also includes an amendment to the Renewable Energy Directive[13] stating: *"Lengthy administrative procedures are one of the key barriers for investments in renewables and their related infrastructure. These barriers include the complexity of the applicable rules for site selection and administrative authorisations for projects, the complexity and duration of the assessment of the environmental impacts of the projects, grid connection issues, constraints on adapting technology specifications during the permit-granting procedure, or staffing issues of the permit-granting authorities or grid operators. In order to accelerate the pace of deployment of renewable energy projects it is necessary to adopt rules which would simplify and shorten permit-granting processes."*

In 2021 the EU reached a 22.8%[14] share of its gross final energy consumption from renewable sources which leaves a long way to go to reach this increased target.

In accordance with the REPowerEU Communication in May 2022, the Commission published a recommendation[15] 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 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*

[13] European Commission. (2022) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0222&from=EN Accessed 16/09/2024
[14] 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 18/09/2024
[15] EU. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=PI_COM:C(2022)3219&from=EN Accessed 18/09/2024

***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."*

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, is in line with the REPowerEU Plan, helping the EU to secure energy supplies, reach the increased renewable energy target and assisting in the clean energy transition.

### 5.3.3 Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 as amended by Regulation (EU) 2024/223

On 22nd December 2022 Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2577 laying down a framework to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy was published. It outlines that renewable energy plants, including wind energy, are crucial to fight climate change and pollution, reduce energy prices, decrease the Union's dependence on fossil fuels and ensure the Union's security of supply. The aim of the regulation is to eliminate bottlenecks in new permitting procedures. It notes that considering renewable energy projects as being presumed of overriding public interest and serving public health and safety would allow new projects to benefit from a simplified assessment for specific derogations foreseen in the relevant Union environmental legislation with immediate effect.

It states:

"*A fast deployment of renewable energy sources can help to mitigate the effects of the current energy crisis, by forming a defence against Russia's actions. Renewable energy can significantly contribute to counter Russia's weaponisation of energy by strengthening the Union's security of supply, reducing volatility in the market and lowering energy prices*."

This regulation was amended by Council Regulation (EU) 2024/223 to extend the period of its application to 30 June 2025.

The Renewable Energy Directive target increase, and the use of "over riding public interest" in this regulation underlines the vital nature of investments into new renewable energy developments, such as the Proposed Development Regulation 2022/2577 as amended by Regulation (EU) 2024/223 signals a broad support at the EU level to accelerate the deployment of renewable energy sources.

### 5.3.4 European Green Deal and European Climate Law

The European Green Deal (presented in 2019) is a package of policy initiatives, which aims to set the EU on the path to a green transition, with the ultimate goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. It supports the transformation of the EU into a fair and prosperous society with a modern and competitive economy. The European Green Deal will transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, ensuring:

- no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050
- economic growth decoupled from resource use
- no person and no place left behind

It focuses on 3 key principles for the clean energy transition, which will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance the quality of life of our citizens:

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

The European Climate Law writes into law the goal set out in the European Green Deal for Europe's economy and society to become climate-neutral by 2050[16]. The law also sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, is in line with the European Green Deal and European Climate Law, helping the EU to reach the goal of no net emissions by 2050. The provision of energy storage also assists in maximising the energy output of the wind farm, improving its energy efficiency.

[16] European Commission. European Climate Law. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/european-climate-law_en. Accessed 06/11/2024.

## 5.4 National Policy Context

The EU Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action Regulation 2018/1999 came into force when it was published in the Official Journal of the EU 11 December 2018. It requires Member States to develop integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) to cover:

1. Security, Solidarity and Trust – Working closely with Member States to diversify Europe's sources of energy and ensure energy security.
2. A fully-integrated internal energy market – Energy should flow freely across the EU, without technical or regulatory barriers. This would enable energy providers to compete freely and promote renewable energy while providing the best energy prices.
3. Energy Efficiency – Improving energy efficiency to reduce the EU's dependence on energy imports, cut emissions and drive jobs and growth.
4. Climate Action – Putting in place policies and legislation to cut emissions, moving towards a low-carbon economy and fulfilling the EU's commitments to the Paris Agreement on climate change.
5. Research, Innovation and Competitiveness – Supporting research and innovation in low-carbon and clean energy technologies which can boost the EU's competitiveness.

Ireland's NECP is discussed in Section 5.4.6.

### 5.4.1 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 commits Ireland to reach a legally binding target of net-zero greenhouse gas 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 our national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.

The Act includes the following key elements:

- 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.
- Embeds the process of carbon budgeting into law, Government are required to adopt a series of economy-wide five-year carbon budgets, including sectoral targets for each relevant sector, on a rolling 15-year basis, starting in 2021.

- Actions for each sector will be detailed in the Climate Action Plan, updated annually.
- A National Long Term Climate Action Strategy will be prepared every five years.

The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5-36MW and will contribute towards Ireland's legally binding targets in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 51% by 2030.

### 5.4.2 The Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024[17] (CAP2024) sets out Ireland's ongoing, urgent response to the climate crisis and outlines actions to cut emissions by 75% by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050. It outlines a massive scaling up in the switch to renewable energy. The critical nature of the climate change challenge is identified in the plan as are the extensive direct and indirect threats of harm to Ireland and its people. Reducing GHGs to mitigate climate change is a key point, reiterated throughout the plan. It states that Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions fell by 1.9% in 2022 compared to 2021 but that this reduction falls short of the level of abatement required to meet national and international targets.

In the plan, the goal in the electricity sector is to make Ireland less dependent on imported fossil fuels and the plan highlights the need to remove barriers to the development of renewables, including onshore wind. The plan notes that the war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the cost and security of our energy supply. This underlines the importance of Ireland eliminating dependency on fossil fuels and that an increase in renewable energy generation, along with supporting flexibility and demand management measures, is necessary for our future energy security. To achieve this, energy needs to be decarbonised by harnessing renewable resources, particularly wind, solar PV and biomass.

The targets set out in the CAP2024 envisages a step-up of our existing targets to meet the required level of emissions reduction by 2030, including:

- Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 80%
- Complete the phase-out of coal and peat-fired electricity generation
- 75% reduction in overall green-house gas emissions
- Increase onshore wind to 9GW

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

[17]Government of Ireland. (2024). Climate Action Plan 2024 https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/79659-climate-action-plan-2024/ accessed 29/04/2024

electrification of other technologies. The plan notes that the transition away from fossil fuels and towards locally generated renewables will improve energy security and reduce Ireland's dependence on imported energy.

The CAP2024 notes that increased renewable electricity generation will play an important role in the decarbonisation of other sectors through electrification, including transport, heating, and industry. It underlines that the transition away from fossil fuels and towards locally generated renewables will improve energy security and Irelands dependence on imported energy. The plan has measures to accelerate renewable electricity generation, this includes:

*"Ensure that renewable energy generation projects and associated infrastructure are considered to be in the overriding public interest".*

These measures are in line with the REPowerEU plan and highlight the urgent need for additional renewable energy developments to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels, especially in light of the war in Ukraine and climate crisis.

One of the 'Key Metrics to Deliver Abatement in Electricity' is to accelerate flexibility. This includes the 2025 KPIs of;

- Maximum level of renewables at any one time on the grid.
- 85% Dispatch down (excluding surplus generation) of renewables below 7%.
- Minimise surplus generation Required long term storage (4 hour plus) in place.

By collocating energy storage (BESS) with the wind farm, the Proposed Development contributes to achieving these KPIs.

The plan notes that the deployment of renewables needs to outpace the growth in energy demand for it to deliver the absolute reductions in GHG emissions required. The demand for electricity in Ireland is predicted to grow by 19-50% in the next decade. Renewables accounted for 38.9% of electricity generated in 2022[18], this needs to increase to 80% by 2030 to achieve the national target.

Therefore, there is a clear necessity of urgent national importance to increase the amount of energy from renewable sources.

[18] SEAI. (2023). Energy in Ireland 2023. https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-publications/energy-in-ireland/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIw_qE4JrnhQMVx5BQBh1W9wZdEAAYASAAEgIt8fD_BwE

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".*

Among the most important measures in the plan is a target of 9GW from onshore wind by 2030. In Dec 2023 Ireland's total onshore wind generation capacity was 4.8GW[19], leaving a shortfall of 4.2GW to be achieved in 7 years. The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable wind energy to contribute to these targets and reduce the shortfall.

The Plan 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 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. In the EIAR submitted with this Planning Statement, **Chapter 3** assesses the Alternatives to the Proposed Development. This includes the Do-Nothing scenario in which the Project's contribution to EU and National renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction targets would be lost, which in light of the climate emergency and energy security concerns is not a reasonable alternative to the deployment of renewable energy.

The plan identifies that increasing renewable energy will directly reduce emissions but also help with the electrification of other sectors stating;

*"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*

[19]Statista. (2024). Onshore wind energy capacity in Ireland 2008-2023 https://www.statista.com/statistics/868474/onshore-wind-energy-capacity-in-ireland/

*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".*



The Proposed Development will help to meet this increased demand and achieve these additional emissions savings. 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. Section 12.1.3 of the CAP2024 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".*

Further measures include policies to increase energy storage to provide for smoothing of electricity supply and demand between times of high variable renewable production and low variable renewable production. As part of the measures to accelerate flexibility in the electricity section, the CAP2024 includes developing a policy framework for electricity storage based on electricity system needs. The Proposed Development includes a Battery Energy Storage System which will assist in maximising the exploitation of the renewable energy resource of the area and minimising curtailment of the wind farm when the grid cannot accept the energy.

The Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities is a key action in the Climate action Plan, it commits local authorities to actions that will ensure that they play a key leadership role locally and nationally in delivering effective climate action. These actions include that in so far as is practicable local authorities will put in place practicable, measures which reduce our carbon emissions in line with national objectives. It includes a commitment to ensure policies and practices at local government level lead the county towards low carbon pathways and put in place a process for carbon proofing major decisions, programmes and projects on a systematic basis, including investments in transport and energy infrastructure moving over time to a near zero carbon investment strategy.

The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5-36MW and supports the target of doubling of onshore wind energy generation in Ireland by

2030 and contributes to the nation's target increase of renewable electricity from 30% to 80% by 2030 as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024.



### 5.4.3 National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the overarching policy and planning strategy for the social, economic and cultural development of Ireland. The framework aims to promote a more environmentally focussed planning system at a local level. It states;

*'The future planning and development of our communities at local level will be refocused to tackle Ireland's higher than average carbon-intensity per capita and enable a national transition to a competitive low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050, through harnessing our country's* ***prodigious renewable energy potential.'***

One of the national strategic outcomes in the NPF is '*Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society'.* The NFP notes that 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. It highlights that new energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables-focused energy generation system. It notes that this will assist in harnessing the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar. It notes that accelerating climate action is a key national environmental challenge. Renewable energy is credited as being a key part of the transition to a low carbon energy future.

The relevant policies for consideration in the National Planning Framework (NFP) are set out below;

**National Policy Objective 15**

**Support the sustainable development of rural areas by encouraging growth and arresting decline in areas that have experienced low population growth or decline in recent decades and by managing the growth of areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.**

And

**National Policy Objective 21**

**Enhance the competitiveness of rural areas by supporting innovation in rural economic development and enterprise through the diversification of the rural**

**economy into new sectors and services, including ICT-based industries and those addressing climate change and sustainability**

And

**National Policy Objective 23**

**Facilitate the development of the rural economy through supporting a sustainable and economically efficient agricultural and food sector, together with forestry, fishing and aquaculture, energy and extractive industries, the bio-economy and diversification into alternative on-farm and off-farm activities, while at the same time noting the importance of maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.**

In the Louth County Development, the Wind Farm Site is in an area identified as Rural Policy Zone 2, described as; 'Area under strong urban influence'. The Proposed Development is a renewable energy project, located in a rural area. During the operational phase, agriculture and forestry land uses can continue, helping to diversify the land and support the local economy in a sustainable manner. Renewable energy projects, such as the Proposed Development can stimulate economic growth, create jobs and bring benefits to communities through Community Development Funds and commercial rates.

**National Policy Objective 52**

**The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.**

The Project has been subject to EIA and NIS. The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.

**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 54 has been fulfilled by the establishment of national, regional and local policy to facilitate renewables. By demonstrating accordance with these policies, the Proposed Development will contribute to the achievement of this national policy objective.

**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 is a renewable energy Project and falls within two wind energy designation zones labelled 'Preferred' and "Open to Consideration" in the Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027. The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided in line with National Policy Objective 55 of the NFP. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.

**National Policy Objective 64**

**Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.**

**Chapter 18; Air and Climate** in the EIAR concludes that during the operational phase of the Proposed Development the effects on air quality are assessed as being slight, positive and long-term in nature due to the displacement of heavily polluting fossil fuels through the provision of renewable energy.

The Proposed Development is compliant with the vision of the National Planning Framework to transition to a low carbon and sustainable economy, especially those policy objectives relating to climate action and renewable energy; National Policy Objectives 54 and 55. It is also compliant with objectives relating to rural diversification and economic

development; National Policy Objectives 15, 21 and 23, and those regarding environmental protection and improving air quality; National Policy Objectives 52 and 64.

### 5.4.4 Draft National Planning Framework

Government has agreed to the publication of a draft first revision of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The public consultation for the draft plan closed on 12th September 2024. Although still in draft form, this Planning Statement includes an analysis of the Proposed Development against the proposed draft NPF. This analysis is included to assist the local planning authority in the event that the draft NPF is adopted prior to the determination of the application for the Proposed Development. However, the Developer notes that it is the current NPF that should from the basis of the authority's decision until such a time as the draft NPF is formally adopted.

The draft plan has a much greater focus on climate action and environmental protection which is relevant to the Proposed Development.

In the energy sector, the draft plan emphasises that transition to a zero carbon economy from renewable sources of energy is an integral part of Ireland's climate change strategy and that the government supports the accelerated delivery of additional renewable electricity generation. Renewable energies are highlighted as a means of improving Ireland's energy security by reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and diversifying its electricity supply.

The draft plan notes that renewable energy generation in rural areas (such as the Proposed Development location) enables carbon emission reductions, land-use diversification and helps to meet electricity demand.

The draft plan credits renewable energy with stimulating economic growth and job creation, as well as bringing benefits to communities through Community Development Funds and commercial rates. If consented, the Proposed Development would provide a community fund calculated in accordance with the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) Terms and Conditions at €2 per MWh of electricity produced by the project. This is to be made available to the local community for the duration of the RESS (15 years).

The draft plan includes the following Policy Objectives relevant to the Proposed Development;

**National Policy Objective 1**

**Ensure that all plans, projects and activities requiring consent arising from the National Planning Framework are subject to the relevant environmental assessment requirements including SEA, EIA, SFRA and AA, as appropriate.**

**The Project has been subject to EIA and AA/NIS.**

**National Policy Objective 70**

**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 as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets.**

The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5-36MW of renewable wind energy, this combined with providing battery storage to maximise the use of the renewable resource of the Wind Farm Site contributes towards the national target of a zero carbon and climate resilient Ireland by 2050 by displacing greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels and reducing Ireland's carbon footprint.

**National Policy Objective 71**

**Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a zero carbon economy by 2050**.

The Proposed Development is a renewable energy project located in two wind energy designation zones labelled 'Preferred' and "Open to Consideration" in the Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027. The Proposed Development has also been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.

**National Policy Objective 72**

**Support the development and upgrading of the national electricity grid infrastructure, including to support the delivery of renewable electricity generating development.**

The Proposed Development will contribute directly and in the long-term to the national electricity grid infrastructure by strengthening it through the addition of electrical transmission infrastructure and through renewable energy generation.

**National Policy Objective 74**

**Support the co-location of renewable technologies with other supporting technologies and complementary land uses, including agriculture, amenity, forestry and opportunities to enhance biodiversity and promote heritage assets, at appropriate locations which are determined based upon the best available scientific evidence in line with EU and national legislative frameworks**

The Proposed Development includes a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with up to 10MW of storage capacity co-located with the Wind Farm. BESS facilities provide a means of allowing electricity from the grid to be imported and stored at times of low demand / high generation, which can then be exported back into the grid at times of higher demand / system stress. Battery storage provides the National Grid with balancing services to help accommodate the increasing level of variable renewable energy generation. Agricultural grazing and forestry (outside of biodiversity buffer zones) can also continue at the Wind Farm Site and in the surrounds. Combined, this maximises the land use by diversification and allows the Proposed Development to efficiently exploit the renewable energy resource potential of the area. The Wind Farm Site is in a rural area, adjacent to the industrial scale Kilsaran quarry. The proximity of the turbines to this facility consolidates land use by facilitating compatible neighbouring industries to efficiently make use of the area. It has existing tracks that can be utilised, reducing the material requirement of the Project.

**National Policy Objective 75**

**Each Regional Assembly must plan, through their Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, for the delivery of the regional renewable electricity capacity allocations indicated for onshore wind and solar reflected in Table 9.1 below, and identify allocations for each of the local authorities, based on the best available scientific evidence and in accordance with legislative requirements, in order to meet the overall national target.**

**And**

**National Policy Objective 76**

**Local Authorities shall plan for the delivery of Target Power Capacity (MW) allocations consistent with the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, through their City and County Development Plans.**

Table 9.1 in the draft plan identifies that the Eastern and Midlands Region, the region relevant to the Proposed Development, had an energised capacity of 284MW of onshore wind in 2023, and a target of 1,966MW, 25% of national share by 2030. This leaves a remaining balance of 1,682MW to be installed in 7 years. The Proposed Development, with an anticipated capacity to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity, would contribute between 1.9% and 2.3% of this outstanding on shore wind targeted to the region.

The Louth County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 includes an objective to produce a Renewable Energy Strategy for County Louth within one year of adoption of the Revised Wind Energy Guidelines but does not yet include a specific target in relation to renewable energy capacity increases. It does include Policy Objective IU 58;

'*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'.'*

The Wind Farm Site falls within two wind energy designation zones; 'Preferred' and "Open to Consideration". The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.

**National Policy Objective 84**

**In line with the National Biodiversity Action Plan; the conservation, enhancement, mitigation and restoration of biodiversity is to be supported by:**

- **Integrating policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity, including the avoidance and/or minimisation of potential biodiversity impacts, in statutory landuse plan.**
- **Retention of existing habitats which are currently important for maintaining biodiversity (at local/regional/national/international levels), in the first instance, is preferable to replacement/restoration of habitats, in the interests of ensuring continuity of habitat provision and reduction of associated risks and costs.**

The design and layout of the Proposed Development follows the recommendations and industry guidelines set out in the 'Wind Energy Development Guidelines' (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2006), 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry' (Irish Wind Energy Association, 2012) and has taken cognisance of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019. The layout and design were an iterative process which followed the constraints-led design approach. The constraints identification process included the gathering of information through detailed desk-based assessments, field surveys and consultation. The ecological assessments of the Wind Farm Site encompassed habitat mapping and extensive surveying of birds and other fauna. Sensitive ecological receptors were mapped, and the design constraints were applied including avoidance of isolated pockets of peat, treelines and hedgerows and other sensitive habitats and setbacks to watercourses. This process has ensured that existing habitats are retained in line with Policy Objective 84. In addition, a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) has been prepared for the Proposed Development. The BEMP area comprises: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.52ha). The BEMP is outlined in Section 6.8 of **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1** of the EIAR.

**National Policy Objective 90**

**Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green and blue infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.**

**Chapter 18; Air and Climate** in the EIAR concludes that during the operational phase of the Proposed Development the effects on air quality are assessed as being slight, positive and long-term in nature due to the displacement of heavily polluting fossil fuels through the provision of renewable energy.

#### *5.4.4.1 Overall conclusions on Draft NPF*

This Planning Statement has provided analysis of the Proposed Development against the Draft National Planning Framework in case it is adopted prior to determination stage. The Proposed Development makes a contribution to a significant number of policy objectives in

the draft plan, especially relevant are 71, 72, 74, 75 and 76 in relation to renewable energy and electrical infrastructure and policy objectives 70, 90 in relation to reducing Ireland carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. The Proposed Development contributes to policy objective 31 and 33 in relation to the rural economy and regional growth and 69 in relation to electrification. The Proposed Development is in compliance with policy objectives 67, 79, 84, 87 in relation to environmental protection and biodiversity enhancement and policy objective 91 regarding the protection of population and human health including noise.

### 5.4.5 National Energy Security Framework

An Energy Security Emergency Group was established in April 2022 to coordinate and oversee Ireland's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This group, chaired by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, has overseen the development of a new National Energy Security Framework in April 2022. 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 in order to address the urgent need to secure Irelands energy supply.

It is focused 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. 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.

Ireland has one of the highest rates of importing fuel in Europe with imported dependency increasing to 81.6% in 2022 according to the SEAI[20]. Electricity demand in Ireland has

[20] SEAI. (2023). ENERGY IN IRELAND. Available here Accessed 26/10/2024

significantly increased in the past decade. This is mainly attributed to increases from large energy users. In the commercial services sector, since 2012, electricity demand increased by 61.5%, the subsector of information & communication has seen the largest increase in this period of 562%[21]. Electricity demand is expected to grow by 37% to 2031[22]. Residential electricity prices in Ireland have seen an average increase of 10.4% and business electricity prices an increase of 43.9% between 2021 and 2022[23]. Increases to the cost of carbon, supply issues and potential political insecurity increases fossil fuel price volatility.

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

The high rate of imported fossil fuel dependency and the increasing demand for electricity make it vital to introduce more domestic renewable energy generation plants, such as the Kellystown Wind Farm to provide reliable, secure and affordable energy supplies in Ireland. The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, and is in line with the National energy Security framework, helping to improve energy security. The provision of energy storage also assists in maximising the energy output of the wind farm, improving its contribution.

### 5.4.6 National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030

The National Energy and Climate Plan[24] (NECP) 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 is required to be updated every two years an updated version was released on 29th July 2024.

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, and
5) Research, innovation and competitiveness.

[21] SEAI (2023). Online available here Accessed 26/10/2024
[22] 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 19/09/2024
[23] SEAI. (2022). Energy in Ireland https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2022.pdf Accessed 18/09/2024
[24] Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. (2024). National Energy and Climate Plan https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a856a-national-energy-and-climate-plan-necp-2021-2030/#:~:text=National%20Energy%20and%20Climate%20Plans,the%20Governance%20of%20the%20Energy Accessed 06/11/24

The plan notes that Ireland has excellent renewable energy resources, it credits renewable energy with increasing sustainability through the use of clean power sources and enhancing energy security by reducing Ireland's dependence on imported fuels.

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 this target has been increased 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.
- 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.

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, is in line with the NECP, this helps to meet the plan objectives of reducing GHG emissions, improving energy security, phasing out fossil fuels and renewable energy targets, including increasing onshore wind capacity by up to 8.2 GW (note this target has been increased to 9 GW in the CAP2024). The provision of energy storage also contributes to energy efficiency objectives.

### 5.4.7 Programme of Government 2020

Programme for Government: Our Shared Future was published in 2020 by the Department of the Taoiseach. This is a Programme to recover our economy, rebuild our society, renew our communities, and respond to the challenges we face both nationally and internationally in of the COVID pandemic. It highlights that the world was approaching a climate crisis long before COVID-19, and that the pandemic has acted as a catalyst, enabling the government to implement radical policies that were considered impossible before; it will not and must not be used as an excuse for failure to take immediate action to deliver on all that is needed to build a better society and a secure future for all living things. It commits to taking the

necessary action to deliver at least 70% (updated to 80% in the CAP2024) renewable electricity by 2030. Increased renewable energy, alongside energy efficiency and the circular economy are integral to the programme. It notes that energy storage, such as that provided by the Proposed Development will play an important role in the transition.

The Proposed Development is in compliance with Programme for Government: Our Shared Future as it provides additional renewable energy and energy storage, helping to meet commitments related to recovering from the impacts of COVID 19 and the transition to a low carbon future.

## 5.5 Regional Energy Policy

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the dissolution of the eight regional authorities and two regional assemblies and for their replacement with three new regional assemblies. The three new regional assemblies were established in 2015 representing the Northern and Western, Eastern and Midland and Southern Regions. Members of the Regional Assemblies consist of the local authorities within that region. The relevant regional assembly for the Proposed Development is the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly.

**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 (2019 – 2031) 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 Vision of the RSES is;

*"To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the health and wellbeing of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all"*

The RSES sets the framework for the County Development Plans, in this case the Louth County Development Plan which is assessed in Section 6 of this Planning Statement.

The RSES Settlement Hierarchy identifies Drogheda, located 8.3km to the south of the Proposed Development as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC). Regional Growth Centres defined as large towns with a high level of self-sustaining employment and services that act as regional economic drivers and play a significant role for a wide catchment area. These areas are highlighted as supporting significant population and economic growth and driving effective regional development. By providing new renewable energy in the area, the Proposed Development helps to sustainably meet the demand targeted and forecast for the Drogheda area.

Chapter 7of the plan is titled; 'Environment and Climate', it acknowledges the effects of climate change on the environment, including the threats to habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The RSES identifies a number of key Regional Strategic Outcomes which include;

- The need to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of our protected habitats and species including landscape and heritage protection.
- To identify, protect and enhance our Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services.
- To ensure the sustainable management of our natural resources.
- To build climate resilience, to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050 and the protection of the healthy natural environment to ensure clean air and water for all.

The RSES states that;

*'The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is committed to the Region becoming a low-carbon and circular region. This will require* ***reduction of all greenhouse gases****, of which* ***carbon dioxide*** *is the most prominent. The priority is to minimise energy demand and waste, and then address how energy will be supplied and* ***renewable technologies*** *incorporated.'*

It notes that the Region will need to shift from its reliance on using fossil fuels and natural gas as its main energy source to a more diverse range of low and zero-carbon sources, including renewable energy. The Kellystown Wind Farm will significantly contribute to Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions targets, it is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable wind energy. Approximately 29,010 to 36,645 tonnes of carbon dioxide will be displaced per annum by the Proposed Development.

The below infographic represents the RSES Climate Action Strategy.

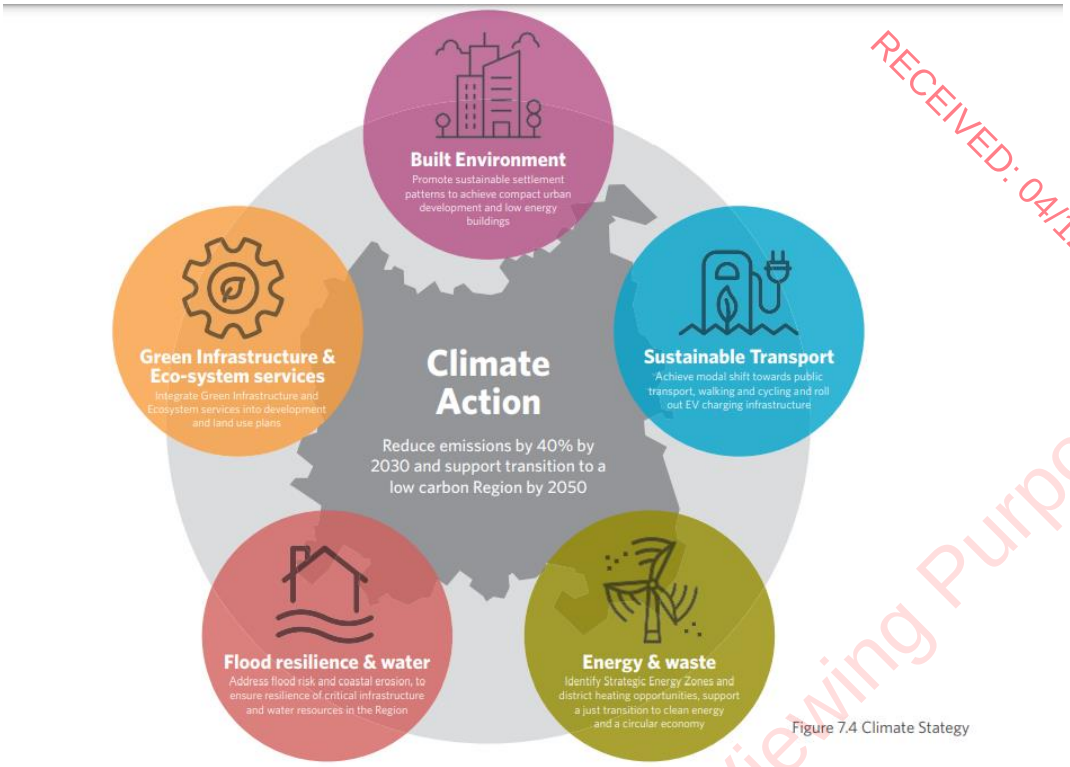



Figure 7.4 Climate Stategy

The RSES highlights that stakeholder engagement in relation to renewable energy generation projects is critical and assists in building public confidence in projects. Optimisation of community benefit from renewable energy projects also needs to be ensured. The public consultation was a multi-stage approach for the Proposed Development, as outlined in the Community Report (**Appendix 1.4 of the EIAR**). The Proposed Development was advertised in the local community; leaflet drops and door to door consultation were carried out to homes within 2km of the Proposed Development in October 2022 and July 2023 and Public Information Day held on 1st December 2023. The Project will also provide a community fund calculated in accordance with the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) Terms and Conditions. The Community Benefit Fund belongs to the local community. The premise of the fund is that it should be used to bring about significant, positive change in the local area.

Chapter 10 of the plan is titled; 'Infrastructure', this includes Energy in section 10.4. It notes that overreliance on non-indigenous supplies of energy is still a major issue for the Region and that making better use of natural resources to increase our share of renewable energy is needed to meet targets. Diversification of the energy network away from fossil fuels and towards green energy such as wind, wave, solar and biomass and the electrification of transport fleets is noted to require the progressive and strategic development of a different

form of energy grid. It highlights that co-locating of renewables and associated grid connections is needed to minimise the amount of additional grid investment required.

The Proposed Development, as a renewable energy project is in line with this approach in the RSES, by providing renewable energy storage in the form of the BESS, the Project also contributes to maximising the use of grid infrastructure to meet the energy demand of the region efficiently.

The relevant Regional Policy Objectives to the Proposed Development are outlined in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Key Planning Policy Objectives from the RSES**

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| **RPO 3.5** | 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. | The site selection process for the Proposed Development is set out in **Chapter 3**; **Alternative** of the EIAR and section 4.1 of this Planning Statement. |
| **RPO 3.7:** | 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. | An Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out on the following:<br>• Human Health and Population; **Chapter 5** of the EIAR.<br>• Shadow flicker and EMI; **Chapter 17** of the EIAR.<br>• Biodiversity; **Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9** of the EIAR.<br>• Soils and Geology; **Chapter 10** of the EIAR.<br>• Hydrology and Hydrogeology including flooding; **Chapter 11** of the EIAR.<br>• Noise; **Chapter 13** of the EIAR.<br>• Landscape and Visual Assessment; **Chapter 12** of the EIAR<br>• Material Assets - including the capacity of services to serve the Proposed Development and the benefits the Proposed Development will provide to the electricity network; **Chapter 14** of the EIAR<br>• Cultural Heritage **Chapter 15** of the EIAR<br>• Traffic and Transport **Chapter 16** of the EIAR |

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | | The detailed EIAR will enable the local authority to thoroughly assesses the Proposed Development's site selection process, environmental constraints and potential impacts |
| **RPO 4.83:** | 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" | The Proposed Development is a renewable energy development located in a rural area. The layout and design allow for diversification of agricultural and commercial forestry lands. The Proposed Development will also provide jobs and economic development. |
| **RPO 6.23** | 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. | The Proposed Development is a renewable energy development which will provide jobs in the renewable energy and construction industries. By displacing greenhouse gases, the Proposed Development contributes towards the transition to a low carbon economy. The circular economy has been considered in the design and planning of the Proposed Development. A Waste Management Plan is included in the CEMP in **Appendix 2.1** of the EIAR which outlines he approach taken. |
| **RPO 7.7** | To reduce harmful emissions and achieve and maintain good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and to work with local authorities and the relevant agencies to support local data collection in the development of air quality monitoring and to inform a regional air quality and greenhouse gas emissions inventory. | The Proposed Development will generate renewable electricity and includes energy storage. This will displace electricity generated by fossil fuels and contribute to improving air quality in the region. **Chapter 18; Air and Climate** in the EIAR includes further details. The Proposed Development has been assessed as having the potential to result in slight, negative and temporary/short-term effects on Air Quality |

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | | during construction and decommissioning. The avoidance of the production of electricity from coal, oil or gas-fired power stations, will lead to a slight, positive and long-term effect on air quality during the operational phase. |
| **RPO 7.16** | Support the implementation of the Habitats Directives in achieving an improvement in the conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region and to ensure alignment between the core objectives of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and local authority development plans. | 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.** The NIS concludes that the Proposed Development will not adversely affect the integrity of any of the European sites concerned in view of their conservation objectives. |
| **RPO 7.26** | Support the development of guidance for assessment of proposed land zonings in order to achieve appropriate riparian setback distances that support the attainment of high ecological status for waterbodies, the conservation of biodiversity and good ecosystem health, and buffer zones from flood plains. | The Louth CDP includes **NGB 57:** *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.*<br>A minimum buffer zone of 10 - 50m has been applied to the bank of all rivers, streams or watercourses in the layout of the Proposed Development. During the construction of the Proposed Development no works will take place in these |

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | | areas. Further details are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** and **Appendix 2.1 CEMP**. |
| **RPO 7.32** | With the assistance and support of the Climate Action Regional Offices, local authorities shall develop, adopt and implement local climate adaptation and mitigation strategies which shall address issues including local vulnerability to climate risks and identify and prioritise actions, in accordance with the Guiding Principles of the National Adaptation Framework, National Mitigation Plan. | The Draft Louth Climate Action Plan has been assessed in Section 3.5 of this Planning Statement. |
| **RPO 7.36** | 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. | The adherence of the Proposed Development to the relevant Local Planning Policy is set out in Section 3 of this Planning Statement.<br>Other publications in relation to guidance on wind energy developments is outlined in Section 4. |
| **RPO 10.20** | 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. | The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 and 36MW of additional renewable electricity to the region. The wind farm is co-located with the energy storage facility will help to maximise the Proposed Developments contribution to meeting the existing and future demand in the region. |

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| **RPO 10.22:** | 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:<br><br>• Facilitating interconnection to Europe, particularly the 'Celtic Interconnector' to France and further interconnection to Europe/the UK in the longer term<br>• 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.<br>• 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 us available at local, regional and national scale to meet future needs.<br>• 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. | The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 and 36MW of additional renewable electricity to the region. The wind farm co-located with the energy storage facility will help to maximise the Proposed Developments contribution to meeting the existing and future demand in the region.<br>The grid connection once constructed will become an asset of ESB Networks to own and operate and will become part of the National Grid infrastructure. |

| RPO | Policy Details | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| | • Support the safeguarding of strategic energy corridors from encroachment by other developments that could compromise the delivery of energy networks". | |

The Proposed Development, by producing renewable energy, at an appropriate location, is in line with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region and helps to achieve policy objectives in relation to climate action, particularly the displacement of fossil fuels, reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, air quality improvement and energy security. It is in compliance with policy related to environmental protection. By providing new renewable energy and jobs in the area, the Proposed Development helps to sustainably meet the demand targeted and forecast for the Drogheda area which is identified as Regional Growth. It contributes to regional economic development including meeting increased energy demand and diversification of rural land objectives.

## 5.6 The Public Interest

As per the recently published guidance by the European Commission (see section 3.3.1) on the third revised Renewable Energy Directive (2023/2413/EU), commonly known as RED III; Member States were required, no later than 21 February 2024, to give effect to a legal presumption that renewable energy plants are in the "overriding public interest" when balancing legal interests in individual cases for the purposes of certain environmental assessments, including in particular Article 6(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC, the 'Habitats Directive.' The Proposed Development does not give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites so no derogation under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive is required. This balancing of legal interests under RED III is therefore not applicable to the Proposed Development. However, the identification of renewable energy development, such as the Proposed Development, as being in the 'overriding public interest' when balancing certain legal interests is evidence of the importance placed on projects of this nature at EU level.

This is in line with the recommendation in the REPowerEU Plan (see section 3.3.2) and Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2024 (section 3.4.5).

A recent judgement ([2024] IEHC 549) on a Wind Farm in Ireland includes the below which is relevant to the new legislation;

> *'The amending directive also provides in certain circumstances for a presumption in favour of such projects where impacts on European sites might otherwise preclude development. Article 16f of the 2018 directive as inserted by the 2023 directive provides: "Overriding public interest By 21 February 2024, until climate neutrality is achieved,* ***Member States shall ensure that, in the permit-granting procedure, the planning, construction and operation of renewable energy***

> ***plants, the connection of such plants to the grid, the related grid itself, and storage assets are presumed as being in the overriding public interest*** *and serving public health and safety when balancing legal interests in individual cases for the purposes of Article 6(4) and Article 16(1), point (c), of Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 4(7) of Directive 2000/60/EC and Article 9(1), point (a), of Directive 2009/147/EC…… Such recent developments in EU law are potentially of significance in that they provide a form of answer for the hitherto problematic clash between arguments regarding the need to address the climate emergency versus the need to give effect to previously established European environmental law regardless of the nature of the project.'*

Although it is submitted that the Proposed Development does not require a derogation under the relevant EU environmental legislation, this judgment, is in line with the broad support at the EU level that renewable energy plants are in the "overriding public interest".

In 2022, the EPA released The Climate Change in the Irish Mind report[25], a study of the Irish population's beliefs, attitudes, policy preferences and behaviours regarding climate change. The report found that 84% of the 84,961 people interviewed were either "Alarmed" or "Concerned" about Climate Change. **Figure 5.1** shows an infographic produced for the report that displays the headline results.



[25] EPA. (2022). https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/climate-changes-four-irelands.php Accessed 18/09/2024

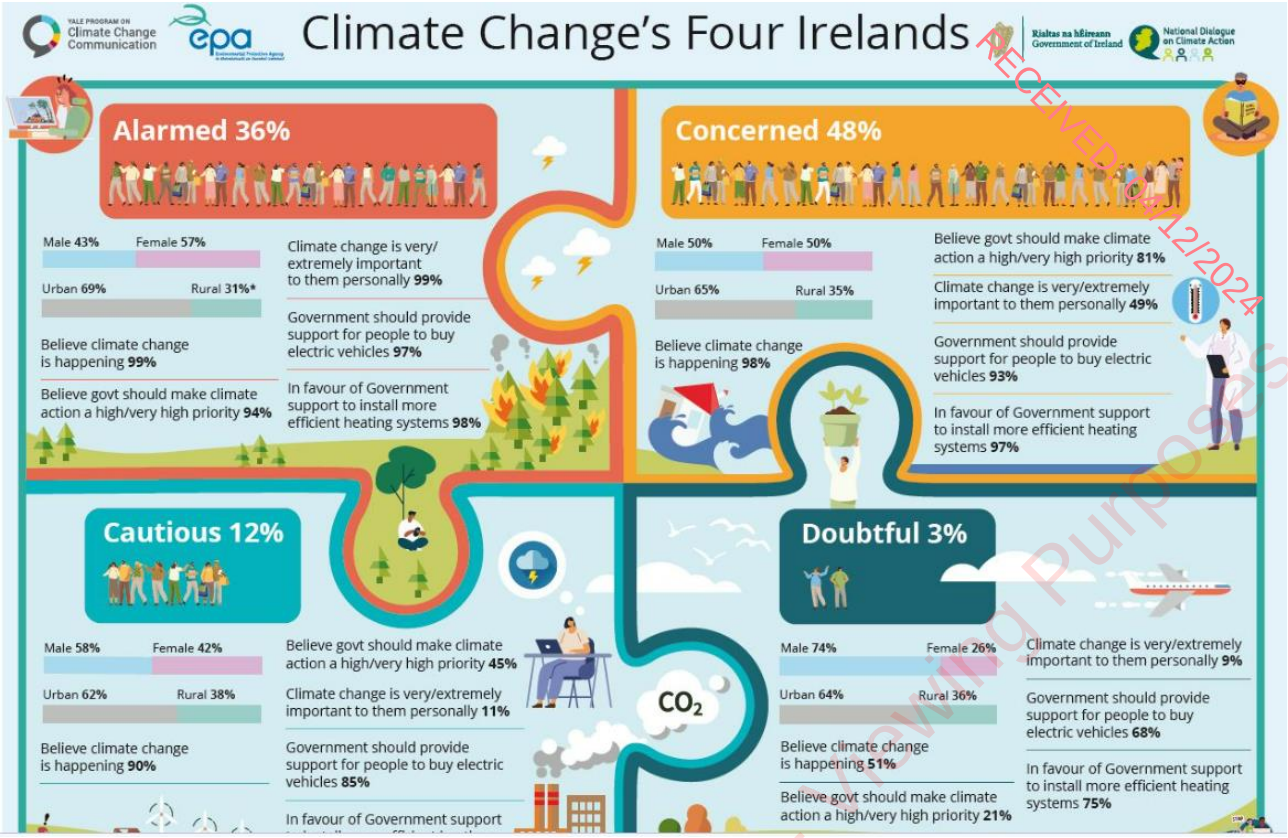



**Figure 5.1: Headline Results of the EPA's (2022) Climate Change's Four Irelands; An Audience Segmentation Analysis.**

The results show that the pressing and urgent need to address climate change is no longer a fringe issue, the overwhelming majoring of the Irish public surveyed view climate change as a concern and want to see action taken to combat it. Section 5.1 outlines that it is widely acknowledge that renewable energy is accepted as mitigation against climate change. This survey shows the alignment between public concern on climate change and policy at EU and National Level with regards to renewable energy being in the public interest.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, energy prices in Ireland have increased significantly. The SEAI's Electricity Prices in Ireland Report; January to June 2022[26], found on average residential electricity prices increased 10.4% in the 12 months prior to June 2022 (note this includes a €200 rebate). Concern over energy costs amongst the population of Ireland is high, a survey by the Journal in October 2022[27] found that 77% of people said that they already or intend to use their home heating less often, while 76% have already or intend to delay putting the heating on. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)[28] report

[26] SEAI. (2022). https://www.seai.ie/publications/SEAIs-EPR-data-for-JAN-to-JUN-2022.pdf Accessed 18/09/2024.
[27] The Journal. (2022). Cost of living crisis: Most households intend to use their home heating less often this winter https://www.thejournal.ie/poll-energy-use-ireland-heating-5891701-Oct2022/ Accessed 18/09/2024
[28] ESRI. (2022). Energy poverty at highest recorded rate https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate Accessed 18/09/2024

on Energy Poverty published in 2022, has also warned that as many as 43% of households could now be in energy poverty, defined as when more than 10% of the household's income is spent on electricity and gas bills.

The EPA and SEAI research show that the public interest in combating climate change and public concern over the cost of energy in Ireland is at a high level. When this is combined with the change in the wording to the Renewable Energy Directive to recognise renewable energy as being of *"Overriding Public Interest*", its addition into the newest Climate Action Plan (2024) and the recent wind energy judgement, the importance of renewable energy projects such as the Proposed Development is reinforced.

# 6 LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

## 6.1 Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027

The Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021 – 2027 (adopted on the 11th of November 2021) is the relevant plan, it 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). It is a blueprint for development in County Louth 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.

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 Plan seeks to support and facilitate viable economic development and job creation, across a range of sectors, in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development. It notes that as the population of the county grows it is essential that the County continues to be well positioned to facilitate further economic investment and respond to any economic uncertainties. It reiterates that Drogheda (8.3km to the south of the Wind Farm Site), is identified as a Regional Growth Centre (RGC) in the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Regional Strategic Economic Strategy (RSES) and outlines the importance of the settlement at both a regional and national level in facilitating future population and economic growth. The location of the Proposed Development in proximity to Drogheda is well placed to contribute to meeting the increased energy demand that growth brings.

The Wind Farm Site is in an area identified as Rural Policy Zone 2; Area under strong urban influence (as opposed to Rural Policy Zone 1; Area under strong urban influence and of significant landscape value). The Plan notes that rural areas make an important economic contribution to County Louth, including the provision of local employment. The Plan identifies that diversification of agricultural lands, including co-location with renewable energy generation, as a method of broadening the employment base of rural areas and providing an alternative source of income to traditional farming methods. The Plan also

identifies renewable energy as a 'Rural Enterprise' and notes that a balance is required between supporting rural based enterprises and projects and protecting the local environment.

Chapter 10 of the Plan is titled 'Infrastructure & Public utilities', with section 10.5 focusing on Energy. The plan states that energy is an essential component of Ireland's economy and society and is important to support the continued growth in County Louth, with respect to both population and the economy. The Plan promotes energy efficiency and the development of indigenous renewable resources, noting that *'our native renewable energy sources need to be developed'.*

The Plan acknowledges that it is critically important that Louth County Council plays its part in realising national renewable energy and emissions reduction targets, noting that this will be achieved through the inclusion of supporting policy objectives for renewable energy generation and development and through the preparation of a Renewable Energy Strategy. To date the renewable energy strategy has not been published.

The Plan credits renewable energy with reducing emissions, providing clean, sustainable energy to meet growth in demand, reducing the need for energy imports, and as playing an important role in contributing to national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and greenhouse gas emissions. A reduction in the dependence on foreign fossil fuels is credited with simultaneously providing positive social, economic and environmental dividends.

This is reinforced by the inclusion of strategic objective 4;
*'SO 4; Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County supporting energy efficiency and reducing energy demand, through a combination of mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change. This includes for increased usage of* ***renewable energy*** *through developing indigenous energy resources, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050, and ensuring flood risk management. The Council will work with other bodies and organisations as appropriate, to identify and help protect critical infrastructure.'*

By producing additional, indigenous renewable energy alongside providing energy storage, the Proposed Development would make a valuable contribution to ensuing the County Louth energy system is reliable, resilient and efficient. It also caters to the growth outlined throughout the plan and support economic and population growth of the county.

Section 10.6 of the Plan outlines the council's approach to Wind Energy. It states that wind energy is currently the largest contributing resource of renewable energy in Ireland and is both Ireland's largest and cheapest renewable electricity resource. It recognises the significant contribution that wind energy can make as a clean, sustainable solution to energy requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets. It notes that the Council will continue to support and encourage the principle of wind energy development in accordance with Government policy and having regard to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines.

Map 10.1 provides details of the locations in the County suitable for wind energy development. The Wind Farm Site falls within two wind energy designation zones labelled **'Preferred'** and **"Open to Consideration"**. This can be seen in **Figure 6.1.**

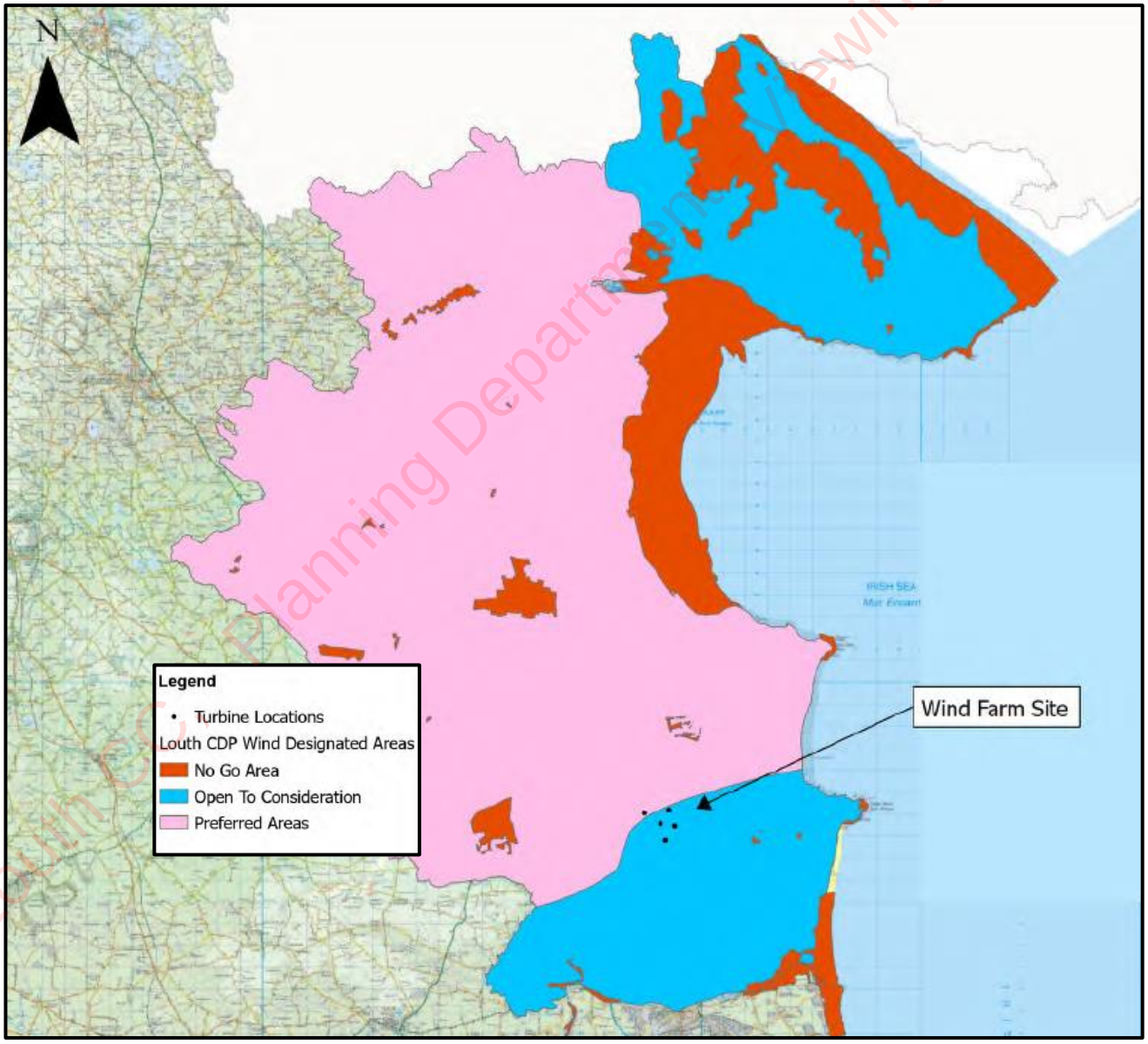


**Figure 6.1: Louth County Development plan 2021-2027 Chapter 10 (*Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development)*[29] overlaid with the turbine coordinates for the proposed Kellystown Wind Farm.**



Chapter 13 of the Plan is 'Development Management Guidelines', it sets out the standards and guidelines which will be applied in the assessment of development proposals. The guidelines note that the principles of sustainable design are a cross-cutting theme of the Plan and that these principles will be a central element of the assessment of planning applications.

Section 13.7 of the Plan is titled; 'Management of Construction Sites'. It requires that a management plan be prepared for the construction of the development, a Construction and Environmental Management Plan has been prepared for the Proposed Development and is included in **Appendix 2.1** of the EIAR.

The following details are required:

- Hours of operation;
- Construction/phasing programme;
- Traffic Management Plan;
- Noise and dust mitigation measures;
- Details of any construction lighting;
- The management of construction and demolition waste, which shall be in accordance with the requirements of the Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management
- Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects (2006).

These details are all available in the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

In terms of wind energy development, the Management Development Guidelines, in section 13.8, note that any application for wind energy development shall be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 and any subsequent Guidelines. The compliance of the Proposed Development with these guidelines is set out in section 7.1 and 7.2 of this Planning Statement.

The Management Development Guidelines state;

[29] Chapter 10 (louthcoco.ie) Accessed 30/09/2024.

*'Map 10.1 in **Chapter 10** Utilities provides details of the locations in the County suitable for wind energy development.'*

The county is split in to three categories; 'No Go Area', 'Open for Consideration' and 'Preferred Areas'. The relevant policy is Objective IU 58;

*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'.*

The Wind Farm Site falls within two wind energy designation zones labelled **'Preferred'** and **"Open to Consideration".** The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.

The guidelines note that details on access, including restrictions on new or intensification of existing accesses onto National and Protected Regional Roads are set out in Section 13.16 'Transport' and Tables 7.9 and 7.10 of the Movement Chapter.

These tables are set out hereunder.

***Table 7.9: Restrictions and Exemptions to Access on National Roads***

| Road Category | Restrictions | Exemptions |
|---|---|---|
| Motorways | No direct access | No exemptions |
| Dual Carriageways | No direct access | No exemptions |
| Single Carriageways (National Primary and National Secondary Roads | No new access or intensification of existing access | 1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard.<br>2. Where a new access is required for any major employment generating activity including tourism or a development of national or regional importance.<br>3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard.<br>4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided. |

**Figure 6.2: Table 7.9 in the Louth County Development Plan 2022-2028.**

*Table 7.10: Restrictions and Exemptions on Protected Regional Roads*

| Route | Restrictions | Exemptions |
|---|---|---|
| R173/R175 Dundalk-Greenore<br><br>R173/R176 Greenore-Carlingford-Omeath (Cornamucklagh)<br><br>R178 Dundalk-Carrickmacross (Essexford)<br><br>R171 Dundalk-Louth Village<br><br>R169 Dunleer-Collon<br><br>R168 Drogheda-Collon<br><br>R166 Drogheda-Termonfeckin<br>R132 Dundalk-Drogheda<br><br>R132 Dundalk-Feede<br><br>R132 Carrickarnon-Border<br><br>R177 Dundalk-Border<br><br>Port Access Northern Cross Road [7]<br><br>R215 Jun 16 to Ardee (Former N52)<br><br>R215 from R132 Junction to Junction 16 | No new access or intensification of existing access | 1. Where the new access would eliminate a traffic hazard.<br><br>2. Where a new access is required for any major development, including tourism developments, of national, regional, or local importance where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard.<br><br>3. Extensions to an authorised use where the additional traffic generated would not result in the creation of a traffic hazard.<br><br>4. Where a new access is to a fixed natural resource of national or regional importance where no other suitable vehicular access can be provided.<br><br>5. Dwellings required to satisfy the housing needs of persons who have lived for not less than 18 years in the area, where no other site is available off a minor road, and where the existing entrance servicing the family home is used. Where the entrance to the existing family home cannot be used, consideration will be given for one new entrance only onto the adjoining protected regional route. A condition confining occupancy to a family member for a minimum of 7 years will be attached to any permission granted under this exemption. |

**Figure 6.3: Table 7.10 in the Louth County Development Plan 2022-2028.**

The Proposed Development will be accessed via 4 no. site entrances to facilitate the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of development. Two are new entrances on to Local road (L-6274-0) and two are existing entrances, one off a local road (L2275-24) and one is located on a private road no, off the Local Road L2275-24A. As the entrances are off local roads the above does not apply.

The Traffic Management Plan in **Appendix 16.2** of the EIAR sets out details of the site access and the design of the entrances that are being upgraded. Site Entrance 1 (L6274), 2 (L6274) and 3 (L2275) have been designed so that visibility at the junctions will be in accordance with Louth County Council Development Plan, Table 13.13 for a non-domestic development on a local road and will have visibility splays of 75m measured from a 4.5m setback. Site entrance No. 4 is an existing priority access junction on the L2275 local road.

The junction will be used during the construction and operation of the permanent met mast. It is not proposed to modify the existing junction as part of the wind farm development.



**Table 13.13: Minimum visibility standards for new entrances**

| Road Category | Sight distance (Y) | Visibility requirement over ground | Distance of the sight line from the edge of the carriageway (1 to 6 houses) (X distance)[3] | Distance of the sight line from the edge of the carriageway (7 houses or greater or non-domestic developments) (Y distance)[4] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National and Protected Regional Routes** | 215 metres | 0.6-1.05 metres | 3.0 metres | 4.5 metres |
| **Regional Road** | 125 metres | 0.6-1.05 metres | 3.0 metres | 4.5 metres |
| **Local Road** | 75 metres | 0.6-1.05 metres | 3.0 metres | 4.5 metres |
| **Cul-de-sac** | 75 metres | 0.6-1.05 metres | 3.0 metres | 4.5 metres |

**Figure 6.4; Table 13.13 from the Lough County Development Plan 2021-2027.**

The relevant Local Policy Objectives to the Proposed Development are outlined in **Table 6.1.**

**Table 6.1: Key Policies from the Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027 relevant to the Proposed Development**

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| **Strategic - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***SO 1:*** *Realise the potential and promote the development and growth of County Louth through harnessing the economic and employment potential of the competitive advantages of the County. This includes its strategic location, connectivity and accessibility to external markets and having regard in particular to the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as Regional Growth Centres located on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.* | One of the competitive advantages of County Louth is its wind resource. The Proposed Development will exploit this resource to generate sustainable and renewable electricity to meet the growth in demand in the vicinity of Drogheda. It will provide jobs and economic development, as well as a community benefit fund and commercial rates. |
| ***SO 2:*** *Support and promote the role of Drogheda and Dundalk as key designated Regional Growth Centres with high levels of self-sustaining employment and services, to act as regional economic drivers, playing a significant role for a wide catchment area and to help achieve a more coordinated and sustainable settlement and travel pattern across the region.* | The Proposed Development will provide renewable electricity to help meet the increased energy demand associated with economic and population growth of Drogheda, which is located 8.3km to the south of the Wind Farm Site. |
| ***SO 4:*** *Transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County supporting energy efficiency and reducing energy demand, through a combination of mitigation and adaptation responses to climate change. This includes for increased usage of renewable energy through developing indigenous energy resources, supporting the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050, and ensuring flood risk management. The Council will work with other bodies and organisations as appropriate, to identify and help protect critical infrastructure.* | 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. The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS 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. This improves the energy efficiency of the wind farm, reducing the need to waste energy when the grid cannot accept it. By producing renewable electricity in an efficient and sustainable |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | manner, the Proposed Development supports the County's transition to a low carbon economy by 2050.<br>A Flood Risk Assessment is located in **Appendix 9.1** of the EIAR. |
| ***SO 6:*** *Conserve and enhance the County's Green Infrastructure and ecosystem services supporting the sustainable management of natural assets and the biodiversity of the County's protected habitats and species to provide a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits to communities.* | The design of the Proposed Development was an iterative process which followed the constraints-led design approach. The constraints identification process included the gathering of information through detailed desk-based assessments, field surveys and consultation. The ecological assessments of the Wind Farm Site encompassed habitat mapping and extensive surveying of birds and other fauna. Sensitive ecological receptors were mapped, and the design constraints were applied including avoidance of isolated pockets of peat, treelines and hedgerows and other sensitive habitats and setbacks to watercourses. The avoidance of fragments of peatland on the Wind Farm Site allows these areas to continue to function in their capacity to provide flood protection as an ecosystem service by facilitating attenuation.<br>EIAR **Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9** assesses the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on biodiversity while and the Natura Impact Statement assesses the potential impacts and effects on European (Natura 2000) sites.<br>The Proposed Development includes a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) in support of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). A total of approximately 1,650m$^2$ of hedgerows will be lost as part of the development, this will be off set with 0.52ha of replacement planting. The BEMP also includes protection and enhancement of a wetland area of 3.54ha. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | This process has ensured that existing habitats are retained and clearance has been minimised and mitigated in line with Policy Objective SO6. In addition, a Biodiversity Enhancement Area has been included in the Project. The Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) comprises the following: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.52ha). The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Biodiversity of the EIAR** and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**. |
| ***SO 11:*** *Support the further development of a resilient economic base in Louth and promote both enterprise and entrepreneurship, underpinned by innovation and talent resulting in the delivery of sustainable jobs and economic growth.* | The Proposed Development provides the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base by providing new, sustainable jobs, providing the stability and diversity to the rural economy that can stimulate further economic development by attracting new business to the region due to the improved supply of electricity, enabling diversification. The Proposed Development represents a strategically significant investment in the locality |
| ***SO 13:*** *Support the sustainable development of rural areas that are under strong urban influence to avoid over-development, while sustaining vibrant rural communities.* | The Wind Farm Site is in an area identified as Rural Policy Zone 2; Area under strong urban influence. During the operational phase, agriculture and forestry land uses can continue. This co-location of renewable energy and agriculture/forestry helps to diversify the lands and provide an alternative source of income to traditional farming methods, support the local economy in a sustainable manner and broaden the employment base of this rural area. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | The co-location with energy storage maximises the exploitation of the wind resource and energy efficiency of the Project while minimising additional infrastructure, making the most out of the material requirements of the project.<br><br>The Proposed Development is an excellent example of sustainable development as outlined in Section 5. |
| ***S0 18:*** *Afford suitable protection to the environment and natural resources of the County and ensure the fulfilment of environmental responsibilities.* | The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided, reduced and mitigated where possible, protecting the natural resources of the Wind Farm Site and surrounds. No significant negative environmental impacts of the Proposed Development were identified aside from a significant indirect, reversible impact on the landscape setting of the standing stones located within the Wind Farm Site in the Cultural Heritage Chapter. With the implementation of the Biodiversity and Enhancement Plan, it is considered that the terrestrial ecological interests of the Wind Farm Site will increase during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, this is a likely long-term Positive effect. |
| **Movement - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***MOV 47:*** *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.* | A Transport and Traffic Assessment will form part of the Planning Application. See EIAR **Chapter 16 Traffic and Transport**. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| **Economy and Employment** | |
| ***EE 3:*** *To facilitate and support the sustainable growth of the economy in County Louth whilst maintaining and improving environmental quality. This economic development policy shall strive to deliver the following key aims:*<br>• *To strengthen existing employment centres supported by enterprise, innovation and skills;*<br>• *To strengthen the integration between employment, housing and transportation with a view to promoting compact urban areas and reducing car dependency;*<br>• *To promote measures to improve the County's attractiveness as a location for investment and increase entrepreneurial activity;*<br>• *To improve the cluster-specific business environment by putting in place a favourable business ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship that supports the development of new industrial value chains and emerging industries;*<br>• *To facilitate economic growth by consolidating existing industrial and commercial areas and by ensuring that there is an adequate supply of serviced employment lands at suitable locations;*<br>• *To promote the regeneration of underutilised industrial and town centre areas in a manner which enhances the local economy and encourages a sequential approach to development; and*<br>• *To provide for a range of business accommodation types, including units suitable for small business.* | The Proposed Development is a renewable energy development which will provide jobs during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases in the renewable energy and construction industries. By displacing greenhouse gases, the Proposed Development contributes towards the transition to a low carbon economy and improves air quality.<br><br>The Proposed Development provides the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base by providing new jobs in the renewable energy industry, 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, enabling diversification. The provision of energy storage further strengthens the electricity grid and maximises the efficiency and output of the wind farm.<br><br>The Wind Farm Site is in a rural area, adjacent to the industrial scale Kilsaran quarry. The proximity of the turbines to this facility consolidates land use by facilitating compatible neighbouring industries to efficiently make use of the area. The Wind Farm Site has existing tracks that can be utilised, reducing the material requirement of the Project. The proximity to the quarry will also reduce the construction phase impacts related to stone deliveries on the local road network. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | The Proposed Development is located 8.3km to the south of the town of Drogheda, identified throughout the CDP as a settlement targeted for economic growth. This proximity will strategically and sustainably support the growth in energy demand that economic development creates. This assists in offsetting economic development by provision of renewable energy, in line with national policy on the transition to a net zero society. |
| ***EE 28:*** *To prioritise economic development in Drogheda and Dundalk taking account of the strategic importance of the settlements along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and their designation as Regional Growth Centres in the RSES.* | The location of the Proposed Development in proximity of Drogheda, a Regional Growth Centre (8.3km to the south of the Wind Farm Site), is well placed to contribute to meeting the increased energy demand that growth brings. |
| ***EE 31:*** *To promote the delivery of essential infrastructure and utilities that support businesses in establishing a competitive and resilient stronghold at local, regional and national level.* | Policy EE31 is located in the Regional Growth section of the CDP. The location of the Proposed Development in proximity of Drogheda, a Regional Growth Centre (8.3km to the south of the Wind Farm Site), is well placed to contribute to meeting the increased energy demand that growth brings. The grid connection will become part of the national electrical grid which is essential infrastructure. |
| ***EE 33****: To promote the Regional Growth Centre of Drogheda as a primary centre for employment in the County that maximises the locational advantage of the town along the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.* | The location of the Proposed Development in proximity of Drogheda, (8.3km to the south of the Wind Farm Site), is well placed to contribute to meeting the increased energy demand that this targeted growth will bring. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| ***EE 55:*** *To support rural entrepreneurship and rural enterprise development of an appropriate scale at suitable locations in the County.* | The plan identifies renewable energy projects, such as the Proposed Development, as a rural enterprise.<br>The location of the Wind Farm Site is suitable based on the following;<br>• Suitably setback to ecologically sensitive areas and European sites.<br>• Avoidance of sensitive habitats.<br>• Setback to watercourses.<br>• Location is supported by CDP's wind strategy.<br>• Its proximity to Drogheda will support targeted growth in demand.<br>• Its proximity to Kilsaran quarry allows compatible land uses to efficiently make use of the area (i.e. this area would be unsuitable for other types of development e.g. residential).<br>• Suitable set back to sensitive receptors.<br>• It has existing tracks that can be utilised, reducing the material requirement of the Project.<br>• The proximity to the quarry will also reduce the construction phase impacts related to stone deliveries on the local road network.<br>• Low Population Density.<br><br>The average population density across the whole of Ireland is 72 persons per square kilometre, Across County Louth the average population density per square kilometre is significantly higher than the national average at 169.6 persons per square kilometre. Therefore, |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | the EDs of Mullary and Clogher, where the Wind Farm Site and surrounds are located, have a relatively low population density in contrast to the County-wide population densities which are greater than 2 times that of the study area for the same period. |
| ***EE 63:*** *To ensure that all applications for industrial and enterprise development submit a carbon footprint calculation and demonstrates how the new buildings and processes/activities will seek to achieve the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 or any amendments to targets.* | The carbon losses and savings are assessed in **Chapter 18 Air and Climate** of the EIAR. In total, it is estimated that between 29,010 tonnes (lower range) and 36,645 tonnes (higher range) of carbon dioxide will be displaced over the proposed 35-year lifetime of the wind farm. |
| **Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure - Objectives and Policy** | |
| ***NBG2:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development will comply with provisions outlined in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026 as assessed in section 3.2 of this Planning Statement. The potential for adverse effects upon biodiversity has 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. **Chapter 6; Biodiversity** concludes that with mitigation measures implemented in full to minimise effects on local habitats, including enhancement of an area of wetland habitat, as well as a native woodland planting scheme, the impact by loss of hedgerows, scrub and a small area of wet grassland is reduced to the level of Slight Significance.<br><br>With mitigation measures as presented implemented in full, it is considered that the significance of the predicted impact on terrestrial |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | mammal species and amphibian and reptile species as a result of the Proposed Development will be Not Significant.<br>With the implementation of the Biodiversity and Enhancement Plan, it is considered that the terrestrial ecological interests of the Wind Farm Site will increase during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, i.e. likely long-term Positive effect. Please refer to EIAR **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** for further details |
| ***NBG 3:*** *To protect and conserve Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the EU Habitats and Birds Directives* | 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 **Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment. EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity** and **EIAR Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.**<br>No significant adverse effects on biodiversity or hydrology and hydrogeology have been identified in the EIAR. |
| ***NBG 4*** *To ensure that all proposed developments comply with the requirements set out in the DECLG 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010'.* | An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS), prepared in line with the DECLG 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities 2010', have been submitted as part of this application. |
| ***NBG 5*** *To ensure that no plan, programme, or project giving rise to significant cumulative, direct, indirect or secondary impacts on European sites arising from their size or scale, land take, proximity, resource requirements, emissions (disposal to land, water or air), transportation requirements, duration of construction, operation,* | 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 |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *decommissioning or from any other effects shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan, either individually or in combination with other plans, programmes or projects.* | of this application. The NIS concludes that the Proposed Development will not adversely affect the integrity of any of the European sites concerned in view of their conservation objectives.<br><br>Further details available in **Natura Impact Statement and Appropriate Assessment. EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity** and **EIAR Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.**<br><br>Cumulative effects are assessed throughout the EIAR. |
| ***NGB 6:*** *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 pathways, for example, hydrological links for potential effects.* | An Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been submitted as part of this application. Please see **Natura Impact Statement** and **Appropriate assessment** for further details**.** |
| ***NBG 9:*** *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.* | The potential for adverse effects upon biodiversity 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.<br>A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) has been provided for the Proposed Development, this comprises: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.5 ha). The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Ecology of the EIAR** and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**. |
| ***NBG 10:*** *To ensure that development proposals, where relevant, improve the ecological coherence of Natura 2000 Network of European Sites and encourage the retention and management if landscape features as per Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.* | There are no Natura 2000 European Sites located on site. However, there is a candidate Natural Heritage Area (cNHA) Drumshallon Lough. Candidate Natural Heritage Area is the name given to wildlife sites that are proposed by NPWS and by third parties for consideration as NHAs. Prior to designation these sites may require further detailed survey and evaluation for their conservation value. These sites have no legal protection until they are taken up into the formal NHA designation process. The Drumshallon Lough wetland system comprises the highest value ecological feature within the Study Area. This was therefore considered as a key constraint and was carefully avoided when commencing the design stage of the Proposed Development.<br><br>Please refer to **Appropriate Assessment (AA)** and **Natura Impact Statement (NIS)** in Volume I of the EIAR submission for further details.<br><br>A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) has been provided for the Proposed Development, this comprises: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | woodland (c.0.52ha). The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Ecology of the EIAR** and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**. |
| ***NBG 11:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid ecological networks such as streams, hedgerows, and tree lines. All turbine locations and associated infrastructure are set back at least 50m from natural streams, and 10m to significant drains. No works will take place within these buffer zones except for the watercourse crossings on the access track network.<br><br>A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) has been provided for the Proposed Development, this comprises: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.52ha). The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Ecology of the EIAR** and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**. |
| ***NBG 13:*** *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.* | An invasive species survey has been carried out on site. The results and required management are in EIAR **Chapter 6 Biodiversity.** Invasive Species measures are set out in the CEMP in **Appendix 1.2** of the EIAR |
| ***NBG 14:*** *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* | The Wind Farm Site is not located within any area designated as a NHA. There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) within a 15 km radius of the Wind Farm Site. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | The closest pNHA to the Wind Farm Site is Blackhall Woods (site code 001293) located c. 2.5km east of the proposed wind farm site.<br>There is a candidate Natural Heritage Area (cNHA) Drumshallon Lough located within the Wind Farm Site. Candidate Natural Heritage Area is the name given to wildlife sites that are proposed by NPWS and by third parties for consideration as NHAs. Prior to designation these sites may require further detailed survey and evaluation for their conservation value. These sites have no legal protection until they are taken up into the formal NHA designation process. The Drumshallon Lough wetland system comprises the highest value ecological feature within the Study Area. This was therefore considered as a key constraint and was carefully avoided when commencing the design stage of the Proposed Development<br>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 NHA sites, are predicted. The Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan will enhance the cNHA and improve the site in line with the Louth county development plan. |
| ***NGB 15:*** *To ensure that any development within or adjacent to NHA or pNHA is designed and sited to minimise its impact on the ecological value of the site and resit development that would result in a significant deterioration of habitats or a disturbance of species.* | The Wind Farm Site is not located within any area designated as a NHA. There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) within a 15 km radius of the Wind Farm Site. The closest pNHA to the Wind Farm Site is Blackhall Woods (site code 001293) located c. 2.5km east of the proposed wind farm site. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | No significant effects on any NHA sites are predicted. See EIAR **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** for further detail.<br><br>There is a candidate Natural Heritage Area (cNHA) Drumshallon Lough located within the Wind Farm Site. The Drumshallon Lough wetland system comprises the highest value ecological feature within the Study Area. This was therefore considered as a key constraint and was carefully avoided when commencing the design stage of the Proposed Development. After the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures listed in EIAR **Chapter 6 Biodiversity,** no significant effect on cNHA sites is predicted. |
| ***NBG 17:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development is not located within any sites of geological interests listed within Table 8.4 of the CDP. The closest site of geological interest is located 'Port Raised Beach (LH25)' located c. 3.71km east of the Proposed Development. Refer to EIAR **Chapter 10 Soils and Geology** for further details |
| ***NGB 20 To protect and enhance wetland sites that have been rated A (International), B (National), C+ (County), C and D importance in the Louth Wetland Surveys and any subsequent versions thereof.*** | Objective no. 1 of the BEMP in **Appendix 6.1** of the EIAR is;<br><br>To preserve and enhance existing wetland habitat, rated as of National Importance, by removal of grazing and control of spread of gorse scrub to offset the loss of wet grassland, and to comply with Policy Objective NBG 20.<br><br>The Study Area (See, Figure 2.2 of the EIAR) surrounding the Wind Farm Site contains the Drumshallon Lough wetland complex. The |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | complex comprises lake, marginal swamp vegetation, wet woodland, wet grassland, marsh and transition mire. The transition mire is listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (Transition mires and quaking bog, code: 7140).<br><br>At the Drumshallon site, the conservation status and the functionality of the transition mire is considered generally good, with occasional grazing/wallowing by cattle the main threat. This habitat has been avoided in the design construction process and will not be impacted by the project. The BEMP includes two management areas, A and B with an area of 3.53ha. Management areas A and B will be made stockproof by the erection of suitable fencing where required. In addition, the control and removal of gorse from the management area A will be imposed as this will be beneficial for establishment of semi-natural grassland, which would be expected to be of a wet or neutral character and useful for insects and other wildlife. |
| ***NBG 23:*** *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.*<br>***NBG 24:*** *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* | The landscape character assessment for Co. Louth was compiled in 2002 and informs the current version of the County Development Plan. 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.<br>○ 'Landscape quality is quite high with a variety of landcover elements. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *elements, which contribute to their distinctiveness such as scenic quality, habitats, settlement pattern, historic heritage and land use.*<br>***NBG 25:*** *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.* | ○ The elevation of the area allows for a large number of views which have a high scenic quality value.<br>○ Rich in archaeological features, notably the round tower, high crosses and churches at Monasterboice.<br>○ The Fieldstown, Brownstown, Carricknashanagh areas offer a sense of tranquillity and isolation close to Drogheda.<br>New Mellifont Cistercian Monastery with its large estate, the greater part of which is a proposed NHA.<br>A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared as part of this application. See EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Amenity** for further details. 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. |
| ***NBG 31:*** *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 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.* | The removal of hedgerows will be required to facilitate the construction of the Proposed Development. The total loss of hedgerows, including bat buffers, will amount to approximately 1,650m$^2$.<br>The BEMP is outlined in Section 6.8 and is presented in full in Appendix 6.1. Briefly, the BEMP area comprises the following: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough (3.52ha), and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (0.52ha).<br>Details of this planting scheme are given in the BEMP (**Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**). |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | To facilitate the construction of access tracks, civil works and turbine hardstands 9.41ha of forestry will need to be permanently clear-felled. The forestry areas comprise of Ash, Sycamore, Sitka spruce and Norway spruce. The felling area proposed is the minimum necessary to construct the Proposed Development and to comply with construction set back distances and environmental mitigation i.e. bat buffers (further details relating to this can be found in EIAR **Appendix 2.1 CEMP, Appendix 2.2 Forestry Report Chapter 7: Bat Ecology** and **Chapter 14: Material Assets).**<br><br>It is a requirement that a felling licence is obtained before any forestry felling takes place. A condition of the felling licence that each land parcel must be replanted according to the replanting requirement for each harvest unit type. It should be noted that the clear-felling of trees in the State requires a felling licence. The felling licence will list the specific details of the replanting required under the replanting condition. All felled areas will need to be replaced in the form of replacement afforested land. Further details are provided in **Chapter 14: Material Assets** in Section 14.6: Land use- Forestry.<br><br>The associated afforestation of alternative lands equivalent in area to those lands being permanently clear-felled is also subject to licensing ('afforestation licensing'). The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine is Ireland's national forest authority and is responsible for all forest licensing. The Developer commits that the |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | location of any replanting (alternative afforestation) associated with the Project will be greater than 10km from the wind farm Site and also outside any potential hydrological pathways of connectivity i.e., outside the ecological zone of Influence (ZoI) within which the proposed project is located and will not give rise to any cumulative significant impacts with the project. Further details regarding the ZoI are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 6: Biodiversity**.<br>The removal of trees and hedgerows will be done outside the nesting season and will follow measures set out in the CEMP. Further details are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 6 Biodiversity**, **Chapter 7 Bat Ecology** and **Chapter 8 Ornithology.** |
| ***NBG 36:*** *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.*<br>***NBG 37:*** *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* | The Wind Farm Site is not located in any area designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beaty'. A Landscape and Visual Assessment has been prepared as part of this application. See EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Amenity** for further details.<br>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**. |
| ***NGB 57:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development has been designed to avoid watercourses. All turbine locations and associated infrastructure are set back at least 50m from natural streams, and 10 m to significant drains. No works will take place within these buffer zones except for the watercourse crossings on the access track network. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | Further details are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** and **Appendix 2.1 CEMP**. |
| **Built Heritage and Culture - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***BH3:*** *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.*<br>***BHC 6:*** *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.* | 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, recorded, and left in situ within cordoned off areas, as outlined in EIAR **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage.**<br>No works are required within a Zone of Archaeological Potential of any monument. *Mitigation to protect Cultural Heritage is set out in Chapter 15 of the EIAR and the CEMP.*<br>The Cultural Heritage assessment in **Chapter 15** finds that The Proposed Development will not result in any predicted direct negative impacts on any known archaeological monuments or designated architectural heritage structures this is in line with Built Heritage and Culture objectives and policy in the Louth CDP. However, the Proposed Development will result in a range of Not Significant-Very Significant indirect negative impacts on the settings of archaeological monuments and architectural heritage structures located within surrounding lands during the operational phase. These indirect impacts will be long term in duration and will be reversible during the decommissioning phase. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | There are no mitigation measures to ameliorate these indirect operational stage impacts on setting, however it is noted that the duration of same is long-term and the effect is reversible following decommissioning of the Wind Farm Site. Due to the impact being indirect and on archaeological monuments that are not accessible to the public, combined with the impact being reversible on decommissioning, these impacts are not considered contravene the Louth CDP policy in relation to the protection of cultural heritage assets. |
| ***BHC 10:*** *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.* | An Archaeological Impact Assessment is included in **Chapter 15**; Cultural Heritage of the EIAR. Ground works during the construction phase will be subject to archaeological monitoring by a licence-eligible archaeologist under licence by the National Monuments Service. A systematic advance programme of archaeological field-walking surveys will also be carried out within Proposed Development areas in forestry plantations following tree felling to confirm the conditions predicted in this assessment, i.e., that they contain no visible surface traces of potential unrecorded archaeological or architectural heritage sites. The Applicant will comply with any conditions in relation to test trenching, surveys and monitoring that are attached to any grant of planning. Measures to protect archaeology are also set out in the CEMP in EIAR **Appendix 2.1.** |
| ***BHC 15:*** *To ensure no development which might have significant deleterious impacts upon the character of the World Heritage Site is permitted.* | It is not predicted that the Proposed Development will have any significant deleterious impact upon the character of any 'World |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | Heritage Site'. Further details are available in EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Amenity** and **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage** in the EIAR. |
| ***BHC 16:*** *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 **Chapter 13** and using view-shed analysis as a tool to guide and inform development management* | The Wind Farm Site is not situated between the northern ridgeline and the *World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne*. Further details are available in EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape & Visual Amenity** and **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage** in the EIAR. |
| ***BHC 29:*** *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.*<br><br>***BHC 38:*** *To ensure new development will not adversely affect the site, setting or views to and from historic gardens and designed landscapes of heritage significance.* | The Wind Farm Site is located approximately c. 257m from Stone House (Mullary Cross, Dunleer, 377m from Rokeby Hall and c.76m from Piperstown House. Further details are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Amenity**. 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. |
| **Infrastructure and Public Utilities - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***IU 14:*** *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.* | A detailed waste management plan has been prepared and included in the **CEMP** in **Appendix 2.1** of the EIAR. Further details are outlined in EIAR **Chapter 14 Material Assets**. |
| ***IU 19:*** *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* | The Proposed Development drainage design uses the principles of Sustainable Drainage, promoting the principles of onsite retention of flows and use of buffers and silt removal techniques. All drainage |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *development proposals shall be accompanied by a comprehensive SuDS assessment including run-off quantity, run off quality and impacts on habitat and water quality.* | related mitigation measures will be encompassed by a robust and proven Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) design proposed as part of the Proposed Development which will be used to control drainage and silt management on the site.<br>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**. |
| ***IU 20*** *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 (GDSDS) and demonstrate how runoff is captured as close to source as possible with subsequent slow release to the drainage system and watercourse.* | **Chapter 9** assessed the impacts of the Proposed Development on Hydrology and Hydrogeology. The design of the Proposed Development is compliance with the design criteria contained in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS). |
| ***IU 22:*** *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.* | Mitigation integrated as part of design and proposed during construction phase includes:<br>• Avoidance of water features based on baseline constraints mapping;<br>• Design of site elements to minimise effects on the water environment;<br>• A surface water management plan comprising the use of SuDS (drainage) embedded in the design to prevent pathways for pollution; and<br>• Construction phase pollution prevention procedures in accordance with best practice guidance.<br>Monitoring of the effect of the Proposed Development on the water environment will be provided by the Applicant through |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | physicochemical water quality monitoring. Implementation of the mitigation proposed eliminates or reduces the potential significance of effect to all receptors to "not significant".<br>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.** |
| ***IU 25:*** *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.* | All turbine locations and associated infrastructure are set back at least 50m from natural streams, and 10 m to significant drains. No works will take place within these buffer zones except for the watercourse crossings on the access track network.<br>Further details are outlined in **EIAR Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** and **Appendix 2.1 CEMP**. |
| ***IU 26:*** *To reduce the risk of new development being affected by possible future flooding by:*<br>• *Avoiding development in areas at risk of flooding and*<br>• *Where development in floodplains cannot be avoided, taking a sequential approach to flood risk management based on avoidance, reduction and adaptation to the risk.* | A Flood Risk Assessment is located in **Appendix 9.1** of the EIAR. The Wind Farm Site is located in Flood Zone C; where the probability of flooding from rivers and the sea is low (less than. 0.1% or 1 in 1000 for both river and coastal flooding). |
| ***IU 27:*** *To ensure all proposals for development falling within Flood Zones A or B are consistent 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* | A Flood Risk Assessment is located in **Appendix 9.1** of the EIAR. All proposed development is sited in **Flood Zone C**, at elevations that are sufficiently raised above adjacent indicative flood extents and will therefore have no impact on flooding elsewhere. Off-site surface water effects are mitigated by provision of SuDS components and no |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *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.* | increase in rate and volume of runoff of surface water from the site because of the development. |
| ***IU 49:*** *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 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.* | The Proposed Development is anticipated to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site.<br><br>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. |
| ***IU 54:*** *To support Sustainable Energy Communities and Local Community Group Initiatives to develop clean energy opportunities within the County.* | The Proposed Development will provide jobs, economic development and, in conjunction with the community development fund, will result in positive socio-economic impacts. The Proposed Development will produce renewable energy and displace polluting fossil fuels. The |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | additional renewable energy will help local homes and businesses to transition to a low carbon community. |
| ***IU 55*** *To support the implementation of the EU Green Deal, Climate Action Plan 2019 (or any subsequent plan), Programme for Government 2020, Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for County Louth and the Climate Action Charter and facilitate measures which seek to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.* | The Proposed Development supports the policies outlined in IU 55 as outlined in the following sections of this Planning statement;<br>EU Green Deal Section 5.3.4<br>Climate Action Plan 2024 Section 5.4.2<br>Programme of Government 2020 Section 5.4.7.<br>Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for County Louth – this has not been published, but Climate Adaption is covered in the Louth Draft Climate Action Plan which is assessed in Section 6.4.<br>Climate Action Charter Section 5.4.2 (part of the Climate Action Plan).<br>The greenhouse gas emissions savings that the Proposed Development will facilitate are set out in **Chapter 18; Air and Climate**. |
| ***IU 56:*** *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.* | 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 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. |
| ***IU 57:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development is anticipated to generate between 28.5 – 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 the EIAR and is available in **Chapter 12**. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| ***IU 58:*** *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'.* | The Proposed Development is located in two wind energy designation zones labelled 'Preferred' and "Open to Consideration". The Proposed Development has been assessed under each of the topics contained in the EIAR, with adverse residual environmental impacts actively avoided. It is clear from the findings of the EIAR and the NIS that the Proposed Development is located in an appropriate location. Section 4.2 of this report; Suitability of Candidate Site, assesses this in more detail.<br><br>**Chapter 3** of the EIAR, Alternatives, explores this in more detail.<br>The pressing need to address climate change and energy security means that it is vital there is a presumption that renewable energy plants are in the "overriding public interest" in line with recent guidance from the EU on the Renewable Energy Directive; RED III.<br><br>The draft National Planning Framework also outlines the importance of renewable energy at appropriate locations;<br>**National Policy Objective 71**<br>**Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a zero-carbon economy by 2050**.<br><br>*The RSES (see section 1.7) includes RPO 3.7;* |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | 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.<br><br>The details of how the Proposed Development meets this objective are set out in Table 5.1. |
| ***IU 62*** *To support the repowering/life extension of wind turbines where appropriate and subject to normal proper planning considerations.* | This policy was flagged as relevant to the Proposed Development during preplanning consultations. The Proposed Development is seeking a 35-year operational life. Prior to the end of the operational phase the repowering/life extension of the turbines will be considered. If repowering or life extension of the Proposed Development is not approved, then it will be decommissioned in the manner proposed in this planning application |
| ***IU 76*** *To require that in all new developments, local services such as electricity be undergrounded where possible and appropriate.* | The grid connection will be connected from the Wind Farm Site substation to Drybridge substation via underground 38kV cable |
| ***IU 77*** *To seek to avoid the sterilisation of lands proximate to key public transport corridors such as rail routes when future energy transmission routes/pipelines are being designed and provided* | The grid connection is not in proximity to any rail lines, the closest; the Great Northern Railway Main Line between Drogheda and Dunleer is |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | over 1km away at the closest point. This is shown on Figure 1.2 in **Chapter 1 Introduction** of the EIAR.<br><br>The Grid Connection route includes works in the public road including Local roads, Regional roads and a section in National Road N51 and a Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) beneath the M1.<br><br>The works are included in the Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment in **Chapter 16** of the EIAR. This Assessment identified that the potential effects of the Project on traffic and transport are considered to be **Slight to Moderate**, given the mitigation measures embedded in the design and proposed for the implementation of the Project. These works are also included in the Traffic Management Plan in **Appendix 16.2** of the EIAR.<br><br>These works will be located in the road and road corridor. This will not sterilise lands in the vicinity in compliance with **IU 77.** |
| ***IU 78:*** *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.* | The Proposed Development is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity and will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. The Proposed Development will contribute to energy security and the improvement of the electricity transmission network within Co. Louth. |
| ***IU 80:*** *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* | The grid connection will be connected from the Wind Farm Site substation to Drybridge substation via **underground** 38kV cable in line with the Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 and draft 2019 guidelines. A |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *avoidance is not possible, full consideration shall be given to undergrounding the lines where technically feasible and environmentally appropriate.* | 38kV Substation is also included in the Proposed Development. The Grid Connection and Substation will be constructed to the requirements and specifications of ESB Networks Limited. The Battery Energy Storage System will provide energy storage to capture surplus energy from the turbines and supply this to the grid. The siting and design of BESS has followed best practice. Alternatives to the proposed grid connection are assessed in **Chapter 3 Alternatives Considered.** |
| **Environment, Natural Resources and The Coast - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***ENV 4:*** *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.*<br>***ENV 5:*** *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.* | 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.<br>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.<br>The Proposed Development will contribute to the objectives and goals of EU Green Deal (outlined in Section 5.3.4), the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Climate Action Charter (Section 5.4.5) in ensuring sustainable development of onshore renewable energy across the County. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| ***ENV 6:*** *To implement the Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2018-2023 (and any subsequent Plan) in order to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to environmental noise exposure.* | Detailed Noise Impact Assessments for the Proposed Development has been completed and is detailed in **EIAR Chapter 13 Noise** and the following appendices:<br>**Appendix 13.1 – Construction Noise Report**<br>**Appendix 13.2 – Operational Noise Report**<br>**Appendix 13.3 - Battery Energy Storage System Noise report.**<br>No significant negative impacts have been identified in relation to noise.<br>The *Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2024 -2028 is still in Draft form (no 2018-2023 plan has been published) and has been considered in Section 3.5.* |
| ***ENV 8:*** *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.* | 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**.<br>The turbine lighting design will be in line with the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA). The IAA requires that all structures over 150m in height require lighting of an obstacle[30] to warn aviation traffic. This is assessed in **Chapter 14 Material Assets**. |
| ***ENV 9:*** *To require all details of on-site lighting associated with all future development are submitted to and agreed with the planning authority.* | Where planning is granted for the Proposed Development all details of on-site lighting associated with the Proposed Development will be |

[30] Irish Aviation Authority (2005) Statutory Instrument No. 215 of 2005, Obstacles to Aircraft in Flight Order, 2005. Available online at: https://www.iaa.ie/docs/default-source/publications/legislation/statutory-instruments-(orders)/irish-aviation-authority-(obstacles-to-aircraft-in-flight)-order.pdf?sfvrsn=fcb70df3_4 [Accessed:17/10/2024]

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | submitted to, agreed with, and will comply with the regulations set forth by the planning authority and the IAA. |
| ***ENV 14:*** *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 associated with site development work, where brownfield development is proposed.* | Impacts to Soils and Geology have 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 and Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** for further details. |
| ***ENV 18:*** *To protect fisheries in all rivers in the County, where appropriate, including relevant species as contained in Annex II of the Habitats Directive.*<br>***ENV 19:*** *To implement the requirements of the Groundwater Protection Scheme to protect known and potential ground water reserves.* | 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 EIAR **Chapter 9 Aquatic Ecology** and **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology**. |
| **Climate Action - Objectives & Policy** | |
| ***CA 1:*** *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.* | 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.<br>The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage.<br>The Proposed Development is anticipated to contribute to the reduction of between 29,010 and 36,645 tonnes of $CO_2$ per year which would otherwise be produced by generating the equivalent amount of electricity using fossil fuel sources (i.e. gas and coal). |
| ***CA 8:*** *To seek to identify projects or initiatives that will assist in meeting national climate and energy targets and to seek funding or support any funding applications for the* | 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. |

| Objective/ Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *implementation of these initiatives from available sources including the Department of Environment, Climate & Communications Climate Action Fund.* | The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS compound with up to 10MW of electricity storage. |

## 6.2 Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026

The purpose of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026 is to protect, enhance and restore biodiversity within the county of Louth, Ireland, as our contribution to national and international efforts to halt the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth. The vision of the biodiversity plan is for County Louth to have healthy people and wildlife, thriving in a healthy, natural environment.

The Plan states;

"*The county intends to move from a goal of "No nett loss of biodiversity" to "Nett gain", that is active management and restoration of our life support systems."*

It highlights that the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis are intrinsically linked, climate change accelerates the destruction of the natural world through droughts, flooding and wildfires, while the loss and unsustainable use of nature are in turn key drivers of climate change.

The plan states that;

*"Nature regulates the climate, and nature-based solutions, such as protecting and restoring wetlands, peatlands and coastal ecosystems, or sustainably managing marine areas, forests, grasslands and agricultural soils, will be essential for emission reduction and climate adaptation. Planting trees and deploying green infrastructure will help us to cool urban areas and mitigate the impact of natural disasters."*

It includes a number of objectives for the council to promote and protect the biodiversity of the council.

EIAR **Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9** assesses the potential impacts and effects of the development on biodiversity while the report to inform screening for appropriate assessment and Natura Impact statement considers the potential impacts and effects on European (Natura 2000) sites. Surveys were carried out to identify and evaluate the importance of ecological features present within the study area. There are no sites designated for nature conservation within the Project site and as such the Proposed Development only poses a risk of indirect effects on such sites. The mitigation measures set out in the Biodiversity chapter of the EIAR, in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will ensure that there will be no effects on sites designated for nature conservation as a result of the Project.

A number of mitigation measures are embedded into the design to protect habitats and species including minimisation of the works footprint and siting to avoid sensitive ecological features. Mitigation by avoidance for protected species includes timing of specific works to avoid disturbance, or potential mortality of species such as common lizard, the curtailment of turbines for bats at certain times of the year and in certain weather conditions and measures to avoid downstream pollution of watercourses.

The area of most ecological interest at the Wind Farm Site is the Drumshallon Lough wetland complex, comprising lake, marginal swamp vegetation, wet woodland, wet grassland, marsh and transition mire. This is a semi-natural to natural wetland system and supports an associated diverse flora and fauna (including breeding snipe). The importance of the Drumshallon Lough wetland system was recognised in the early stage of the wind farm project and the design ensured that the entire lake and associated wetland habitats were not affected directly by the works.

The Proposed Development will result in the loss of a limited amount of habitat of significant ecological importance in a local context, namely sections of hedgerow/treeline. The permanent loss of hedgerows to facilitate the Proposed Development will amount to an estimated 301m. An additional loss of 249m (maximum) will be lost as a result of the implementation of bat buffers at the turbines. With an average hedgerow width of 3m, this equates to 1,650m$^2$ (0.165ha). The loss will be offset by the planting of 0.52ha of broadleaved woodland. As part of the Development, a relatively small area of wet grassland (c.500 m$^2$), which is part of an extensive wetland habitat that includes a lake, marsh and transition mire, will be directly impacted as a result of the proposed development of a track leading from Turbine T03 to Turbine T05. This will be offset by the enhancement of a considerably larger area of wetland habitat (wet grassland and marsh) to the west. A Biodiversity enhancement Management Plan is included in **Appendix 6.1** of the EIAR with full details.

To facilitate the construction of access tracks, civil works and turbine hardstands 9.39ha of forestry will need to be permanently clear-felled. The forestry areas comprise of Ash, Sycamore, Sitka spruce and Norway spruce. All felled areas will need to be replaced in the form of replacement afforested land. Further details are provided in **Chapter 14: Material Assets in Section 14.6: Land use- Forestry.**

The losses will be offset through a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP). The BEMP area comprises the following: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland

habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.52ha). With mitigation measures implemented in full to minimise effects on local habitats, including enhancement of an area of wetland habitat, as well as a native woodland planting scheme, the impact by loss of hedgerows, scrub and a small area of wet grassland is reduced to the level of Slight Significance. With mitigation measures as presented implemented in full, it is considered that the significance of the predicted impact on terrestrial mammal species and amphibian and reptile species as a result of the Proposed Development will be Not Significant. With the implementation of the Biodiversity and Enhancement Plan, it is considered that the terrestrial ecological interests of the Wind Farm Site will increase during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, i.e. likely long-term Positive effect.

The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Ecology of the EIAR** and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1 of the EIAR**.

The Proposed Development has been designed to protect and enhance biodiversity and aligns with the objectives of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan for County Louth 2021-2026.

## 6.3 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.[31] 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 follows:**

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

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.'*

[31] 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

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 Beaty 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.

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 Wind Farm Site does not fall into any of these areas, it is therefore identified as having low to moderate levels of sensitivity. The Sensitivity of the existing landscape is assessed in detail in **EIAR Chapter 12; Landscape and Visual Impact**. The assessment finds that the landscape sensitivity of the Central Study Area is deemed to be Medium.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment in 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 that 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.

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.

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.

## 6.4 Louth Draft Climate Action Plan

The Louth Draft Climate Action Plan was generated as a result of the enactment of Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2021). It is a five-year plan to outline the actions which will be taken by Louth County Council to support the national policy.

The Plan outlines that climate action includes Mitigation and Adaption stating that;

- *'Mitigation efforts include transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, adopting sustainable land-use practices, and promoting eco-friendly transportation methods. These actions are essential for curbing the rate of global warming and minimising its adverse effects.'*
- *'Adaptation to climate change involves making changes and preparations to minimize the negative impacts of shifting weather patterns, such as developing climate-resilient infrastructure, implementing water management strategies, and promoting sustainable agriculture practices.'*

Investing in renewable energy sources such as wind is highlighted as creating job opportunities, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and contributing to a cleaner environment. The Plan outlines that the transition to a low-carbon economy generates a demand for skilled workers in industries such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem restoration, fostering job creation and economic growth.

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. The Proposed Development will incorporate a BESS 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. This improves the energy efficiency of the wind farm,

reducing the need to waste energy when the grid cannot accept it. By producing renewable electricity in an efficient and sustainable manner, the Proposed Development supports the County's draft Climate Action Plan policies and the wider transition to a low carbon economy by 2050 in line with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2021).



## 6.5 Louth County Council Noise Action Plan 2018-2023

The Noise Action Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the SI No. 549 of 2018, also known as the Environmental Noise Regulations. The European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018, S.I. No. 549 of 2018, implements EC Directive 2002/49/EC (Environmental Noise Directive - END) on assessment and management of environmental noise in Ireland. The overall aim of managing environmental noise within the framework of the regulations is to avoid, prevent and reduce the harmful effects due to long term exposure to environmental noise which will in turn promote good health. The Noise Action Plan is therefore designed with the twin aims of:

- Avoiding significant adverse health impacts from noise.
- Preserving environmental noise quality where good.

The draft plan states that

*"The potential noise impact of future development will be adequately managed through the Planning and Licensing processes, including existing provision for Environmental Impact Assessments. Implementation of existing regulations will continue, and the County Development Plan will take cognisance of the noise action plan."*

The Proposed Development has been subject to EIA, noise impacts are assessed in **Chapter 13; Noise**. The assessment finds that predicted construction noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors during all months of construction and during the HDD activities under the M1 Motorway are below the Daytime and Night-time threshold values within BS 5228 and are therefore deemed to be not significant. Construction vibration is likely be at low levels and would be short term in nature. Vibration levels generated from operational wind turbines are typically imperceptible even at the base of the turbine. As a result, no significant effects are anticipated.

Predicted operational noise levels from the Proposed Development indicate that for noise sensitive receptors neighbouring the Proposed Development, wind turbine noise from the Proposed Development will meet the WEDG 2006 Noise Limits at all assessed Noise Sensitive Receptors and are therefore deemed to be not significant. Predicted BESS and

substation noise levels have been assessed in accordance with BS4142 which indicates no adverse impacts. As a result, no significant effects are anticipated.



## 6.6 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, polices within the Meath County Council Development Plan related to archaeological landscapes and Visual effects on surrounding areas have been taken into consideration in this Planning Statement.

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 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 6.2**. Individual technical assessments included with the Environmental Report will also refer to CDP policies where relevant.

**Table 6.2: 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** | |
| ***HER POL 1:*** *To protect sites, monuments, places, areas or objects of the following categories:*<br>• *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;*<br>• *Monuments and places included in the Record of Monuments and Places as established under the National Monuments Acts;*<br>• *Historic monuments and archaeological areas included in the Register of Historic Monuments as established under the* | It is considered that there will not be any Cultural and Natural Heritage significant effects arising from the proposed Development on the cultural Heritage of County Meath. See EIAR **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage** for further details. |

| Objective/Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *National Monuments Acts; Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Chapter 8*<br>• *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;*<br>• *Archaeological objects within the meaning of the National Monuments Acts; and Wrecks protected under the 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.* | |
| ***HER OBJ 3:*** *To protect important archaeological landscapes from inappropriate development.* | No significant visual impact is predicted on archaeological landscape in County Meath, 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. |
| **HER POL 6:** *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.* | The Proposed Development is located c. 7.6km north of the Buffer Zone and c. 8.4 km northeast of the Core Area boundaries associated with the World Heritage Site of *Brú na Bóinne*. The Newgrange passage tomb is c.12.6km from the Proposed Development site. It is world-renowned for its alignment and deliberate orientation towards the southeast and the rising sun at Winter Solstice. This is the opposite direction of the Proposed Development and so horizon views to the SE from the tomb are unaffected<br><br>The LVIA in **Chapter 12** of the EIAR states that; |

| Objective/Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| | *'From particularly important locations such as Brú na Bóinne, the turbines would be seen at a considerable distance as a small part of wider panoramic views within which other turbines are visible.'*<br><br>The effect of this is assessed as not significant. The findings of the assessment did not identify any significant impacts in relation to receptors in the Central or Wider Study Area.<br><br>The Cultural Heritage assessment in **Chapter 15** of the EIAR states that;<br><br>*'The Battle of the Boyne battlefield site falls within the ZTV pattern to various degrees, LVIA assessment indicates that visibility is likely to be possible from some areas, but this visibility will be incidental and partial, relating to turbine tips and hubs. Given the limited views towards the Proposed development per ZTV analysis and select indicative VPs (VP19) outlined in **Chapter 12**, it is considered that any likely indirect impacts for the battlefield site (5.5km distant at closest point) are long-term negative impacts of negligible magnitude on a high value receptor resulting in a Not Significant/Slight significance of effect.'* |
| **HER OBJ 8:** *To encourage and facilitate pre-application discussions, in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the 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.* | The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, were contacted during the scoping exercise on the 27th July 2023. These are set out in Section 1.12 of **Chapter 1 Introduction** in the EIAR. |
| **HER OBJ 11:** *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.* | There is no significant impact on ridgeline/UNESCO views as confirmed in the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment in **Chapter 12** of the EIAR and the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment in **Chapter 15** of the EIAR. |
| **HER POL 52:** *To protect and enhance the quality, character, and distinctiveness of the* | It is considered that there will not be any landscape, visual and cumulative assessment |

| Objective/Policy | Statement of Compliance |
|---|---|
| *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.* | significant effects arising from the proposed Development. See EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape** |
| **HER OBJ 49:** *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.* | 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** |
| ***HER OBJ 56:*** 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 interfere unduly with the character and visual amenity of the landscape. | It is considered that there will not be any significant negative impacts on the views and prospects listed in the CDP. Further detail can be found in EIAR **Chapter 12 Landscape.** |

## 6.7 Compliance with Local Policy Conclusion

The Proposed Development's anticipated contribution of between 28.4 - 36 MW of renewable electricity, supports investment in sustainable energy production and associated infrastructure in County Louth while avoiding or minimising significant environmental or visual impacts, is in line with overarching objectives of the County Development Plan. The Proposed Development will also provide jobs, economic development and, in conjunction with the community development fund, will result in positive socio-economic impacts, which is also in line with the objectives of the Louth CDP.

The Wind Farm Site falls within two areas "*Preferred*" and *"Open to Consideration"* for wind energy development in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations. Furthermore, the Proposed Development 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.

The Proposed Development also meets the requirements Louth Development Plan to not have significant adverse impacts on the surrounding natural environment, including water quality, landscape or biodiversity. The Proposed Development has been assessed as having is not predicted to result in likely direct Significant effects on the Cultural Heritage resource at any stage. There are predicted indirect visual setting Significant effects during the operational stage at three standing stone monuments (SMRs) and four protected structures (Rokeby House, Stonehouse (2) and Piperstown House. The effect is reversible following decommissioning of the Proposed Development and these archaeological monuments are not accessible to the public, these impacts are therefore not considered to contravene the Louth CDP policy in relation to the protection of cultural heritage assets.

The Proposed Development is not within an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or an Area of High Scenic Quality. It is in an area of low population density relative to the county of Louth and the surrounding areas. 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.

The design of the Project was an iterative process which followed the constraints-led design approach. The constraints identification process included the gathering of information through detailed desk-based assessments, field surveys and consultation. The ecological assessments of the Wind Farm Site encompassed habitat mapping and extensive surveying of birds and other fauna. Sensitive ecological receptors were mapped, and the design constraints were applied including avoidance of isolated pockets of peat, treelines and hedgerows and other sensitive habitats and setbacks to watercourses. The avoidance of fragments of peatland and wetland on the Wind Farm Site allows these areas to continue to function in their capacity to provide flood protection as an ecosystem service by facilitating attenuation in line with Louth policy on the protection of ecosystem services and wetlands.

This process has ensured that existing habitats are retained save for some limited vegetation clearance which is minimised and replaced where possible in line with the Louth CDP. In addition, a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan has been included in the Project and comprises the following: (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.5 ha). The BEMP is outlined in **Section 6.8 of Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR and is presented in full in **Appendix 6.1** of the EIAR.

With the implementation of the Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan, it is considered that the terrestrial ecological interests of the Wind Farm Site will increase during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, *this is a* likely long-term Positive effect. This is in line with policy related to Biodiversity and natural heritage in the Louth CDP and Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Proposed Development complies with the 'Planning Guidelines for Wind Farm Development 2006' and has had regard to the 'Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019' as required by the Louth CDP in the Wind Energy section of the CDP. In this regard to achieve the goal of maximising the potential for wind energy development in pursuance of national targets for renewable energy, the Wind Energy Guidelines highlight that securing community and therefore public acceptance of wind energy is important. Suitable and early community engagement formed a key part of the design and planning phase of the Proposed Development. This also mirrors objectives and policies set out in the in the Louth CDP.

Environmental issues have been considered throughout the EIAR processes, as effects have been identified, mitigation has been applied to reduce impacts and enhance positive benefits. The findings of the EIAR technical chapters demonstrate that the environment can accommodate the Proposed Development without giving rise to significant adverse residual effects including cumulative effects. No significant negative environmental impacts of the Proposed Development were identified aside from a significant indirect, reversible impact on the landscape setting of the standing stones located within the Wind Farm Site For further information refer to **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage**.

The Proposed Development has also taken into consideration the Meath County Development Plan 2018 – 2023 in terms of landscape and visual and cultural heritage, particularly in relation to the UNESCO work heritage Site; Brú na Bóinne. The Project has been assessed as being in line with the policy requirements.

Ireland is in a climate crisis and the establishment of low carbon economies through increased renewable energy generation is now a time-critical consideration underpinning the development of the Country as a whole. This issue is emphasised in the Louth County Development plan. By displacing fossil fuels with renewable wind energy, the Proposed Development contributes towards the policies in these chapters. In addition to the Proposed Development's contribution to achievement of the national climate targets, it also offers

potential key capacity to address recent issues identified in relation to security of electricity supply. Energy security is of vital importance, particularly considering the ongoing geopolitical conflicts. The Proposed Development represents an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to Ireland's energy security.

# 7 OTHER RELEVANT POLICY

## 7.1 The Wind Energy Development Guidelines – Guidelines for Planning Authorities June 2006

The 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines provide best practice advice on planning wind energy developments and advice in relation to the information that should be submitted with planning applications including the effects to be assessed. The guidelines set out criteria which assist in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development. They are also of assistance to developers and the wider public in considering wind energy development. The Proposed Development has considered the provisions of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 in the design and siting of the Wind Farm and is considered to be in line with the recommendations as set out in the Guidelines. Full details on compliance with the criteria in the 2006 guidelines can be found in **EIAR Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual Impact, Chapter 17; Noise and Vibration** and **Chapter 17 Shadow flicker**.

**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).

The Proposed Development has been designed in accordance with the IWEA Best Practice Guidelines for the Irish Wind Energy Industry 2012.

The key relevant elements of the guidelines and the location of further information on these topics is set out below;

- Layout; the layout design of the Proposed Development was an iterative process which followed the constraints-led design approach and following the guidance set

out in the IWEA guidelines. The process is set out in **Chapter 3 Alternatives** of the EIAR.

- Pre-planning meetings; as least one pre-planning meeting is recommended to be held with the planning authority, preferably at an early stage in the application process to discuss the scope of the application and to seek any views held by the planning authority; Section 2.4.2 of this report.
- EU Water Framework Directive and water quality impacts; **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology** of the EIAR.
- EIA Directive and the requirement for EIA. Section 1.7.2 of EIAR **Chapter 1; Introduction.**
- EIA Scoping and Consultation;, guidance is provided on Section 1.12 of EIAR **Chapter 1 Introduction.**
- Habitats Directive; AA and NIS requirements. NIS submitted with the Application.
- Birds Directive and impact to birds; **Chapter 8 Ornithology** of the EIAR.
- Mitigation Measures; Each of the technical assessment Chapters in the EIAR contains mitigation measures to avoid, reduce and remedy in line with the IWEA guidelines.
- Project Description; In line with the IWEA guidelines, **Chapter 2** of the EIAR; **Project Description** sets out a detailed description of the Proposed Development including construction related activities, works to accommodate the turbine delivery works, drainage infrastructure, the grid connection, wastes, forestry felling and afforestation. A list of cumulative projects is included in **Appendix 2.4** of the EIAR. This has informed the cumulative assessments in the technical assessments of the EIAR.
- Consideration of Alternatives; this is set out in **Chapter 3 Alternatives**.
- Noise; **Chapter 13; Noise** assesses the impacts of the Proposed Development and its compliance with the IWEA guidelines.
- Shadow Flicker; the **Shadow Flicker** assessment in **Chapter 17** of the EIAR was undertaken in line with the IWEA guidelines.
- Ecology, guidance is provided on surveys and assessment of the impact on the following are recommended;
    - Birds; Assessed in **Chapter 8 Ornithology** of the EIAR
    - Bats Assessed in **Chapter 7 Bat Ecology** of the EIAR
    - Habitats Assessed in **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR and in the NIS.
    - Mammals Assessed in **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR
    - Flora Assessed in **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR
    - Aquatic environment Assessed in **Chapter 8 Aquatic Ecology** of the EIAR

- Natura 2000 sites Assessed in the separate NIS submitted with the application
- Invertebrates Assessed in **Chapter 6 Biodiversity** of the EIAR

- Soils and Geology, including the impacts on ground stability, soil contamination and compaction, removal of bedrock, peatlands, geological heritage sites are assessed in **Chapter 10 Soils and Geology**. Ground water levels are assessed in **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.**
- Hydrology and Water Quality impacts, including sedimentation, runoff, nutrient enrichment, pollution and potential impacts on water table; **Chapter 11 Hydrology and Hydrogeology.**
- Landscape and Visual Impacts, guidance is provided on impact assessments, mythology for the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, sensitivity, landscape context and cumulative effects. These have been applied in **Chapter 12 Landscape and Visual**.
- Cultural Heritage, guidance is given on the types of effects to be assessed, consultation and visual assessment; these are addressed in **Chapter 15 Cultural Heritage.**
- Felling and forestry; Described in **Chapter 2 Project Description** and assessed in **Chapter 14 Material Assets** and **Appendix 2.2 Forestry Report**
- Telecommunications Systems and Aviation Issues; **Chapter 14 Material assets**
- Human Impacts including socio-economics, recreation and amenity, health and safety are assessed in **Chapter 5 Population and Human Health**. Roads, traffic & transport are assessed in **Chapter 16; Traffic and Transport**, land use is assessed in **Chapter 14 Material Assets**, Noise is assessed in **Chapter 13 Noise** and Shadow Flicker in **Chapter 17; Shadow Flicker** of the EIAR.
- The guidance provides information on the format of Community Engagement. This is outlined in **Chapter 2 Project Description** Section 2.11 and the Community Report (**Appendix 1.4**) of the EIAR.

### 7.1.1 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 5MW 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 **Section 12.9** of this document and the Community Report in **Appendix 1.4** of the EIAR. The consultation process for the Proposed Development is considered to be in line with the guidelines.



## 7.2 The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines -Guidelines for Planning Authorities December 2019

The Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines were published for public consultation in February 2020. The guidelines will supersede the 2006 guidelines if they are formally adopted by the government. However the draft guidelines remain subject to change and the final version as adopted may differ from the 2019 consultation draft.. The key relevant points in the draft Revised Guidelines include:

- The application of a more stringent noise limit and noise monitoring regime.
- 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 introduction of new obligations in relation to engagement with local communities along with the provision of community benefit measures.

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

- As detailed **in Chapter 2**, Section 2.4.1 of the EIAR, the proposed layout was designed to achieve an optimal separation distance between the dwellings and the proposed turbines, providing a minimum separation distance of 720m between turbines and the nearest dwellings. In accordance with Section 6.18.2 of the Draft 2019 Guidelines, 4 no. properties are owned by landowners involved with the Project and have agreed to a reduced setback distance with the Applicant. It is worth noting that the properties availing of the exception are all in excess of the mandatory minimum setback of 500 meters, with the closest dwelling located 552m from Turbine 05. The remaining 3 no. dwellings are setback in excess of 500m, with a setback of

563m, 686m and 689m from Turbine 02. Please refer to Figure 1.3. of the EIAR, which illustrates all sensitive receptors located within 2km of the proposed turbines.
The Proposed Development will meet the WEDG 2006 Noise Limits at all assessed Noise Sensitive Receptors. The impacts are therefore deemed **not significant.**
Please refer to Chapter 13 Noise for further details.

- To avoid shadow flicker at inhabited houses, assessment and mitigation measures have also been included in the Proposed Development, in line with the 2019 Draft Guidelines, full details of this can be found in EIAR Chapter 5: Population and Human Health.
- The public consultation was a multi-stage approach outlined in the Community Report (**Appendix 1.4 of the EIAR**).
- The Proposed Development will provide a community benefit fund for the first 15 years of operation.

# 8 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

## 8.1 Introduction

The planning application should be considered on the basis of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area including the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the environment.

During the EIA scoping with key consultees and consultation with the public, the below key recurring environmental considerations emerged:

- Principle of Development
- Residential amenity
- Biodiversity, Appropriate Assessment and NIS
- Ornithology
- Hydrology and Hydrogeology
- Climate
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Material Assets
    - Quarry
    - Telecommunications and Aviation

These topics have been discussed in preceding sections of this statement, however, they are grouped here to provide further detail.

### 8.1.1 Principle of Development

As detailed in **Chapter 4** of the EIAR, Planning Policy and throughout this Planning Statement, there is a positive planning context for the Proposed Development as it supports national policy with regard to renewable energy provision and national renewable electricity targets. The Proposed Development is compliant with International, European and National policy on energy security, emissions reductions and renewable energy production. The Climate Action Plan 2024 sets out a detailed roadmap designed to deliver the proportion of renewable electricity up to 80% by 2030, including a target of 9 Gigawatts of onshore wind energy by 2030. The proposed pathway includes a more rapid build-out of renewable generation capacity, including wind power generation technologies. The proposed 5 no. wind turbines have an estimated maximum export capacity (MEC) of 28.5 – 36MW of renewable electricity through the indigenous wind resource at the Wind Farm Site, depending on the final turbine technology installed. It is considered that such development would contribute to achieving the Climate Action Plan's target of achieving 80% renewable

electricity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030. The nature and export capacity of the Proposed Development accords with National Policy Objective 55 of the National Planning Framework (NPF), which seeks to 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.

At a regional level, the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly supports the delivery of renewable energy stating that *"The Strategy supports an increase in the amount of new renewable energy sources in the Region. This includes the use of wind energy – both onshore and offshore, biomass, and solar photovoltaics and solar thermal, both on buildings and at a larger scale on appropriate sites in accordance with National policy and the Regional Policy Objectives outlined in this Strategy"*. The nature of the proposed development is consistent with this objective.

At local level, the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 supports the development of Wind Energy projects in appropriate areas. The Louth County Development Plan 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 requirements and its vital role in helping achieve national targets in relation to fossil fuel reductions and consequently greenhouse gas emissions with Objective S04 stating the following:

> "*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".*

The Proposed Development would therefore be integral to contributing to the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County in accordance with the policy objectives set out in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Proposed Development is subject of two zoning designations, *"Open to Consideration"* and *"Preferred Areas"* for wind energy development according to Map 10.1: Areas suitable for Wind Development in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. According to Objective IU 58, the placement of wind farms and related infrastructure in *"Preferred Areas"*

as specified on Map 10.1 will be encouraged, and the Council will 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."* The Wind Farm Site's designation as "*Preferred Areas"* and *"Open to Consideration"* for wind farm developments underlines its suitability for this type of project. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations.

Having regard to the foregoing, it is considered that the nature and export capacity of the Proposed Development is supported by national, regional and local policies and objectives regarding renewable wind energy

### 8.1.2 Residential Amenity

When selecting a suitable site to accommodate the Proposed Development, the Applicant sought to identify an area with a relatively low population density. Having reviewed the settlement patterns in the vicinity, the subject site emerged as a suitable area to accommodate the Proposed Development. The surrounding area is largely rural with isolated residences and farmsteads and ribbon development throughout the area. The Wind Farm Site is located in the Electoral Divisions (EDs) of Mullary and Clogher (49.6km²). The population density of these EDS is;

- Clogher ED 68.8 persons per square kilometre
- Mullary ED 76.3 persons per square kilometre

The average population density across the whole of Ireland is 72 persons per square kilometre. Across County Louth the average population density per square kilometre is significantly higher than the national average at 169.6 persons per square kilometre Therefore, the EDs of Mullary and Clogher, where the Wind Farm Site and surrounds are located, have a relatively low population density in contrast to the County-wide population densities which are greater than 2 times that of the study area for the same period.

Regarding setback distances, SPPR2 of the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines December (2019) mandates a minimum setback of 4 times the wind turbine's tip height, or at least 500 meters, from residential properties for visual amenity, with some flexibility for small-scale, on-site energy generation developments. Section 6.18.2 of the Guidelines states that an exception may be provided for a lower setback requirement from existing or permitted dwellings or other sensitive properties to new turbines where the owner(s) and occupier(s) of the relevant property or properties are agreeable to same. It

notes that the noise requirements of these Guidelines must be capable of being complied with in all cases. In such exceptional reduced setback situations, the relevant parties must provide written confirmation to the satisfaction of the planning authority that they have agreed to a reduced setback and have no objection to the proposed wind energy development.

The current Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) do not specify exact separation distances between wind turbines and dwellings. Instead, the guidelines focus on a more comprehensive approach, considering various factors such as the size of the turbines, local topography, and the existing environment. Notably, they provide specific recommendations for mitigating certain impacts: shadow flicker at neighbouring dwellings should not exceed 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day when within 500 meters of a turbine (Section 7.14). Additionally, the guidelines indicate that noise impacts are generally not significant if the nearest turbine is more than 500 meters away from any noise-sensitive property (Section 5.6).

The Proposed Development involves the installation of 5 no. wind turbines, each adhering to specific dimensions as detailed in the EIAR. These turbines are of the three-bladed, horizontal-axis type, with varying specifications: tip heights range from 179.5m to 180m, rotor diameters from 149m to 163m, and hub heights from 98m to 105m.

Considering the setback distances specified in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines from December 2019 (SPPR2), which mandate a setback distance for visual amenity purposes of four times the tip height of the relevant wind turbine with a mandatory minimum of 500 meters from any residential property, alongside the current Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) indicating that noise impacts are generally not significant if the nearest turbine is more than 500 meters away from any noise-sensitive property, the Proposed Development requires a minimum setback distance of 720m. This requirement is based on the tallest proposed turbine, which has a tip height of 180m.

As detailed in **Chapter 2**, Section 2.4.1 of the EIAR, the proposed layout was designed to achieve an optimal separation distance between the dwellings and the proposed turbines, providing a minimum separation distance of 720m between turbines and the nearest dwellings. In accordance with Section 6.18.2 of the Draft 2019 Guidelines, 4 no. properties are owned by landowners involved with the Project and have agreed to a reduced setback distance with the Applicant. It is worth noting that the properties availing of the exception

are all in excess of the mandatory minimum setback of 500 meters, with the closest dwelling located 552m from Turbine 05. The remaining 3 no. dwellings are setback in excess of 500m, with a setback of 563m, 686m and 689m from Turbine 02. Please refer to Figure 1.3. of the EIAR, which illustrates all sensitive receptors located within 2km of the proposed turbines.

In light of the foregoing, it is considered that the separation distances between the proposed turbines and residential dwellings complies with both the current Wind Energy Guidelines (2006) and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019, ensuring that the project adheres to established standards for minimising impact on neighbouring properties regarding noise and visual impact.

Notwithstanding the Proposed Development's compliance with the current Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) and the and the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2019 regarding separation distance from dwellings, **Chapter 13: Noise** includes a Noise Impact Assessment which was undertaken to determine the likely significant effects from the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the Proposed Development, at nearby noise sensitive receptors (residential properties).

A background noise survey was undertaken at seven noise monitoring locations. The data was analysed in conjunction with on-site measured wind speed data and operational noise limits have been derived in accordance with the WEDG 2006.

Predicted construction noise levels at the nearest noise sensitive receptors during all months of construction are below the Daytime and Night-time Category A threshold values within BS 5228 and that predicted levels would be short term. Construction vibration would also likely be at low levels and would be short term. Therefore, the effect from construction noise and vibration is deemed to be not significant. Activities related to decommissioning would use similar plant to that used for construction activities and would occur at the same locations, as such noise level output during the decommissioning phase is expected to be no higher than the construction phase.

For the operational noise assessment WEDG 2006 Noise Limits were derived in relation to background noise levels and other applicable criteria in accordance with the WEDG 2006 Guidelines.

Predictions of wind turbine noise were made in accordance with good practice guidance using three candidate wind turbines with serrated trailing edge blades, a 149-163 m rotor

diameter range and a hub height of 98.5-105 m. Predicted operational noise levels from the Proposed Development indicate that for noise sensitive receptors neighbouring the Proposed Development, wind turbine noise would meet the WEDG 2006 Noise Limits at all Noise Assessment Locations (NAL) and are therefore deemed to be not significant.

The three candidate wind turbine models were chosen in order to allow a representative assessment of the noise impacts. Should the Proposed Development receive planning permission, the final choice of wind turbine would be subject to a competitive tendering process. The final choice of wind turbine would, however, have to meet the noise limits determined and contained within any condition imposed.

Predicted BESS noise levels have been assessed in accordance with BS4142 which indicates no adverse impacts. As a result, no significant effects are anticipated.

In light of the foregoing, it is considered that the proposed development will not adversely impact the residential amenity of properties in the vicinity by way of noise and disturbance.

As detailed in **Chapter 17: Shadow Flicker**, the Applicant is committed to ensuring that shadow flicker from the Proposed Development will not significantly impact the residential amenities of surrounding properties. As standard across all projects, EDF implement mitigation measures to cease operation of the turbines during periods of potential shadow flicker to ensure that no significant residual shadow flicker effects are experienced at any sensitive receptor within 10 rotor diameters of a turbine. In that regard, the Proposed Kellystown Wind Farm will comply with the recommended limits of 30 hours per year and 30 minutes per day detailed within the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) and the zero shadow flicker policy as set out in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2019).

**Chapter 5** of the EIAR assessed the significance of potential effects of the Proposed Development on population and human health. There are no likely significant effects for the Project, alone or cumulatively.

### 8.1.3 Biodiversity, Appropriate Assessment and NIS

EIAR **Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9** assess the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on biodiversity. The Wind Farm Site is not within or adjacent any areas designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protected Area (SPA) or Natural Heritage Area (NHA). The Project is not located within any area designated for ecological protection. The nearest Natura 2000 site, i.e., SPA or SAC to the Project are the Boyne Estuary SPA (ID: 004080), which is located approximately 7.7km southeast of the

Proposed Development and the Clogher Head SAC (ID: 001459), which is located approximately 8Km west of the Proposed Development. The Natura Impact Statemen (NIS) concludes that no European Site will be adversely effected by the Proposed Development.

There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) within a 15 km radius of the Wind Farm Site. The closest NHA is the Skerries Islands NHA (Site Code: 001218), which is located approximately 28km southeast. The area within the Wind Farm Site that is of most ecological interest is Drumshallon Lough wetland complex, comprising lake, marginal swamp vegetation, wet woodland, wet grassland, marsh and transition mire. Transition mire is listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. At the Drumshallon site, the conservation status and the functionality of the habitat is considered generally good. Drumshallon Lough was labelled as site no. LH119 with a rating of C+ County Conservation and subsequently was given a B National Importance rating (www.wetlandsurveysireland.com). It is identified as a 'Candidate Natural Heritage Area' (cNHA) according to the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. Candidate Natural Heritage Area is the name given to wildlife sites that are proposed by NPWS and by third parties for consideration as NHAs. Prior to designation these sites may require further detailed survey and evaluation for their conservation value. These sites have no legal protection until they are taken up into the formal NHA designation process. The Drumshallon Lough wetland system comprises the highest value ecological feature within the Study Area. Drumshallon Lough was considered as a key constraint and was carefully avoided when commencing the design stage of the Proposed Development.

The Wind Farm Site is situated within an agricultural landscape used for both pastoral and arable farming, and commercial forestry plantations occur scattered through the landscape and are relatively small in size. There are two stands of mature broadleaved woodland which occur on site and are also of ecological note. This area constitutes the most important foraging and roosting habitat for bats onsite.

The Proposed Development will result in the loss of a limited amount of habitat of significant ecological importance in a local context, namely sections of hedgerow/treeline. The permanent loss of hedgerows to facilitate the Proposed Development will amount to an estimated 301m. An additional loss of 249m (maximum) will be lost as a result of the implementation of bat buffers at the turbines. With an average hedgerow width of 3m, this equates to 1,650m$^2$

The Wind Farm has been designed to sensitively avoid the Drumshallon Lough wetland system, other than minor encroachment by a new track at the extreme western end where an area of approximately 500m$^2$ (0.05ha) will be affected.

The loss of habitats as a result of the Project will be offset through a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP). The BEMP comprises the following:

(i) The BEMP will preserve and enhance part (3.52ha) of the wetland system, which will offset the loss of a relatively small area of wet grassland 500m$^2$ (0.05ha) as a result of the Proposed Development. By including a large area of wetland within the Plan compared to the relatively small loss as a result of the Proposed Development, the Plan recognises and highlights the importance of this wetland system, which has been rated as of National Importance and is listed in the Wetlands Inventory for County Louth.

(ii) The BEMP will offset the loss of hedgerows as a result of the Proposed Development by a native woodland replanting programme (approx. 0.52ha), and this will also mitigate the impacts on bats by provision of enhanced habitat through tree planting which adjoins existing broadleaved woodland shown to be of high importance for bats.

With the implementation of the Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan, to minimise effects on local habitats, including enhancement of a Nationally Important wetland, as well as a native woodland planting scheme, the impact by loss of hedgerows, scrub and a small area of wet grassland is reduced to the level of Slight Significance. It is anticipated that with the implementation of the BEMP, the overall ecological value of the Wind Farm Site will increase over time, with benefits not just for habitats and bats but also birds, mammals and invertebrates.

The Transport Delivery Route (TDR) and the Grid Connection Route (GCR) are also assessed. For the TDR, works involving the removal of hedging, and tree pruning may also be required along various sections. The hedging will be later replanted and the effect of this impact is rated as of Slight Significance.

The GCR extends over a length of 12.65km. There are no habitats of significant ecological interest alongside the roads of the Grid Connection Route. After the works are complete and the roadside strips re-instated, full recovery of the marginal vegetation is likely to take place within 1-2 years. The effect of disturbance to roadside habitats is rated as Not Significant.

The mitigation measures set out in the Biodiversity Chapters 6, 7 8 and 9 of the EIAR, the Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP), the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will ensure that there will be no effects on local watercourses and ultimately any European or National designated site as a result of the Project.

Mitigation measures are also embedded into the design to protect habitats and species including minimisation of the works footprint by using existing infrastructure and siting to avoid sensitive ecological features. Mitigation by avoidance for protected species includes timing of specific works to avoid disturbance, or potential mortality of species, the curtailment of turbines for bats at certain times of the year and in certain weather conditions and measures to avoid downstream pollution of watercourses.

### 8.1.4 Ornithology

The Proposed Development design accounted for ornithological sensitivities and reduced potential effects on birds. A Bird Protection Plan will be produced to ensure that all breeding birds and any protected roosting species are protected during construction and decommissioning of the Proposed Development as well as during any major works required during the operational phase. In addition, specific mitigation will be implemented to ensure that protected bird species are not disturbed during any works associated with the Proposed Development. Following full implementation of this mitigation, no significant effects of the Proposed Development on statutory sites or sensitive bird species are predicted. This is in accordance with RSES Policy **RPO 7.16** and CDP Policy NBG 3, NBG 9, NBG 14 and NBG 15 and the Louth Biodiversity Action Plan by protecting all natural heritage sites which are designated or proposed for designation under European legislation, National legislation and International Agreements as well as protecting and promoting biodiversity outside these areas. The Ornithology assessment and NIS concludes that the Proposed Development will not adversely affect the integrity of any of the European sites concerned in view of their conservation objectives.

### 8.1.5 Hydrology and Hydrogeology

**Chapter 11** of the EIAR assesses the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on Hydrology. The Proposed Development surface watercourses within the boundary drain either to the east within the Burren or Boyne catchments, or to the west within the Dee catchment, all of which eventually drain to the Irish Sea. Where the watercourses drain to Irish Sea the waters are designated / protected as the Boyne Coast

and Estuary Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Seapoint Bathing Water Area, and the Dundalk Bay SAC. The Proposed Development boundary spans across three groundwater bodies; the Louth groundwater body, the Wilkinstown groundwater body, and the Drogheda groundwater body. Aspects of the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of the Proposed Development that may impact on the receiving water environment have been identified and the pathways of potential effects assessed. Implementation of the mitigation proposed would result in no significant residual effects to the receiving water environment as a result of the Proposed Development. This is in accordance with the Policy **NBG 3, NBG 5** and **NB57** in the Louth County Development Plan.

### 8.1.6 Climate

The Proposed Development will contribute to a net national reduction in the emissions of greenhouse and other gases resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels. Savings of carbon dioxide arise from the generation of renewable electricity, such that generation from other sources (which emit carbon dioxide|) are offset. The estimated savings depend on the assumption of which source of electricity is displaced and the savings range from 29,010 to 36,645 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. This is compliant with the Louth CDP strategic objective SO 4 in relation to the transition to a low carbon and climate resilient County and policy objective IU 49 in relation to reducing green house gases. Ireland aims to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. By 2030, the country targets generating 80% of its electricity from renewable sources as per the Climate Action Plan 2024. Among the most important measures in the Climate Action Plan 2024 is a target of 9GW from onshore wind by 2030. In December 2023 Ireland's total onshore wind generation capacity was 4.8GW[32], leaving a shortfall of 4.2GW to be achieved in 7 years. The Proposed Development will contribute between 28.5MW and 36MW of installed capacity of renewable electricity, which the context of the ongoing climate emergency is an urgent Irish national priority.

### 8.1.7 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage is assessed in **Chapter 15** of the EIAR. The Proposed Development will not result in any predicted direct negative impacts on any known archaeological monuments or designated architectural heritage structures in accordance with the Built Heritage and Culture objectives and policy in the Louth CDP. However, the Proposed Development will result in a range of Not Significant-Very Significant indirect

[32]Statista. (2024). Onshore wind energy capacity in Ireland 2008-2023 https://www.statista.com/statistics/868474/onshore-wind-energy-capacity-in-ireland/

negative impacts on the settings of archaeological monuments and architectural heritage structures located within surrounding lands during the operational phase. These indirect impacts will be long-term in duration and will be reversible during the decommissioning phase.

There are no mitigation measures to ameliorate these indirect operational stage impacts on setting, however it is noted that the duration of same is long-term and the effect is reversible following decommissioning of the Proposed Development. Due to the impact being indirect and on archaeological monuments that are not accessible to the public, combined with the impact being reversible on decommissioning, these impacts are not considered contravene to the Louth CDP policy in relation to the protection of cultural heritage assets.

Cumulative effects associated with the Proposed Development are predicted to be not significant.

### 8.1.8 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

**Chapter 12 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** (LVIA) of the EIAR assesses the effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual amenity of the receiving environment. The assessment considers the potential effects during the construction, operational, and decommissioning phases.

As set out in the LVIA, the Wind Farm Site and much of the Central Study Area (<5 km) are contained within the 'Uplands of Collon and Monasterboice' Landscape Character Area (LCA) as designated in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027. This designation recognises the site's relatively elevated plateau location and the opportunities this brings for views over the wider landscape. It states that the landscape quality is 'quite high', and that the elevation affords a 'high scenic quality value'. In this regard, it is noted that much of the land within the southwest of the Central Study Area is designated as Areas of High Scenic Quality (AHSQ) in recognition of its scenic qualities. It is important to note that whilst the area of landscape that falls within the 'Clogherhead and Port Oriel' Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), this area of landscape is located 7km to the west at its nearest point. As outlined in the description of character, the scenic qualities of this landscape draws on the coastal views north, south and east, rather than directly towards the Wind Farm Site. Within the Central Study Area there are also three designated views and prospects, View 23 (Callystown to Clogherhead), View 25 (Brownstown southwards over AHSQ towards Drogheda), and View 26 (Newtown Monasterboice towards Monasterboice

Tower). Whilst these reflect the scenic opportunities presented in the Central Study Area, it is noted that none of these views directly orientate towards the Proposed Development, and in the case of View 23, and 25 orientate in the opposite direction from the Wind Farm Site.

The description of the LCA highlights the archaeological significance of the landscape and the prevalence of archaeological monuments. Whilst it is recognised that there are features present in the Central Study Area (such as Monasterboice) that have notable heritage and archaeological value, in terms of the contemporary experience and perception of the landscape, the Central Study Area is not considered to have a notable time-depth quality, relative to other parts of the wider landscape such as in the Boyne Valley, where a mix of modern residential properties and working characteristics that relate to subsistence informing landscape character. To the west of the Central Study Area, the underlying agrarian landscape is influenced by the M1 road corridor and other notable roads such as the R132. The scale of this infrastructure, and its audible and visual influence, degrades the landscape and scenic qualities of the Central Study Area.

Whilst the landscape of the Central Study Area is recognised for its scenic and archaeological values, these values reflect the longstanding human interaction with this landscape over time, rather than being explicitly informed by naturalistic qualities and values. It is a working landscape, that is extensively influenced by typical productive rural landscape activities and land uses, and so whilst some parts are inherently more susceptible to change, such as in the locality of Monasterboice, it is considered to be a robust landscape. On balance of the reasons outlined above, the LVIA describes the landscape sensitivity of the Central Study Area as 'Medium'.

As detailed in the EIAR, mitigation measures focus on early-stage site selection and design rather than traditional on-site measures, adhering to minimum setback distances to reduce perceived turbine size. To minimise visual intrusion, the development team applied the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (2006) guidance on wind farms, which includes siting and design criteria for a number of different landscape types. The subject site is located within a landscape setting that is consistent with the 'Hilly and Flat Farmland' landscape type according to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines. Therefore, the following criteria was applied when siting and designing the Proposed Kellystown Windfarm:

- **Location**: The Proposed Development is located on a broad elevated plateau, which is preferred within the guidance, and is located at sufficient distance from

surrounding properties such that they do not visually dominate them. Their elevated location also ensure that they do not contribute to visual clutter.

- **Spatial Extent**: The Proposed Development has a relatively small spatial extent that responds to the scale of this landscape.
- **Spacing**: The turbines are well spaced, allowing a high degree of visual permeability between the turbines. Their regular spacing corresponds with the scale of the underlying field pattern.
- **Layout**: The staggered linear layout adopted is advocated for this landscape type.
- **Height**: The turbines are considered to be consistent with the scale of this relatively elevated plateau landscape and responds to the scale of the surrounding agricultural and commercial forestry context. Importantly, the turbines do not appear over scaled in relation to the topography of the receiving landscape and are in no instances considered to dominate.
- **Cumulative effect**: Whilst the landscape contains other wind energy developments, where visible cumulatively, these are at such distances that the wind turbines are not perceived to visually dominate.

The EIAR examines the residual landscape effects and landscape character, value, and sensitivity, noting the impact on landscape character at both local and broader scales within the study area. This includes analysis of views of recognised scenic value, local community views, centres of population and houses, transport routes; and tourism, recreational and heritage features located within the study area.

As detailed in the EIAR, the Proposed Development will have a modest physical impact on the landscape within the site as none of the Proposed Development features have a large 'footprint' and land disturbance/vegetation clearing will be relatively limited. The topography and land cover of the Wind Farm Site will remain largely unaltered with construction being limited to access tracks, turbine hardstands, watercourse crossings, temporary construction compound, meteorological mast, and forestry area felling around the wind farm infrastructure. A 38kV on-site substation compound will be constructed with minimal landscape effects, and all internal site cabling will be underground to minimize land cover disruption. The construction phase, while involving heavy machinery and materials movement, is considered to have a short term medium negative impact on landscape character in the central study area.

For most commercial wind energy developments, the greatest potential for landscape impacts occurs as a result of the change in character of the immediate area due to the

introduction of tall structures with moving components. In terms of scale, the broad scale of the plateau landform helps to assimilate the wind farm within the context of the Central Study Area, where these attributes reduce the type of scale conflict that can occur in more intricate landscape areas. In terms of function, the broad plateau has a utilitarian character due to the presence of working rural land uses such as agriculture, commercial forestry, mineral extraction, and residential development. Whilst it is recognised that parts of the Central Study area have scenic value, this scenic value is considered to relate primarily to the availability of longer range views, and views towards the coast and distant mountainous landscape, as well as over the much altered rural landscape context. Although the proposed development will influence the scenic properties of the landscape by merit of their presence, the spacing afforded between the turbines, allows a high degree of visual permeability such that these visual relationships will remain available, and the underlying features and characteristics of the landscape will be retained.

It is acknowledged that whilst the proposed turbines will not occur within the AHSQ, located in the southern part of the Central Study Area, their presence will indirectly influence the designated scenic value. Again, this scenic value is influenced by extensive human intervention in the landscape, including the M1 road corridor which passes through it. In terms of the indirect effects of the Proposed Development on the character of the landscape in the Wider Study Area (5-20km), the influence of the proposed turbines on the perceived landscape character will progressively lessen with distance, as they become incrementally small and partially visible features in a wider landscape context, and the degree to which they remain visible and noticeable reduces. With respect to the 'Clogherhead and Port Oriel' AONB to the east of the Wind Farm, whilst it is acknowledged that this location is sensitive from a scenic perspective, it is noted that the site is located 7km to the west at its nearest point. The Wind Farm Site does not sit within any of the views presented as being of particular importance, those being of the coastal aspects to the north, east, and south, and the proposed turbines (whilst visible) would be present as a long-range visible feature in inland views. It is not considered that the proposed development would notably influence the character of this area of landscape in any significant manner.

In relation to the landscape of the Boyne Valley to the southwest and southeast, and in particular, the distinctive valley floor landscapes which are considered to be of high sensitivity, where visible, the proposed turbines would be seen partially at distance, as modest scale background features, and occupy a limited spatial extent in wider panoramic views. Whilst it is noted that there are parts of the wider landscape that are considered to be highly sensitive, and which have high scenic and archaeological value, in all instances,

the landscape character is impacted by a longstanding human interaction with the landscape such as the presence of existing buildings and infrastructure.

It is important to note that in terms of duration, the Proposed Development represents a long-term (but not permanent) impact on the landscape and is reversible. The lifespan of the project is 35 years, after which time it will be decommissioned, and the landscape will be reinstated to prevailing conditions. It is expected that the decommissioning phase will be completed within one year and that within approximately 2-3 years there will be little evidence that a wind farm was present. Effects will therefore be temporary/short-term in duration.

In summary, there will be physical impacts on the land cover of the Wind Farm Site as a result of the Proposed Development during the operational phase, but these will be relatively minor in the context of this working, rural landscape, that includes quarrying activities and commercial forestry. The scale of the Proposed Development will be well assimilated within its landscape context without undue conflicts of scale with underlying landform and land use patterns.

The influence of the Proposed Development on landscape character will inherently be most notable at the immediate landscape level, where their scale and form have the potential to generate considerable change to the character of the landscape. With distance the comparative influence of the Proposed Development reduces. For these reasons, and within the context of the Central Study Area, the magnitude of the landscape impact during the operational phase is deemed to be High-medium within the Wind Farm Site and its immediate environs (within approximately 1km) reducing to Medium for the remainder of the Central Study Area. The quality of the landscape effects is deemed Negative, and the duration of the impact is long- term.

Beyond the Central Study Area (5km from the Wind Farm Site) and relevant to the Wider Study Area, the magnitude of landscape impact during the operational phase is deemed to reduce to Low and Negligible at increasing distances as the wind farm becomes a proportionately smaller and component of the overall landscape fabric. The quality of the landscape effects would remain Negative, and the duration long-term.

The EIAR's visual impact assessment, detailed in Table 12.10 (in **Chapter 12**), categorises viewpoints based on distance, sensitivity of visual receptors, and the magnitude and significance of visual impacts. The findings indicate that visual impacts at most Viewshed

Reference Points (VRPs) range from 'Moderate-Slight', with a general negative long-term outlook, but become negligible or imperceptible at greater distances. Although this landscape contains many sites of archaeological and heritage importance and are included in the wider consideration of visual impacts concerning designated views, and Tourism, Recreational & Heritage Features, four of the viewpoints (VP21, 22, 23, and 24) were selected as being of particular importance in terms of being key views. This includes panoramic views from the Hill of Slane, and from the iconic passage tombs of one of the world's most important neolithic landscapes, Brú Na Bóinne, which includes the Dowth, Knowth, and Newgrange passage tombs. The sensitivity is categorised as Very High – High in recognition of the importance of these locations, and the sensitivity of visual receptors to changes in views of the surrounding landscape, whilst simultaneously recognising that the landscape is not immune from human influence. Of the four viewpoints, views from the Hill of Slane (VP21) are the most extensive, albeit at 14.2km, views are distant, and seen as part of a wider panoramic view within which other turbines are visible. The limited spatial extent and minor visual intrusion results in no greater than a 'Slight' likely visual impact significance. Despite being marginally closer to the Wind Farm Site, visibility is more partial from the three passage tombs, giving rise to 'Slight' and 'Slight-imperceptible' likely visual impact significance. It is considered that the Proposed Development will not generate significant visual impacts concerning key views at these important heritage sites.

In total, of the 25 viewpoints assessed as part of this LVIA, 13 (VPs 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16, and 25) were selected as being relevant to a consideration of visual effects in relation to the local community. Two of the viewpoints (VPs 9 and 10) experienced the highest likely visual impact recorded for the Proposed Development being that of 'Substantial-Moderate' Visual Impact Significance, and six of the viewpoints (VPs 4, 5, 11, 12, 15 and 25) experienced a 'Moderate' Visual Impact Significance. All of these viewpoints are located within 1.8km of the proposed turbines, where views are proximate, and the scale of the turbines is perceived as being most prominent.

It is acknowledged that the proposed turbines will become one of the defining features in this local landscape context, however through considered design, the dispersed layout of the proposed turbines results in a strong degree of visual permeability through the scheme so as not to generate any strong sense of enclosure or heavily obstruct views of the distant landscape where available. Overall, whilst the turbines will present at a considerable scale from some of the nearest local community receptors, they do not generate any notable sense of over-bearing. As such, it is not considered that the Proposed Development will generate significant visual impacts for local community receptors.

The EIAR assesses the impacts on centres of population, major routes, heritage and amenity features, and concludes that the Proposed Development will result in significant visual impacts. It also considers the implications of turbine dimension variations, concluding that these variations have negligible impact on the overall visual assessment.

Cumulative impacts are also considered, particularly focusing on visual aspects and landscape character. The proposed wind farm will be one of only a few present in the wider landscape, and in the great majority of instances will be viewed in isolation. Therefore, the EIAR concludes that the magnitude of cumulative impact is deemed to be low.

It is considered that whilst the proposed Kellystown Wind Farm will result in noticeable landscape and visual changes, particularly within its immediate vicinity, these effects are not considered significant and are expected to diminish rapidly with increased viewing distances and in the broader landscape context. The Proposed Development is not anticipated to generate significant cumulative impacts with other existing or potential wind energy developments within the study area.

In conclusion, having regard to the existing site characteristics, and relevant planning guidelines, it is considered that the proposed turbine structures, by reason of their height (tip height up to 180m), scale, and siting in this upland rural area, will not adversely impact the character and visual amenity of the surrounding rural landscape. The Wind Farm Site's designation as 'Preferred Area' and 'Open to Consideration' for wind farm developments underlines its suitability for this type of project. This designation implies a recognition of the potential for wind energy development in the area, balanced against environmental, social, and economic considerations. In relation to visual impact, it is considered that the proposed turbine structures, while substantial in height and scale, have been sited to minimise visual intrusion. The turbines' slender profile and the project's overall design have been planned to reduce visual clutter and maintain the landscape's coherence. The turbine design, characterised by aerodynamic lines and minimalistic appearance, contributes to reducing the visual prominence of the structures in the landscape, ensuring they do not appear overly dominant.

The EIAR's LVIA clearly demonstrates that the turbines, though visible, will integrate effectively within the upland landscape's character and will allow the existing landscape to maintain the visual coherence, which is already host to a blend of natural features such as hills and forestry coupled with man-made elements such as the adjacent quarry and

agricultural buildings. The proposed turbines will be viewed as part of the broader landscape, adding a contemporary element to the rural and natural setting without detracting from its overall beauty and character. In light of the foregoing, it is considered that the Proposed Development represents a well-considered and suitably located renewable energy development that aligns with local and national planning policies and guidelines and would not cause significant adverse impacts on the landscape character or visual amenity of the area.

### 8.1.9 Material Assets

The Kilsaran quarry at Gallstown is situated adjacent to the Proposed Development. Due to the proximity and the nature of the development, the quarry has been assessed as a relevant cumulative development and potential combined effects are detailed throughout the EIAR.

The quarry commenced operation in 1993 following receipt of planning permission and was subsequently obtained a Quarry Registration Certificate (LCC Reg. Ref. RQ1) in January 2005 on foot of the requirements of section 261 of the Planning and Development Acts, 2000 (as amended). The quarry site comprises approximately c. 84.5 hectares. A portion of the northern edge of the Wind Farm Site is bounded by a Local Road L6274, which connects a County Road L2275 and a Regional Road R132, and by greenfield land containing 1 No. vacant dwelling. The extractive methods currently practiced on site are comprised of topsoil and overburden removal, drilling, blasting, crushing, washing and screening of rock to produce roadmaking stone, stone for concrete and general aggregates.

The quarry site has recently been granted planning permission (LCC Reg. Ref. 22190) on the 27th November 2023 to extend the extractive area to include a parcel of land comprising c. 10ha to a proposed depth of +60m AOD. This area of land is located to the central eastern portion of the quarry site. The total average annual extraction rate of 750,000 tonnes is expected to continue for a period of 25 years. The expansion plans which have been assessed throughout the EIAR in terms of cumulative impacts.

Blasting carried out in the quarry causes Ground Vibrations and Air Overpressure in the surrounding areas. Ground Vibration from blasting occurs due to inefficient use of explosive energy. Air Overpressure is energy transmitted from the blast site within the atmosphere in the form of pressure waves.

A Ground Vibration and Air Overpressure Blast Monitoring assessment was undertaken at the Wind Farm Site over a period of three months which captured three blast events on the (10/07/2024, 09/08/2024 and the 12/09/2024). The objective of the monitoring was to inform the structural analysis and design of Wind Turbines to ensure that they can withstand the impacts of the quarry's current and future blasting activity.

The Assessment measured the Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) for Ground Vibration and Peak Sound Pressure Level (PSPL) for Air Overpressure.

The threshold limit for Peak Sound Pressure Level (PSPL) was set at 180 dB. This threshold, though higher than typical thresholds for structures sensitive to air overpressure, is justified for wind turbines, which are designed to withstand large dynamic forces.

Ground vibration at sensitive receptors is measured as Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) in mm/s. The PPV is the maximum instantaneous velocity of a particle at a point during a given time interval. A Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) threshold of 100 mm/s has been conservatively established for wind turbines based on engineering judgment and relevant standards, including BS ISO 4866:2010, BS 5228-2:2009, and BS 7385-2:1993. Although these standards do not specifically recommend thresholds for wind turbines, it has been selected to safeguard the structural integrity of the turbines under blasting conditions.

The wind turbines are designed with substantial Class A and Class B foundations — such as linked reinforced concrete or stiff reinforced concrete rafts—capable of withstanding significant dynamic loads, including those from wind and seismic activity. Each wind turbine foundation will be constructed with 949m3 of concrete and 84.78t of reinforced steel. The foundation will be 27.2m in diameter and 3.5m in depth. This makes them relatively flat with high capacity to withstand horizontal pressures and forces which could arise from blasting.

While BS 5228-2:2009 suggests a 50 mm/s limit for cosmetic damage in reinforced structures (associated with damage to plasterboard portions within buildings), it is considered that the higher threshold of 100 mm/s which corresponds to the potential for minor damage in building is a more appropriate threshold. Given the robust design of wind turbine structures, which allows them to tolerate greater dynamic forces than conventional structures, this threshold provides a conservative buffer against potential blasting vibrations.

The results recorded at the turbine location during the three blast events are presented in **Chapter 13 Noise – Appendix 13.4** of The EIAR.

The Ground Vibration and Air Overpressure blast monitoring concluded that at the locations of the proposed Wind Turbines, the PPV and PSPL values are projected to remain within threshold limits (100mm/sec and 180dB), confirming that they are situated at a safe distance. This zone is established with the understanding that the turbines will not experience any structural or cosmetic damage due to blasting activities. The blasts from the quarry will have no impact on the structural integrity of the Wind Turbines or the ground structure in which they are situated. Further details are outlined in **Chapter 10: Soils and Geology** and **Chapter 13: Noise and Vibration**.

The proximity of the turbines to this facility consolidates land use by facilitating compatible neighbouring industries to efficiently make use of the area. the presence of the quarry makes certain development types, such as residential, unsuitable. This is in line with Louth County Development Plan policy on Economy and Employment EE 3 and EE 55 and National Policy Objectives 15, 21 and 23 in the National Planning Framework in relation to rural economic development and diversification and National Policy Objective 74 in the Draft National Planning Framework in relation to Renewable Energy and complementary land uses. The proximity to the quarry will also reduce the construction phase impacts related to stone deliveries on the local road network.

#### *8.1.9.1 Aviation*

Operating wind farms have the potential to cause a variety of adverse effects on aviation. Rotating wind turbine blades may have an impact on certain aviation operations, particularly those involving radar. The physical height of turbines can cause obstruction to aviation and the overall performance of communications, navigation and surveillance equipment. According to the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) Guidance Material Annex 14, Structures that extend to a height of 150m or more above ground elevation should be regarded as an obstacle. The IAA requires that all structures over 150m in height require lighting of an obstacle to warn aviation traffic. The proposed turbines at Kellystown Wind Farm will have a maximum overall tip height of 180m above ground level, during operation.

During Consultation, a response to scoping was received from the Department of Defence highlighted that the Department opposes the erection of wind farms or other obstacles which will affect the ability of the Irish Air Corps to train and operate in a safe and economic manner. It was highlighted that the proximity to the M1 could potentially affect Air Corps' ability to access regional areas. The M1 is situated approximately 1.92km west of the nearest turbine in the Wind Farm Site**.** In response to the highlighted potential issue, an

aviation study was undertaken by Aviation Planning Consultants (O'Dwyer and Jones) on behalf of the developer to consider the conditions and requirements laid down by the Civil Aviation and Irish Aviation Authority and the Department of Defence and Air Corps. The findings of the report show that the distance of 1.92km between the M1 motorway and the nearest turbine, is twice the necessary International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) clearance required (0.9km) either side of any visual flying route for Helicopters. The study also concluded that the Proposed Wind Farm Site was not in conflict with any current aviation requirements and complied with the Civil Aviation and IAA Best practices.

**Civil Aviation and IAA Best practices**

ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization): With regard to the aviation features on the ICAO Aeronautical Chart, which included Dublin airport, aerodromes, disused military aerodromes, aerial sporting locations and the Dublin ATC control area, the findings concluded that none of the aviation features will be affected by the Proposed Wind Farm site.

Civil Aviation Flight Paths*:* With regard to the Civil Aviation Flight Paths, the findings concluded that a flight route near the Kellystown area (EIDW-AD-2.24-12.1), which shows 2 transit routes (BAMLI & NEVRI) several thousand feet above site, will be unaffected by the Proposed Wind Farm site.

Aviation Authority Guidance[33], ICAO guidance[34] and EASA guidance[35], (EU) 2018/1139 and the Aerodrome Regulation (EU) 139/2014), with regard to Wind Turbines: To comply with the Aviation Authority Guidance principal requirements, the turbines will be marked and lit, specifically related to the height, (specified as per ICAO guidance and EASA guidance) and will be identified on aviation charts.

The Department of Defence have expressed concerns on a previous wind farm application (unrelated project) where proposed turbines were within 9.6km of a 'military installation' or army camp or within 37km of a Casement Aerodrome and more generally anywhere within

[33] IAA, S.I. No. 266/2019 - Irish Aviation Authority (Standardised Rules Of The Air) Order, 2019 Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2019/si/266/made/en/print
IAA, S.I. 72/2004 - Irish Aviation Authority (Rules of the Air) Order, 2004 Available at: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/72/made/en/print

[34] ICAO, Annex 14 - Aerodromes - Volume I - Aerodromes Design and Operations, Ninth edition July 2022 and ICAO, Annex 14 - Aerodromes - Volume II – Heliports, Fifth edition, July 2020

[35] EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) Easy Access Rules for Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA), revision Feb 2023 Available at: https://www.easa.europa.eu/en/document-library/easy-access-rules/online-publications/easy-access-rules-standardised-european

a Military Operating Area (MOA; set up under section 68 of the IAA Act 1993). The Kellystown Wind Farm Site is outside the MOAs.



Military Helicopter Routes above Motorways

The Department of Defence have expressed concern with 'tall objects' within 3 nautical miles (5.556km) of either side of a motorway, citing that that helicopters may navigate by following motorway routes. If an area of 3 nautical miles was to be left free on either side of the motorway, there would be an 11.1km corridor along all motorways unavailable for any 'tall objects'. Based on the Aviation Analysis Report, O'Dwyer and Jones Aviation Planning Consultants do not consider this to be necessary in all cases as the Department's concerns can be appropriately managed through other methods. This is expanded upon as follows:

- The ICAO, Annex 14, Vol 2- Heliports states that the 'obstacle limitation surfaces' for helicopter Approaches and Take-offs have an overall width of 1.8km at its widest part. This is applicable to all helicopters;
- ICAO and EASA make provisions for wind turbines up to 315m in height in any location once they have the specified lighting and are marked on aviation charts;
- Provision in aviation legislation for low-level flying of military aircraft is made only in relation to the MOAs and specific restricted and Danger Areas delineated by IAA and published in AirNav Ireland;
- Outside the MOAs Aircraft are obliged to meet the EU Aviation Safety Agency Standardised European Rules of the Air (SERA) 2020 (also contained in the IAA Rules of the Air Orders S.I.72 of 2004 & S.I. 266 of 2019) which require aircrafts to fly at specified safe heights and horizontal distances (1.8km at full width) which are substantially less than the outlined 11.1km. These specified safe distances are within the proposed turbine locations; and
- It is not possible to maintain the obstacle free corridor (11.1km) along any of the motorways or national roads as requested by the Air Corps, due to the presence of existing mast and turbines already well within this distance, along motorways or national roads (M1, N1 and N2).

In summary, given the ICAO and EASA specified overall width (1.8km) to facilitate helicopter Take-off and Approaches (worse case width), 0.9km clearance either side of any visual flying route is sufficient in that is provides a safe 'low level route' for military helicopters. As the Proposed Wind Farm site at its closest turbine is twice this distance (1.92km) from the M1 motorway, it is concluded that the Proposed Wind Farm site is well clear of any low-level helicopter route above the M1 or the National Road N1 or N2. The report concluded that the Proposed Wind Farm Site is not in conflict with any current aviation requirements.

The impact assessment provided in EIAR **Chapter 14; Material Assets**, concluded that no significant effects are predicted on air navigation as a result of the Proposed Development. The full aviation study is located in **Appendix 14.2** of the EIAR.

### 8.1.10 Traffic and Transport

**Chapter 15; Traffic and Transport** assesses the potential effects of traffic associated with the Proposed Development on the public road network and on sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, describes the existing public road and junction network, identifies whether there is any potential for significant effects to arise (both in isolation and in combination with other developments) and outlines the mitigation measures that will be implemented to negate any potential significant effects that might arise. The assessment evaluates the potential effects of traffic generated by the Proposed Development during the construction, operation and decommissioning.

The assessment evaluates the potential effects of traffic associated with the construction of the Proposed Development infrastructure, the Grid Connection in the public road network between the Onsite Substation and Control Room and the existing 110kV substation at Drybridge and the transportation of turbine components on the public road network between the Port of Galway and the Proposed Development.

The Traffic and Transport Assessment states that no long-term significant effects have been predicted as part of the Proposed Development, however mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design to maintain the highest standard of road safety, minimise delay and disruption to all public road users, and to comply with statutory regulations.

The results of the traffic analysis show that the existing public road network can accommodate the increased traffic volumes generated by the Proposed Development. Works on the public road network will be carried out using an approved traffic management plan and site entrances will be signposted in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual published by the Department of Transport. Visibility at site entrances will be maintained in accordance with the Louth County Council Development Plan 2021-2027. There is likely to be a slight residual effect on the condition of road surfaces at the site entrances due to vehicles turning and on the grid connection route prior to final road reinstatement. However, following final road reinstatement, there will be no residual effects associated with the construction of the Proposed Development.

There will be no residual effects on the public road network during the operational phase of the Proposed Development. The results of the traffic analysis show that the existing public road network can accommodate the operational traffic generated by the Proposed Development when combined with predicted public traffic growth beyond 2070. The interface between the Proposed Development and the public road network has been designed to eliminate residual risk with visibility splays, signs and roadmarkings, vehicle dwell areas and access gates setback from the carriageway edge to allow vehicles to pull off the road when entering the Site.

The results of the traffic analysis show that the existing public road network can accommodate the increased traffic volumes generated by the Proposed Development during decommissioning. There is likely to be a slight residual effect on the condition of road surfaces at the site entrances due to vehicles turning. The decommissioning will be subject to a separate traffic management plan as the destination for recycled turbine parts may differ from the port of origin.

The assessment has identified that the potential effects of the Project on traffic and transport are considered to be Slight to Moderate, given the mitigation measures embedded in the design and proposed for the implementation of the Project.

# 9 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The planning application should be considered on the basis of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and on the likely effects of the Proposed Development on the environment.

## 9.1 The National Interest and Strategic Importance

The Proposed Development will make a valuable contribution to climate change adaptation and greenhouse gas reductions as part of the international (Section 5.2) and European (Section 5.3) efforts to combat climate change.

Ireland is facing significant challenges in efforts to meet renewable energy and emissions targets and is falling behind in the longer-term movement away from fossil fuels (Section 5.4). Ireland has one of the highest rates of importing fuel in Europe with imported dependency increasing to 81.6% in 2022 according to the SEAI[36]. Energy demand in

[36] SEAI. (2023). ENERGY IN IRELAND. Available here Accessed 26/10/2024

Ireland has been growing and is expected to continue to increase, especially electricity demand which is expected to grow by 37% to 2031[37]. Increases to the cost of carbon, supply issues and potential political insecurity increases fossil fuel price volatility. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, energy prices in Ireland have increased significantly. The SEAI's Electricity Prices in Ireland Report; January to June 2022[38], found on average residential electricity prices increased 10.4% in the 12 months prior to June 2022. Concern over energy costs amongst the population of Ireland is high, a survey by the Journal in October 2022[39] found that 77% of people said that they already or intend to use their home heating less often. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI)[40] report on Energy Poverty published in 2022, has also warned that as many as 43% of households could now be in energy poverty, defined as when more than 10% of the household's income is spent on electricity and gas bills. Approximately 850MW of installed wind energy capacity is generated in Wind Farms in Ireland that will reach the end of their planning permissions or will have to be decommissioned between now and 2030. A recent report from Wind Energy Ireland[41] finds that between now and the end of 2030, Ireland may lose around a fifth of the total installed onshore wind energy capacity. This means that at a time when we should be accelerating towards our Climate Action Plan targets by increasing installed wind energy, we may end up in a position to fall backwards.

The high rate of imported fossil fuel dependency, the increasing demand for electricity, existing wind farms reaching the end of their operating life and current energy price volatility make it vital to introduce more domestic renewable energy generation plants, such as the Proposed Development to provide reliable, secure and affordable energy supplies in Ireland. The Proposed Development improves Irish energy security and will reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels in line with the National Energy Security Framework (5.4.5) and the REPowerEU Plan (Section 5.3.2.

The construction of the Proposed Development will also positively contribute to the regional economy bringing investment and jobs that will help to support and retain confidence in the key regional industries of construction and renewable energy.

[37] 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 01/11/2024

[38] SEAI. (2022). https://www.seai.ie/publications/SEAIs-EPR-data-for-JAN-to-JUN-2022.pdf Accessed 01/11/2024.

[39] The Journal. (2022). Cost of living crisis: Most households intend to use their home heating less often this winter https://www.thejournal.ie/poll-energy-use-ireland-heating-5891701-Oct2022/ Accessed 01/11/2024

[40] ESRI. (2022). Energy poverty at highest recorded rate https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate Accessed 01/11/2024

[41] WEI. (2024) Repowering Ireland. https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/final-repowering-ireland-report-june-2024.pdf. Accessed 25/09/24

## 9.2 Economic Importance of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development would represent a strategically significant investment in the locality of Louth and the wider southern region. The Proposed Development will provide an significant economic benefit to both the Irish and local economies. The Proposed Development provides the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base, providing the stability and diversity to the rural economy that can stimulate further industry investment to take place.

The influence of the Proposed Development to the de-carbonisation of the electricity network will contribute positively to an issue of strategic social importance. This is illustrated by the text of the Irish government's recent Climate Action Plan 2024 which sets an ambitious 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, such as streamlining regulation and encouraging reinforcement of the grid to facilitate greater renewables penetration. The significance of the action plan is underlined by the Irish government's recent declaration of a climate emergency.

The RSES recognises and aims to support the many opportunities for wind as a major source of renewable energy. It declares that opportunities for both commercial and community wind energy projects should be harnessed, having regard to the requirements of the 2006 DoHPLG Guidelines on Wind Energy.

As a form of sustainable energy, and with an anticipated output of between 28.5 and 36MW, the Proposed Development will contribute to the renewable energy targets in County Louth and in the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Area.

The Proposed Development will be a significant regional project providing a sizable economic benefit through local investment, employment, local authority rates, and a local community benefit funds in accordance with Government, regional and local planning policies.

Wind Energy Ireland produced a report on The Economic Impact of Onshore Wind in Ireland[42] below which illustrated that the onshore wind industry in 2020 supported over 5000 jobs and by 2030 there is a potential to increase this to over 7000, as shown **Figure 9.1**. The report also outlines the current benefits of onshore wind along with how far Ireland

[42] WEI. (2021). The Economic Impact of Onshore Wind in Ireland https://windenergyireland.com/images/files/economic-impact-of-onshore-wind-in-ireland.pdf Accessed 01/11/2024

has to go to reach binding targets. Note that the installed capacity needs to nearly double within in a ten year period.

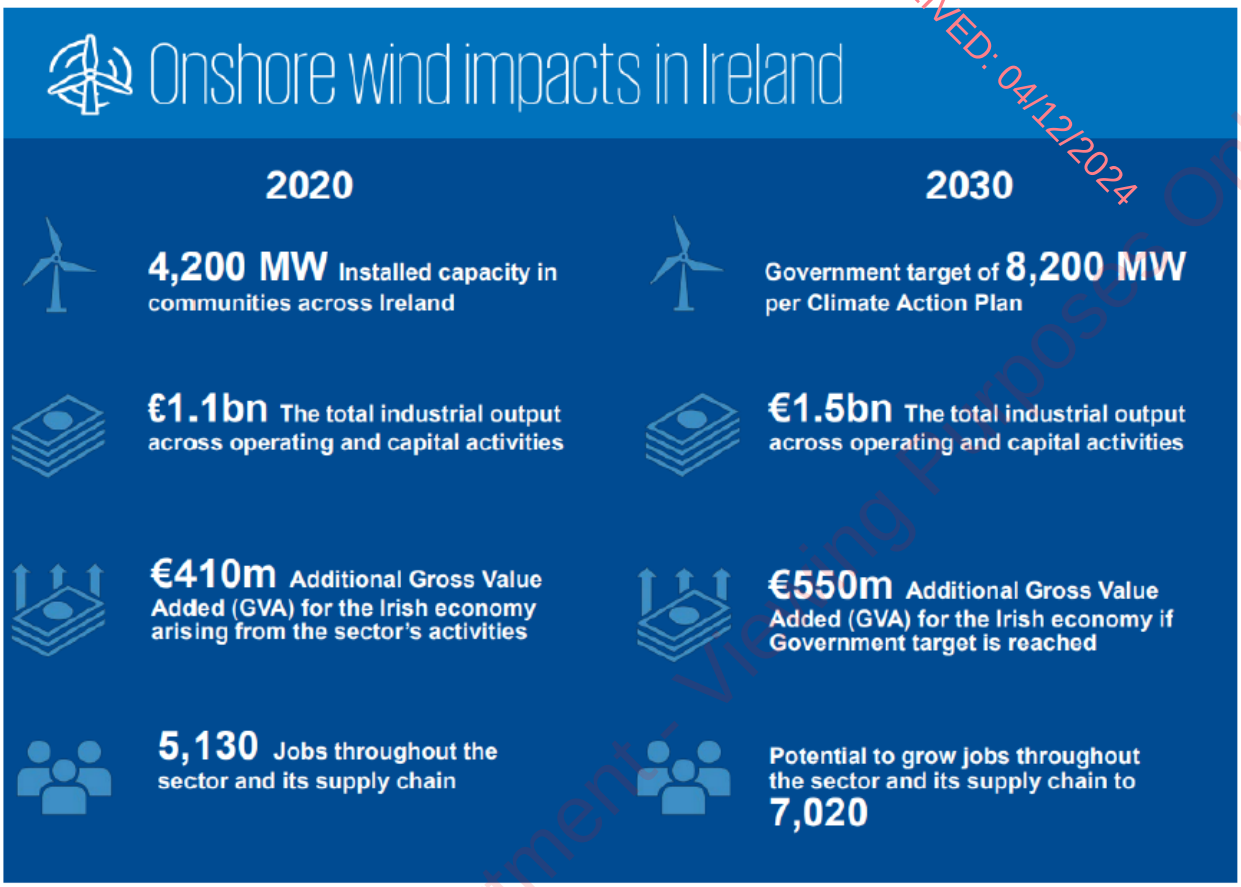



**Figure 9.1: Onshore Wind Impacts in Ireland (from the Economic Impact of Onshore Wind in Ireland Figure 1.6)**

The construction of the Proposed Development will positively contribute to the regional economy bringing investment and jobs that will help to support and retain confidence in the key regional industries of construction and renewable energy. This is assessed in **Chapter 5 Population and Human Health** of the EIAR.

## 9.3 The Proposed Development as Sustainable Development

The Proposed Development is an example of sustainable development, enshrined in the National Planning Framework and in the new Draft National Planning Framework. There are three facets to sustainable development which are economic, social and environmental. The Proposed Development meets each of the three facets of sustainable development as laid out in **Table 9.1**.



**Table 9.1: The Proposed Development as Sustainable Development**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Economic Role** | The Proposed Development provides the opportunity to reinforce the existing local renewable energy industry knowledge and skills base by providing new jobs in the industry, 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, enabling diversification. The Proposed Development will have a positive economic impact with several Irish firms commissioned to work on the design, environmental assessment and planning. The construction and operational phases will also create jobs locally and nationally and will lead to further economic development.<br>The Proposed Development represents a strategically significant investment in the locality |
| **Social Role** | The impact of the Proposed Development to the de-carbonisation of the Irish electricity network is a positive contribution to an issue of strategic social importance. This is illustrated by the Climate Action Plan 2024 which 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, such as streamlining regulation and encouraging reinforcement of the grid to facilitate greater renewables penetration. The significance of the action plan is further underlined by the Irish government's recent declaration of a climate emergency.<br><br>The deployment of modern, efficient wind turbine technology, which is currently the cheapest form of new generation, will also contribute to reducing the cost of energy and benefit Irish consumers through lower energy prices.<br><br>The Proposed Development has the potential to bring significant positive benefits to local communities. It will support sustainable local employment; it will contribute annual rates to the local authority; and it will provide opportunity for local community investment in the project in line with the new Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS). This is a Government of Ireland initiative that provides support to renewable energy projects in Ireland. A Community Benefit Fund will be put in place for the RESS period (i.e., 15 years of the operation) of the Project |

| | |
|---|---|
| | to provide direct funding to those areas surrounding the Project. The significant annual community benefit fund will be established in line with Government policy which will include funding for both wider community initiatives and a Near Neighbour scheme focused on houses in close proximity to the Project. The additional renewable energy that the Proposed Development will generate will help support Ireland's wider low carbon transition. It will help to meet the additional electrical demand that will be created by the electrification of the transport and heating networks and the growing tech industry installations such as data centres. |
| **Environmental Role** | The Proposed Development has been assessed by the EIA process in terms of its impact on the environment, where impacts have been identified, the design has been amended and mitigation implemented to avoid, prevent and reduce adverse impacts and maximise positive impacts.<br><br>Approximately 29,010 to 36,645 tonnes of carbon dioxide will be displaced per annum by the Proposed Development. This helps to mitigate climate change and will have a positive impact on the environment.<br><br>The Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) comprises (i) the enhancement of existing wetland habitat to the south and west of Drumshallon Lough, and (ii) the planting of an area of broadleaved woodland (c.0.52ha). With the implementation of the Biodiversity and Enhancement Plan, it is considered that the terrestrial ecological interests of the Wind Farm Site will increase during the operational phase of the Proposed Development, *i.e.* likely long-term Positive effect. |

The Proposed Development has been conceived and designed to align within the planning and sustainable development objectives of the local area. The success of this is documented in comprehensive detail through the EIAR and illustrated in **Table 6.1** which shows accordance with the provisions of the Louth County Development Plan.

The application documents and EIAR show that the Proposed Development provides an excellent opportunity to stimulate continued and additional investment to maximise beneficial impact towards national targets, while also minimising the resulting environmental effects.

## 10 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Throughout this Planning Statement, renewable energy is identified as being required to play a vital 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 RED III and the renewable energy policy adopted at a European, national, regional and local level, provides strong policy support for renewable energy development. The Proposed Development contributes to supplying the national demand for renewable energy, which in the context of the ongoing climate emergency 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. 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 2023, installed onshore wind capacity in Ireland reached 4.78GW[43], leaving a shortfall of 4.2GW to be achieved in 7 years.

The Proposed Development also meets the definition of Sustainable Development in terms of the three sustainability pillars; Economy, Environment and Social.

This Planning Statement outlines how the Proposed Development is compliant with International, European and National policy on energy security, emissions reductions and renewable energy production. It reviews policy for the Eastern and Midland region and local Louth and Meath County policies and finds the Proposed Development complies with key renewable energy, landscape and environmental policy objectives. In this regard, the Proposed Development:

- Is in an area designated **'Preferred'** and **"Open to Consideration"** in the Louth County Development Plan (CDP) 2021-2027.
- Is anticipated to have the capacity to generate between 28.5-36MW of renewable wind energy to the national CAP2024 target of 9GW by 2030, helping to reduce the current 4.2GW shortfall.

[43] Statista (2023). Onshore wind energy capacity in Ireland 2008-2023. Available here Accessed 18/9/2024.

- Contributes to the 42.5% overall renewable energy target (and 45% ambition) by 2030 for the EU introduced by the REDIII.
- Contributes to assisting Ireland to increase from 42% electricity produced by renewable sources in 2020 to 80% by 2030 to meet the national target.
- Complies with the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland region's goal of prioritizing action on climate change across all strategic areas and in all economic sectors.
- Supports the local Louth County Development Plan policy of increasing energy security and promoting renewable energy.
- Aligns with the Louth County Development Plans' requirements with respect to water quality, landscape, biodiversity or amenities, and cultural heritage.
- Contributes to rural economic development in line with the Louth CDP.

The development process adopted by the Applicant has represented a best practice approach to a renewable energy scheme design, minimising the potential impact on the receiving environment through multiple design iterations. The proposed layout represents the optimum fit with the technical and environmental parameters of this project and this site. Furthermore, the embedded mitigation, mitigation by avoidance and reduction and compensation through management and restoration of degraded habitats as outlined in the EIAR, CEMP and Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan are considered to adequately mitigate the predicted environmental effects.

Overall, it is considered that the Proposed Development aligns with international, European, national and local policy.